

## The FaithJustice Vision

From the dawn of creation, human beings have migrated across the earth. Reasons for migrating are numerous and vary depending on individual circumstances, but all immigrants share the promise of hope and better lives in a new land. The arrival of new cultures feels threatening to many in the United States and too often results in conflict and violence. Many immigrants live in fear and anguish due to federal raids, indefinite detention, and deportations that tear apart families and create an atmosphere of panic.

The FaithJustice Foundation is committed to the clarion call for compassionate immigration reform in the United States. We condemn the separation of children from their parents and deportation without due process. We affirm the inherent value and rights of all persons regardless of legal status or nationality. We call on people of faith to promote the biblical vision of justice for the oppressed and hospitality to those strangers in our land.

## The Biblical Witness<sup>1+</sup>

*Don't mistreat or oppress an immigrant, because you were once immigrants in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 22:21)*

*Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 19:34)*

*I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me. (Matthew 25:35)*

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:2)*

## Key Issues

### Immigrant Detention and Deportation

An estimated 11.3 million undocumented immigrants currently live in the U.S. The U.S. government spends more on immigration enforcement than all other federal criminal law enforcement agencies combined (\$187 billion from 1986 to 2012). And each year, this is getting more expensive due to rising detention rates. In October 2016, Immigration and Customs Enforcement kept an average of more than 40,000 individuals per day in detention. And over 60% of detainees are held in privately-run, for-profit prisons. Detention centers have notorious human rights records, with over 180 deaths reported since 2003. Furthermore, the number of deportations are increasing, including of immigrants who have lived in and contributed to their local communities for years. Now, they face separation from their families. Reports show that officials often use coercive tactics to deport immigrants, such as withholding required information, forcing them to sign documents they can't read, or threatening prolonged detention.

**Solutions:** The solution, ultimately, is to establish protections for people that fulfill the promise of democracy. To do this, we must change our priorities. Faith in Action started a campaign, [Invest in Love](#), to advocate that money spent on detention, deportation and militarizing the border be spent instead on community needs. [Freedom for Immigrants](#) is leading a movement to end immigration detention, advocate for laws to curb the growth of detention and the use of private prisons, and improve oversight. In the meantime, ongoing detentions and

<sup>1+</sup> Scriptures are from the *Common English Bible* translation.

deportations require a response. A national [faith-based sanctuary movement](#) is protecting undocumented immigrants from detention and deportation. [Congregation Action Network/LA Red campaign](#) and others are also organizing rapid response deportation defense teams to support community members facing deportation.

***How to Take Action:***

- [Join Faith in Action](#) to advocate for different budget priorities that [Invest in Love](#)
  - Engage in deportation defense with help from this [guide from Faith in Action](#)
  - Become a [sanctuary congregation](#)
  - Launch a Dignity Not Detention campaign with this [guide from Freedom for Immigrants](#)
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## Community Response to Immigration

The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2023, immigrants will account for more than 14% of the U.S. population, up from less than 8% in 1990, and that the immigrant population will grow at four times the rate of the native-born population. In 2016, immigrants added an estimated \$2 trillion to the U.S. GDP. But rising immigration rates in the U.S. have led to increasing anxiety in communities, who may be unable to manage rapidly changing demographics. Increased anxiety leads to decreased trust and an environment that can foster anti-immigrant policies, hate crimes, and a frayed social fabric.

***Solutions:*** There is a growing movement to create “Welcoming Communities” across the country. Led by [Welcoming America](#), this movement advances the idea that inclusive communities are prosperous and supports cities and towns to create policies that foster an environment where all are welcome.

***How to Take Action:***

- Plan a Welcoming Week event in your community with the [Welcoming America toolkit](#)
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## Immigration Reform

Since its founding, the U.S. has been a refuge for people seeking new jobs, safety from war and oppression, and a chance to be reunited with families. Americans agree that there should be ways for people to immigrate that respects the rule of law, but how to do that is debated. Various pathways exist for people in the U.S. to apply for legal status, but many of those options have been restricted or narrowly interpreted. As a result, over 11 million undocumented immigrants live in the U.S., many of whom have been here for over 10 years building their lives, starting families, and contributing to the economy as workers and entrepreneurs. Yet, they live in the shadows fearing the lives they built will be uprooted.

***Solutions:*** Many organizations are advocating for pathway to citizenship legislation, enabling people to live without fear. Such legislation would also create extensive economic benefits - it's estimated that it would add at least \$1.2 trillion to GDP over 10 years.

***How to Take Action:***

- Advocate for a path to citizenship and other federal policy change with [NETWORK](#)

## Other Resources

Find a list of other resources to learn about and take action on immigrant rights at <https://www.faithjusticefoundation.org/charitycause/immigrant-rights>.