

Father's Day-Themed Vigils 2017
#DontDeportMyDad

TOOLKIT

Overview

We're asking religious and community leaders to conduct Father's Day weekend prayer vigils (Friday night or Saturday) in support of immigrant and refugee fathers. Too often, the mother-child relationship is seen as the only one that matters, and we want to highlight the fact that fathers are important to families and kids' development too. We have a specific case we're supporting which inspired this idea, but there are thousands of fathers across this country being torn from their children because of unjust deportation policies. Please see below resource with talking points, template press advisories and sample social media posts.

Toolkit Content

- Organize an Interfaith Vigil
- Sample Media Advisory/Release
- Talking Points
- Social Media
- Opinion Editorial

Background

Donald Trump continually attacked immigrants throughout his campaign through hateful anti-immigrant rhetoric. Now his administration has instituted harsh and unjust immigration policies that are designed to have no mercy or compassion for the thousands of families being devastated as mothers and fathers are torn apart from their children. The administration has also targeted Somali immigrants and is threatening to take away Temporary Protective Status for Haitians and Hondurans. Faith communities and allies have a moral responsibility stand in solidarity with the immigrants and refugees in our midst this Father's Day.

Host an Interfaith Vigil

Hosting interfaith vigils provides the opportunity for faith leaders to express how welcoming immigrants is part of all faith traditions, reflecting on the deep scriptural and spiritual roots of our work to support refugees and immigrants. Even small events, multiplied across the country, will send a powerful message to the Trump administration and Congress that welcoming immigrants and refugees is moral issue that is important to people of faith and conscience.

Steps to a successful prayer vigil:

- Coordinate a public prayer vigil with faith leaders, refugee resettlement agencies, immigrants' rights groups, refugee leaders, community members, and if possible local elected leaders

- Identify the core leaders and speakers, make sure there are impacted people, including undocumented individuals (if possible) and Muslim organizations and Imams who are invited to help plan and speak at the event
- Consider inviting elected officials including Representatives, Senators, City Council Members or the Mayor
- Be clear about your goals, what you want to accomplish, and how many people you hope will join the event
- Identify the best location for the vigil, which is generally somewhere central in a symbolic memorial, state capitol, park or city hall
- Apply for any permits needed for the location; reserve or order any equipment you'll need such as microphones, cameras, banners, candles, projectors; and make sure you can access electrical outlets.
- Choose a time of day best for attendance and media – most news reports take place at 5-6 PM and 9-10 PM, so a few hours before those time blocks is best for press events
- Promote the event through social media, public service announcement, flyers, websites, and congregation bulletins
- Agree on messaging and talking points
- Bring signs that are consistent with your messaging and agreed upon ahead of time
- Assign specific talking points to each speaker and ensure they have time limits
- Invite the media by issuing a media advisory and following up with a press release after the event
- Invite participants at the vigil to be part of further action and advocacy by writing and calling the White House and their Representatives and Senators

The set-up for the vigil should ensure that all faiths are respected and welcomed with awareness and consciousness. Drawing on the faith traditions and rituals can make vigils much more powerful, raising the creative and dramatic tension.

- Ask clergy attending to wear collars, stoles, robes and any other appropriate religious attire
- Foot-washing of individuals impacted by immigration policies
- Procession with candles to symbolic location
- A Prayer Wall with handwritten prayers for immigrants and refugees
- Lift up stories in sacred texts
- Highlight passages in scripture and present to Members of Congress
- Collect and deliver prayers to your Senators and Representatives
- Make visuals – photos, drawings, art, etc., that show the consequences of the Trump administration's actions and policies

Topline Talking Points

On Father's day, we honor all fathers and their contributions to families and our country. Immigrant and refugee fathers represent the best of what our nation offers – they are role models, veterans, caretakers, teachers, doctors, workers, congregants, lay leaders, neighbors, and integral members of our communities.

We demand that President Trump and Secretary Kelly stop deporting fathers and tearing up families who are part of our communities. We urge Congress to reject the president's request to fund his mass deportation force and border wall. The America we all love celebrates fathers and values their contributions to their families and our country.

Immigrant and refugee fathers are pillars of their families and our communities. They know how much their children are counting on them to protect them, to teach them valuable lessons, and to be there for them in the good and bad times.

On this day, the children of immigrants make one powerful appeal to America: "Don't deport my dad." No child wants to see their father or mother locked up and facing deportation. Countless children are suffering the emotional and financial impacts of a parent who is detained or has already been deported.

Immigrant and refugee fathers work hard to build a better future for their children and our community. America's past and present is filled with immigrant fathers who sought the American Dream not for themselves but for their children. They've put the well-being of their family before themselves. Those sacrifices must be honored.

Sample Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Date]
MEDIA CONTACT: [Phone and Email]

*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****
[DAY, June X, 2017]
Vigil at [TIME]
[ADDRESS]

On Father's Day, Children Call on Trump: "Don't Deport My Dad"

Faith and Immigrant Communities Hold Vigil to Stop Trump's Mass Deportation Policies

[CITY, STATE] As Father's Day nears, faith communities, civic leaders, elected officials and immigrant mothers and fathers will join together for a vigil to pray for parents facing deportation. Advocates will denounce President Trump's mass deportation policies and urge Congress to reject the president's request to fund his mass deportation force and unnecessary border wall.

While families across the country celebrate fathers, faith, community and elected leaders will honor immigrant and refugee fathers and their contributions to America as they pray for those facing deportation. In addition to Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and measures to separate

immigrant families, the president and his administration are asking for \$4.5 billion (in addition to the existing \$19 billion in immigration enforcement each year) to implement his executive orders that expand a deportation force.

What: Press conference to decry the Trump administration’s anti-immigrant and anti-refugee policies and actions

When: [DATE and TIME]

Where: [LOCATION]

Who: [list leading participants/organizations attending, specify names and title of speakers]

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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [date]

CONTACT: [media contact phone and email]

On Father’s Day, Children Call on Trump: “Don’t Deport My Dad”

[CITY] - Today, faith and immigrant communities held a vigil to honor the contributions of immigrant and refugee fathers, and they prayed for those facing deportations. Joined by civic and elected leaders, participants denounced President Trump’s mass deportation policies and urged Congress to reject the president’s request to fund his mass deportation force and unnecessary border wall.

[QUOTE], said Executive Director of [ORG NAME],

Rev./ Imam/ Rabbi X said, [QUOTE].

[Name], an immigrant father from [community] spoke about his/her experience of living in fear of deportation and family separation: [QUOTE]

Watch the video of this event at: [LINK to public video reporters can access, if available]

View the photos from this event at: [LINK to public photos reporters can access, if available]

Learn more about X’ work on Y at: [LINK to your organization’s website]

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Social Media

Sample Tweets

- Today we're praying for all the immigrant dads that make this country great #DontDeportMyDad #FathersDay #HereToStay
- For #FathersDay, we celebrate immigrant & refugee dads - they work hard not only for their children, but also for our communities.
- Children of immigrant dads make a powerful call to @POTUS for #FathersDay: Don't deport my dad.
- We honor dads and pray for those facing deportation. #DontDeportMyDad
- Immigrant fathers - past & present - sought the American Dream not for themselves, but for their children's future. #DontDeportMyDad
- We pray for immigrant fathers who fear being separated from their families. Congress must reject Trump's deportation force. #DontDeportMyDad

Sample Facebook post:

- Today, we honor the contributions of immigrant and refugee fathers and pray for those facing deportation. President Trump and Sec. Kelly must listen to the prayers and call of children who don't want their dads deported. It's time for compassion. Congress must reject Trump's request to fund his mass deportation force. #FathersDay #DontDeportMyDad

Sample Vigil Program

Welcome—a few words about the focus and purpose of your vigil. Why now? What's the concern? Who's affected? How can this vigil convince your members of congress to support refugees and immigrants? What values shape your faith traditions' response to these concerns?

This may take the form of brief comments from one of your speakers, or a welcome and an opening prayer.

Opening Prayer: Ask clergy or key lay leader to open with a prayer Song—A singer, choir or instrumentalist can perform, or a few singers can lead participants in singing. Reading—for ideas see suggested readings below.

Speaker—A personal story from a local community member of how the outdated and unjust immigration system has impacted families. More than one story can be integrated throughout the program as well. Creative Ritual: Integrate creative symbols or rituals from faith traditions that draw more attention to the importance of immigration reform (see above suggestions)

Prayer—One person may lead the prayers, or you might invite several faith leaders to pray according to their traditions. Involve vigil participants in praying a refrain throughout your prayer time, or pray in a circle so everyone has the opportunity to pray. Consider offering prayers in multiple languages.

Song & Closing—reiterate the focus and purpose of your vigil, and send participants off with a call to welcome newcomers and raise their voices in the public sphere to stop the deportations. Consider a procession or march to another symbolic and strategic location.

Sample Invite to Your Member of Congress

Dear Honorable Senator / Representative,

Thank you for your support of refugees and immigrants over the years.

We would like to invite you to attend [ORGANIZATION/ COALITION]'s prayer vigil/ press conference on [DATE] at [LOCATION] along with faith leaders and civic leaders who are speaking out against the deportations that separating families and tearing fathers away from their children.

We would be honored to have presence as a speaker at this press conference/ vigil. Other speakers include [list 2-3 top speakers] Please let us know as soon as you can if you are able to attend by contacting me at [email]. If you are able to be there we will connect about the details on messaging and agenda.

Sincerely,

Suggested Readings from Scripture:

"The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Lev 19:33-34)."

The Qur'an tells us that we should "serve God...and do good to...orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, and those who have nothing (4:36)."

The Hindu scripture Taitiriya Upanishad tells us: "The guest is a representative of God (1.11.2)"

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured." --Hebrews 13:1-3

In the Qur'an, it is written that Muslims should "serve God ... and do good to ... orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, [and those who have nothing]." (Qur'an 4:36)

"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me...just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." --Matthew 25:35-40