

LENTEN VALUES:

SPRINGING INTO ACTION

Contents

INTRODUCTION 2

ASH WEDNESDAY - ACCOUNTABILITY 3

FIRST SUNDAY - RIGHT RELATIONSHIP..... 4

SECOND SUNDAY - COMMUNITY 5

THIRD SUNDAY - HOPE 6

FOURTH SUNDAY - HUMANENESS 7

FIFTH SUNDAY - PROMISE 8

PALM SUNDAY - COMPASSION 9

GOOD FRIDAY - LOVE 10

EASTER - BOLDNESS 11

CONCLUSION 12

INTRODUCTION

Created by the IIC Holy Days & Holidays Working Group, this Lenten guide is meant to be used to help observe the Sundays and major holy days within the Lenten season. Lent, a season of spiritual discipline and preparation that starts annually with Ash Wednesday—which falls this year on February 22—anticipates the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ at Easter. Many Christians celebrate this season worldwide.

Please use this guide as a weekly or daily devotional – individually, in groups, or throughout an organization or faith community. The guide invites readers to act, and we hope it will serve as a tool to mobilize people of faith to embody their beliefs in seeking justice this season as they reflect on the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ. The priorities laid out in this guide do not reflect the views of all IIC member organizations.

Designed by Alison Kahn, American Friends Service Committee

Ash Wednesday

ACCOUNTABILITY

"Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble... 'Yet even now,' says the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and mourning; rend your hearts and not your garments.'"

Joel 2:1, 12-13

PRAYER

God who created humans from the dust of the ground, we pray flights immorally sending families away would stay grounded.

Remove policies that hold communities in fear, and instead may we fast in repentance

for ways we have been complicit in feeding such fears.

Hold us accountable as a nation for cruel separations of families and racist practices, and Strengthen us to grow your Force of Love

until the oppressed truly become free.

Amen.



STORY

Eun Jin, originally from South Korea, shares: "I came to the U.S. to continue my studies in theology... to help those hurting on the inside. (But) because of a series of missed chances, I failed to keep my status... Because of my lack of status, my children could not go to college, and because I could not drive, my children were limited even more in their studies and activities.

I wish for the administration to provide a pathway to citizenship for all undocumented immigrants, for without citizenship, my children and I cannot pursue the careers that we want."

Read more of Eun Jin's story at: bit.ly/EunJinStory.

REFLECTION

The prophets called for proclamations of faith to be matched with actions that demonstrated commitment to God and promoted justice for the oppressed. Joel warned that disobedience to God would bring destruction upon the nation of Israel through successive waves of chewing, swarming, crawling, and consuming locusts. Such graphic warnings of calamity could not be ignored—and they mirrored back to the nation God's disappointment in their apostasy. In recent years, immigration laws have led to suffering at and beyond our borders and terror among immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. How may this season of Lent lead us to urgent fasting and repentance to hold our nation accountable and increase our hospitality?

ACTION

- Read this [IIC Press Release](#) regarding a recent national [Faith Letter](#) urging the Administration to restore US asylum commitments.
- Listen to "[A Mother, A Daughter, A Deadly Journey](#)" from NY Times Daily, to learn of risks migrants are currently facing as they cross dangerous barriers to pursue hope.

AUTHOR: REV. DR. SHARON STANLEY-REA, CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

First Sunday of Lent

RIGHT RELATIONSHIP

“If death got the upper hand through one man’s wrongdoing, can you imagine the breathtaking recovery life makes, absolute life, in those who grasp with both hands this wildly extravagant life-gift, this grand setting-everything-right, that the one man Jesus Christ provides?”
Romans 5:17

PRAYER

Gracious and holy God, you know the stories, pain, and struggles of your children. You sent Jesus to live among us to understand the pain and struggle. Please be present with immigrant detainees who face unthinkable conditions. Strengthen us to join efforts to bring justice for the migrant and the migrant’s family. Amen.



STORY

Mr. A. and his son were previously held at the Berks family detention center. As Berks ended its contract as an immigration detention center, Mr. A. said, “there were 28 days of uncertainty and anguish with my son, where we had a false freedom, rules for everything we did, and we didn’t have the security of being able to talk to someone inside Berks. We are happy that now they will have one less place to hold people.”

REFLECTION

The United States maintains the largest immigration detention system in the world. Individuals, families, and children are detained in centers, even though there are less harmful and sustainable alternatives. As expressed in the scripture passage, human-created systems can be sinful and cause harm. Jesus Christ offers an alternative, urging us to seek justice and healing, and to seek right relationship with one another and with God. Therefore, it is our responsibility to witness God in each person. Let us join the migrant-led voices clamoring for mercy, dignity, change, and justice. As we witness Berks ending detention, we learn we can seek right relationships. Let us work to end the harms of immigrant detention.

ACTION

- Learn more about how race and gender intersect with violence and abuse in the immigration detention system in the US found in Black Alliance for Just Immigration’s resource, [Uncovering the Truth](#).
- Deplorable living and [working conditions persist](#) for immigrants in detention. Work with elected officials to demand change and accountability by passing legislation like the [Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act](#).
- Urge Congressional leaders to divest from immigration detention and invest in community-based alternatives. Resources found at [Freedom For Immigrants](#).

Second Sunday of Lent

COMMUNITY

“If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

Mt.17: 5

PRAYER

All loving God, who resides in the community of the Trinity, show us the way of universal acceptance for our neighbors who live in various stages of becoming whole members of our communities. Let us reflect your love to the DACA youth, the temporarily protected families, the green card holders with a legal flaw and the undocumented folks who only want to contribute and grow. We know, that when privileges afforded to some are denied to others, our community is not communal, our love is incomplete, and our reflection of You is blurry. Do not enable us to “preserve” your goodness in the safe distance for some but not others to experience. Rather, help us to joyfully leave the holy places with holy hearts in order to serve one another as full participants in the citizenry of Divine Hope.



Photo credit: Adam Barkan

STORY

Alejandro (alias), a middle aged Mexican man, came to my immigration law practice to humbly and hesitantly inquire if there were any way that he might become a citizen. He longed to be included as a full member of these United States, with the same rights and responsibilities of an American citizen. For 30 plus years, he had legal residence, raised his family and served on various councils to improve his community. However, when Alejandro was 18 years old, he had committed a crime. He was caught, served his supervision and never committed another crime. Still, he is a convicted felon and that made his naturalization dubious. Because he had admitted to his crime and his crime occurred one year before an arbitrary cut off date for immigration forgiveness, he became a citizen recently. With Divine Hope, he courageously sought community and found forgiveness. Laws that reflect our values, instead of our fears, make good citizens.

REFLECTION

In the Transfiguration passage, Elijah and Moses highlight the prophetic lineage of God’s promise of hope. Then God reveals that Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise and He is the Son of God. The disciples must listen to Him because they will carry forth His Divine Hope into the community after He is gone. Initially, Peter wants to encapsulate the sacred and set apart the geographic location as a holy place. However, Jesus rejects this notion. We must see that our Divine Hope has always been ensconced in a loving community that sees no barriers to love. So, the disciples must descend from this glorious mountaintop experience to confront the injustices and ills of the world that isolate others from experiencing that which is sacred. Jesus instructs His disciples to rid the communities of demons that exclude individuals from the group. Today, Jesus beckons us to purge the selfishness, apathy, and racism that cloud the hope of full acceptance for all members of our communities.

ACTION

- Attend a religious service with an immigrant community and reflect on the experience. Learn a few words of the native languages of immigrants who worship in your parish/religious community.
- Meet with representatives of the United States Customs and Immigration Service to learn about their work and suggest ways they can better enforce the nation's laws while respecting the rights and needs of immigrants.
- Identify immigrants in the parish who are still waiting for family members to be permitted to enter the United States. Learn about the process of sponsoring family members, and write to those still waiting overseas to promise friendship and welcome when they finally arrive.

For these and other suggestions see [this USCCB resource](#).

AUTHOR: SR. MARY ELLEN LACY D.C., ST. VINCENT’S IMMIGRATION LAW CLINIC

Third Sunday of Lent

HOPE

“And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. . .”

Romans 5:5

PRAYER

O God, just and compassionate One,
we are grateful for the many ways that DACA recipients enrich U.S. society and culture.
We honor their courage, determination,
generosity, and amazing hope.
We ask that You inspire all people of faith to join them
as they call on elected leaders to provide a path to citizenship for all immigrants who desire to become U.S. citizens.
Amen.



STORY

“DACA has been a great opportunity for many of us who were brought here undocumented at a very young age by our parents. It gave us the opportunity to have better jobs, opening the door to pursue our goals and dreams. DACA enabled me to pursue my education. During the previous administration, everyone encountered major setbacks, especially immigrants... Dreamers like myself lived in constant fear of what would happen to DACA and our lives. I have been hopeful that this administration will work toward a more comprehensive immigration reform with dignity for all, including Dreamers. It will not be an easy task, and we will probably encounter many setbacks, but we have to continue to luchar (fight).”

Alicia Dominguez, DACA recipient, Wilmington, DE

REFLECTION

In June 2022, DACA recipients commemorated the 10th anniversary of the executive action that provided new opportunities for them and ignited hope for legislation that would open a path to citizenship for them, their families and their communities. Nearly 11 years later they still wait and even face a threat of termination of the program, but they have not given up hope. In these years, they have worked, attended college, served in numerous ways, including during COVID. They welcome support of advocates but they have organized themselves into strong leaders who persist in their demands. They inspire all of us to hold elected leaders accountable and work proactively with them until their hopes for full citizenship are realized.

ACTION

- [Contact your Representative](#) to urge support of the [Dream Act of 2023](#) and ask others to make calls.
- Sign [this petition](#) from UnitedWeDream.
- Fast one day this week in support of DACA recipients as they continue to wait in hope.

AUTHOR: SR. MARIE LUCEY OSF, FRANCISCAN ACTION NETWORK

Fourth Sunday of Lent

HUMANENESS

*“You were once
darkness, but now you
are light in the Lord.
Live as children of
light, for light
produces every kind of
goodness
and righteousness and
truth.”*

Ephesians 5:8-9

PRAYER

Merciful God, we pray for families and individuals who have left or fled their homes, seeking safer and better lives. We lift up to you their hopes, fears, and needs, that they may be protected on their journeys, their dignity and rights may be honored and upheld, and they may be welcomed with open arms into generous and compassionate communities.

Amen

Catholic Charities USA

Photo credit: AFSC



STORY

Bara'a and her family fled their home in Syria and are currently living with her three children in a refugee camp in Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. Her story was shared with us by Global One, which supports mothers and children by providing hygiene and health supplies and trains local women as midwives to support long-term development.

Bara'a still experiences trauma surrounding the birth of her youngest child, Rouba, four years ago. Her hands shake as she recalls the memory. Unable to breastfeed her daughter due to mental exhaustion, Bara'a had to rely on donations to buy formula milk to feed Rouba. Once the donations ran out after a week, Bara'a had no choice but to feed her newborn a mixture of sugar and water. Read more stories [here](#) and watch [this video](#) about life in a refugee camp.

REFLECTION

We are created out of great love. Our human dignity, our being light, comes from God's love for us, not the color of our skin or our immigration status. Mindful of this great love, with no merit of our own and despite our faults, how are we to respond and show our gratitude? God's invitation to be light, is certainly to treat each other with the same goodness, righteousness and truth that God shows us daily. We have seen goodness, righteousness, and truth go out the window in recent times, especially in how we've treated people seeking asylum and refuge in our country. The decimation of the Refugee Resettlement Program has shown how cruel we can be if we forget to be the light in our world and act in the darkness instead.

ACTION

- Urge your representatives to increase support and funding for refugee resettlement.
- Attend or host a screening of the new film [Seeking Asylum](#) with your community or congregation.

AUTHOR: SR. MARIA ORLANDINI OSF, FRANCISCAN ACTION NETWORK

Fifth Sunday of Lent

PROMISE

“I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land. Thus you will know that I am the Lord. I have promised, and I will do it, says the Lord.”
Ezekiel 37:12-14

PRAYER

God of compassion, you reveal the way to life through the path of obedience to your law. Inscribe your law of love upon our hearts, that in life we may follow your way and become more fully your beloved community.
Amen.



STORY

Eduardo was an experienced truck driver in Honduras. During one fateful trip, his truck was stolen. Despite warnings, he filed a police report. In retaliation, the criminals found him at home and threatened him with violence. Eduardo and his wife, Kiara, decided to sell everything and flee the life they knew. By the time they reached Guatemala, Kiara was ill, which tempted them to return. Borrowing a phone, Eduardo called their neighbors only to learn that hours after they fled, their home was attacked in a drive-by shooting. “That’s when we knew we couldn’t go back,” Eduardo said.

Forced migration is a symptom of deeper issues, including endemic poverty, corruption, impunity, inequity, repression, and violence (often directly related to U.S. foreign policy), ill-conceived trade agreements, and the actions of U.S. corporate actors. Until we address the economic, social, environmental, and political conditions which compel migration, people like Eduardo and Kiara will continue to be forced to flee their homes. *Story from Justice for Immigrants.*

REFLECTION

Our sojourn on Earth is long and too often difficult, even dangerous. Like the Holy Family, Eduardo and Kiara were forced to flee their home to save their family. Like the people of Israel, Eduardo and Kiara and tens of thousands like them walk for weeks and months in search of the promised land.

What is the source of their faith? Where is their hope? Who is it they seek? It is the faithful God, the Spirit within; the God of eternal promise. Ezekiel reminds us of the eternal promise of the God of abundance to settle us upon God’s holy land; to make us a people alive in God’s Spirit, a welcoming community at home in God’s Beloved Community. “I have promised, and I will do it, says the Lord.”

ACTION

- We have a responsibility to ensure that our laws reflect God’s covenant of love. Contact your members of Congress and ask them to take action on legislation that addresses the root causes of migration.
 - Urge congressional vote against the Border Safety and Security Act of 2023 (H.R. 29), which was introduced in the House at the beginning of the 118th Congress. H.R. 29 would effectively continue the current misuse of Title 42 indefinitely, while detaching it from any public health rationale.
 - To contact your members of Congress, call (202) 224-3121. You can also find contact information for your Representative [here](#).
- Make this Sunday of Lent a time of commitment as you locate where in your local community migrants are assisted in their journey. Consider how you are called to support this work.

AUTHOR: SR. ANN SCHOLZ, SSND

Palm Sunday

COMPASSION

“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

1 John 3:18

PRAYER

O God of all nations and peoples:
We live in a nation of immigrants,
and one in which the diverse gifts
of many peoples
have contributed to our energy
and strength.

Yet it is a nation in which some
immigrants
are discriminated against
because of the color of their skin,
their language, or the country of
their origin.

Help us, by your grace, to offer
hospitality to all strangers,
as our Father Abraham did in the
desert.

Grant us the wisdom and skill to
enact just
and merciful immigration reforms
so that the hospitality and access
to this great land
may be offered equally to people
of all colors and races and
nations.

Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia

STORY

On Jan. 12, the new app, CBP one, which allows asylum seekers in Tijuana to request entry appointments to the U.S. was launched. The challenges that ensued are a microcosm of many of the inequities migrants face elsewhere. Those able to snag the first two weeks of appointments were privileged by having means of obtaining the initial information about the app, as well as being able to read, and read it in a language they understand. Given that the app is not available in Haitian Creole, we already know certain groups have encountered additional barriers. Digital savvy (or access to someone who can assist), phone access, faster internet (which is often associated with money as those who can afford hotels benefit from their more reliable internet), as well as fewer issues with the facial recognition software access of the app (which tends to malfunction more often with migrants with darker skin), are just some of the additional ways certain migrants face inequities.

The app is not available in Haitian Creole. As Guerline Jozef, executive director of Haitian Bridge Alliance stated, “We are already seeing rampant misinformation and scams around this program, and the lack of equity around language access is opening yet another avenue for the exploitation of Haitian migrants who are left confused, frustrated and in limbo. We are extremely disappointed that once again the system continues to fail Black migrants in search of protection.”

REFLECTION

When we encounter suffering and inequity, it is our responsibility to inform ourselves of the issues and challenge ourselves and others to do better.

As Pope Francis said on Sept. 17, 2019 during his homily at Holy Mass, at Casa Santa Marta, “Compassion is like the lens of the heart; it allows us to take in and understand the true dimensions.” “If compassion is the language of God, so often human language is that of indifference.” “We must ask ourselves, ‘How many times do we look away...?’”

As challenges both at either side of the border as well as in the rest of the U.S. continue to exist for migrants, it is up to all of us to stand together with those who suffer injustice; to demonstrate compassion and speak out for change when others are silent.

ACTION

- Engage in actions to promote justice for Black immigrants through our IIC Black Immigrants Take Action Toolkit: bit.ly/BHMActions.
- Learn about sponsorship opportunities with the new parole program through [The Bridge](#) and [Welcome.US](#).
- Support Black immigrant-led organizations, such as MNHRUS, who fight for the rights of Black immigrants. Uplift their work and humbly ask how you can get involved, understanding that sometimes that may mean stepping back so other voices may come forward. Visit the following organizations' sites to learn more: mauritianiannetwork.org; haitianbridge.org; undocublack.org; blackimmigrantcollective.org; baji.org; facebook.com/CamAmerCouncil

AUTHOR: VIVIANA WESTBROOK, JD, CLINIC

Good Friday

LOVE

“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together... but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”
Hebrews 10:23-25

PRAYER

God of everlasting love and grace, we pray for healing and redemption.

We pray that all who suffer exclusion and incarceration may know freedom and welcome in this lifetime.

May we find in ourselves the strength

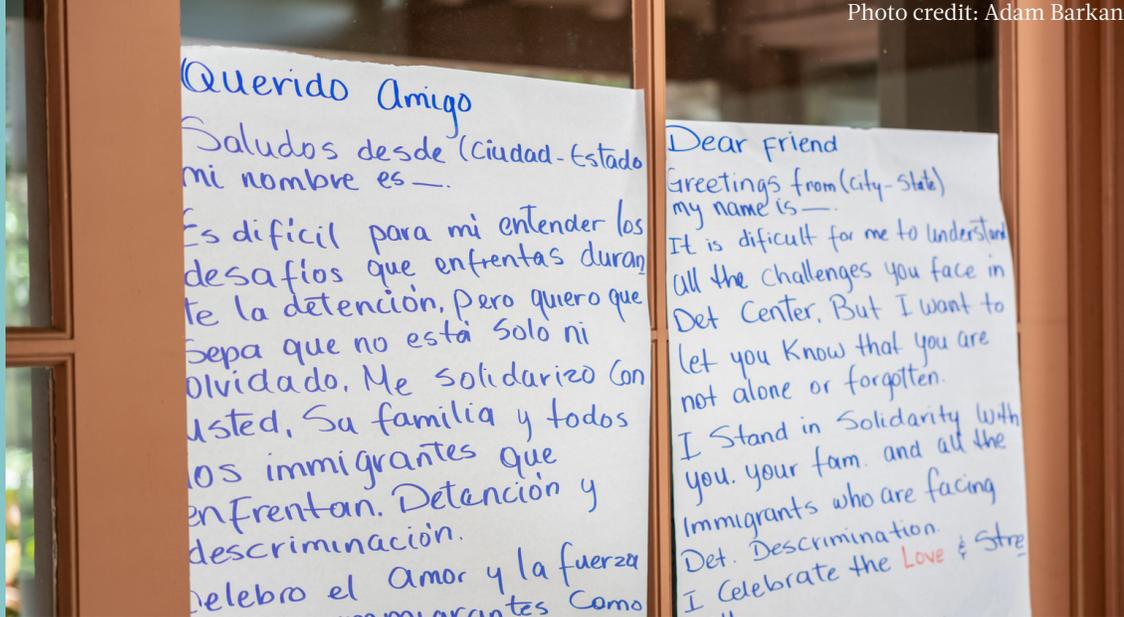
to act in every moment with abundant love and compassion.

May this time of reflection bring us new understandings

of our own transcendent power to love without limit,

give without hesitation, and live without conceit,

always in the service of a better world.



STORY

“Hello. My name is Angelica, and I am coming with my children Pedro and Diana. We are coming from Mexico. We are running away from my former partner, the father of my children. He attempted to kill me. After I filed for divorce, he tried to kidnap me, which is the reason we left. He did not let me live in peace. Thanks to God, we arrived into the caring hands of this shelter. They opened their doors and made me feel better through their kind gestures. I thank all the people who will make it possible for us to cross the border legally, be safe, and stay away from any fear of violence. God bless each of you. Thank you.”

Testimony offered to [NJFON](#) at a border shelter in Mexico

REFLECTION

This Good Friday, we are mourning the continuation of Title 42 and the Biden administration’s announcement of its plans for a ban on asylum-seekers who transit through a third country. These sweeping policies exclude, expel, and criminalize people fleeing persecution and torture. They inflict enormous suffering, tear families apart, and block access to the legal right to seek protection in the United States. On this day, we remember the burden of the cross that Jesus carried and his suffering of body and soul at the crucifixion. We remember Mary’s despair at the pain of her son and Jesus’ teaching that Mary and his disciple should love and care for each other as family after his death. Let us maintain faith and hope through a time of darkness, help each other persevere in the face of loss, and stir others to join us in the exercise of love. With the hope of Easter in our hearts, let us experience rebirth and renewal in the transformation of the world around us.

ACTION

- Take direct action to support migrants in your community through mutual aid and service. Donate, volunteer, and advocate with groups like [Sanctuary DMV](#).
- [Tell President Biden](#) to uphold the rights of migrants seeking asylum in the United States.
- [Call on your elected officials](#) to stop border militarization and abuse.

AUTHOR: ALISON KAHN, AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Easter Sunday

BOLDNESS

*"For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."
2 Timothy 1:7*

PRAYER

Holy God,
You who in power raised Christ from the dead,
You who in love sent Him to die,
You who in self-control did not punish our sins as we deserved,
You have filled us with Your own Spirit.
May we walk in the boldness of that Spirit.
Work Your power in us to pursue justice for the asylum-seeker and refugee.
Work Your love in us to radically care for immigrant children separated from their parents.
Work Your self-control in us to be winsome witnesses to hostile audiences.
Amen



STORY

Wilmot and his wife fled Liberia’s civil war, barely escaping to Ghana alive. When his wife earned a scholarship to study nursing in the United States, he was not permitted to join her. Not until the Liberian Resettlement Act passed did they even have a chance at reunification, and not until Wilmot’s daughter was almost two years old did he hold her for the first time.

REFLECTION

The Spirit of God is not the spirit of this world. Nowhere is this clearer than in immigration discourse. Across history, across party lines, across international borders, the spirit of this world foments fear around immigration. Fear divides the human family into innumerable “others,” it opposes love and shuts down self-control. But we rejoice in the knowledge that the spirit of this world is weak, compared to the Spirit who defeated death once and for all in the resurrection of Jesus. This Holy Spirit emboldens and empowers us to oppose the spirit of this world, to speak out for the oppressed and to welcome the stranger.

ACTION

- Urge the Biden administration to recognize the moral and fiscal imperative to end profiteering off of human suffering and invest in humane, community-based alternatives to detention.
- Advocate to secure an asylum pathway for vulnerable groups.
- Join the Welcome Corps to accompany newly arrived refugees.

*AUTHOR: CHRISTINA IWUAGWU,
LUTHERAN IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICE*

THANK YOU

Thank you for joining the Interfaith Immigration Coalition for Lent. We hope these devotions have provided a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the Lenten season, the hope of Easter, and the faith-based values that ground the work of immigration justice. As you've reflected, we hope you've been inspired to take action in solidarity with your immigrant neighbors.

STAY INVOLVED

View additional spring holy day resources from the IIC: bit.ly/IICSpring23
Sign up for the IIC email list to stay in the loop about future religious resources, advocacy opportunities, and the latest immigration news: bit.ly/IICadvocacy.
Follow the IIC on Facebook at facebook.com/interfaithimmigrationcoalition
and on Twitter at [@interfaithimm](https://twitter.com/interfaithimm).



© 2023 INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

Photo Credit: Carl Roose/AFSC