

Core values

- **Respect for the dignity and contributions of all**
- **Humane legal immigration system**
- **Attainable citizenship for immigrants**
- **Family unity**

Much like our nation's history, the histories of our many faith traditions are centered on the stories of migrants. Ours are immigrant communities who planted their faith and rooted their lives in this new land. The call to 'welcome the sojourner' is strong: it compels us to advocate for immigrants who wish to fully contribute to our society. Any meaningful immigration reform must include an expedient process for undocumented immigrants and their families to attain citizenship.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:2

Our faith communities include people from many countries and many economic backgrounds. We value the contributions of each regardless of their wealth or country of origin. All deserve the opportunity for citizenship. Any legislation granting citizenship to immigrants should respect the dignity of all people and

include the ability to be reunited with family members. Harsh requirements, like "touchback" measures or excessive fees and fines or employment or socioeconomic criteria are immoral and should not be included in any legislation.

DREAMers and agricultural and high-skilled workers are important contributors to our communities, but legislation must provide solutions for more than a select few. Prioritizing some members of our community while leaving others behind violates the values of our faiths and we cannot support piecemeal legislation. We expect Congress to work for the common good and keep families together by granting immigrants of diverse educational and skill levels, and familial relations citizenship.

The face of immigration

Widian

My father was raised in a tiny village in Galilee, by loving parents who made a meager living as farmers. My mother, who was raised in an orphanage, married my father at seventeen. During my childhood, my father worked as a mechanic and my mother as a teacher. While our home was filled with love, my parents recognized that their children would have better opportunities for education and advancement in the U.S.

We came as visitors and overstayed our visa. My parents made many attempts to become "legal," spending money on lawyers who gave us false hope and left us wondering if we were ever going to have the chance to stop living in fear. As a child, I did not quite understand our immigration status; I only knew it was a secret we were never to mention to anyone.

My experience as an undocumented immigrant has informed my commitment to support those most in need. Throughout my years as a social worker, I have had the honor to meet God in at-risk youth, homeless men and women, the elderly, my faith community, friends, family, and strangers.

Recently, three months shy of my thirty-first birthday, with no criminal record, having lived in the U.S. at least five consecutive years, having arrived before age 16, and holding an advanced degree, I completed my application for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. But my new status is bittersweet as I continue to pray in hopeful expectation that undocumented immigrants all over the country will have the opportunity to live freely in our home.

Story contact: Ashley Wilson, awilson@networklobby.org



I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

Matthew 25:35



Immigration is really at the heart of most faiths because it's all about welcoming the stranger. I think it's because our history in the biblical times was all about being nomad.

Sister Simone Campbell, NETWORK

As people of faith, we advocate for a full and direct path to citizenship and we will oppose any legislation that simply seeks to “regularize” immigrants’ status. We believe that barring people from attaining citizenship creates a permanent underclass. This is unacceptable to people of faith and violates the very principles upon which this nation was built.

Congress must also expand access to Green Cards for individuals pursuing citizenship and fix the visa backlog that makes obtaining a Green Card difficult. A path to permanent second-class status, either by design or by failing to make the process accessible and timely, is contrary to the values of our faiths and core principles of our national culture.

How do our faith principles inform our policy recommendations?

We believe that our immigration system will remain broken until Congress passes meaningful reform that provides full citizenship to our immigrant sisters and brothers currently residing in the United States. Until Congress does so, we fully support President Barack Obama’s decision to use his constitutional authority to address the brokenness of our immigration system, alleviate the suffering of many immigrant families, and begin to heal our national community. The president’s executive actions will provide temporary relief to millions of our neighbors, including mothers and fathers living in fear of deportation and children who worry that their parents could be taken from them at any moment. These measures will serve to stabilize families, communities, and economies and reaffirm our national values.

Administrative relief is woefully inadequate and temporary at best. We know that the only permanent solution lies in comprehensive Congressional action. Members of Congress must use their Constitutional authority and responsibility to devise a process by which our immigrant brothers and sisters can attain the citizenship they so desperately seek; only Congress can craft legislation that will provide a permanent fix to our broken immigration system.

We will continue to press Congress to pass bipartisan legislation that protects the God-given dignity and rights of every human person, including migrants, immigrants and refugees. We support legislation that creates an achievable pathway to citizenship for individuals of all educational and skill levels, fixes the immigration visa system and reunites families, protects the rights of all workers, promotes the full integration of newcomers, respects the special needs of the most vulnerable, and addresses the violence, persecution, and poverty that force migrants from their homes.

Resources:

Interfaith Immigration Coalition
interfaithimmigration.org

Migration Policy Institute
mpi.org

Immigration Policy Center
immigrationpolicy.org



Interfaith Immigration Coalition | interfaithimmigration.org | March 2015 | African American Ministers in Action • American Baptist Home Mission Societies of the American Baptist Churches, USA • American Friends Service Committee • American Jewish Committee • Bread for the World • Christian Reformed Church • Church of the Brethren • Church World Service • Columban Center for Advocacy & Outreach • Conference of Major Superiors of Men • Daughters of Charity • Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ) • The Episcopal Church • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) • Franciscan Action Network • Friends Committee on National Legislation • Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society • Interfaith Worker Justice • Irish Apostolate USA • Islamic Information Center • Jesuit Refugee Service • Jewish Council for Public Affairs • Leadership Conference of Women Religious • Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service • Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns • Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office • Muslim Public Affairs Council • National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd • National Council of Churches • National Council of Jewish Women • NETWORK, A Catholic Social Justice Lobby • Pax Christi USA • PICO National Network • Presbyterian Church USA, Immigration Issues Offices • Sisters of Mercy of the Americas • Sojourners • 3P Human Security • T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights • Union for Reform Judaism • Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations • United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries • United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society • UNITED SIKHS • U.S. Jesuit Conference • World Relief

More than 63% of Americans agree

that the immigration system must allow undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. a way to become citizens

Majorities of all religious groups agree

that immigrants currently living in the U.S. should be allowed to become citizens provided they meet certain requirements.

A majority of Americans believe

that the growing number of newcomers from other countries helps strengthen American society.

Source: Citizenship, Values & Cultural Concerns: What Americans Want from Immigration Reform, Findings from the Religion, Values, and Immigration Reform Survey

In America we finally found a country that gave us more rights, more freedom, more opportunities than we had ever known anywhere in our history outside of Israel. Can we do less than ensure an America where every immigrant is treated with the same respect and afforded safety and the opportunity to contribute?

Rabbi David Saperstein,
Former Director
Religious Action Center
of Reform Judaism