

# ***Organizing, Educational and Advocacy Toolkit***

## ***For Religious Congregation***

***Revised Edition, 2014***

# **We Are All Immigrants**

***A Campaign to Create Welcoming Communities  
and Organize for Immigrant Rights on Long Island***

*Don't mistreat any foreigners who live in your land. Instead, treat them  
as well as you treat citizens and love them as much as you love yourself. Remember,  
you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.  
Leviticus 19:33-34*



[www.longislandwins.com](http://www.longislandwins.com)  
[www.longislandjw.org](http://www.longislandjw.org)  
<http://www.nccusa.org/ecmin/licc/>  
[www.longislandimmigrantalliance.com](http://www.longislandimmigrantalliance.com)

*Toolkit compiled by Long Island Jobs with Justice and Long Island Wins*

# Toolkit Introduction:

## When Good People Do Something

**“The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good [people] to do nothing.”**

**(Edmund Burke, 18<sup>th</sup> century British statesman and philosopher)**

Edmund Burke captured one of the enduring questions in history and literature: **what should ordinary people of good will do when confronted with evil?** Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., called himself “a drum major for justice”, suggesting that as he led the great struggle against the evils and injustices of racial segregation, many ordinary people were behind him; making ordinary, difficult and dangerous personal decisions that eventually toppled the Jim Crow system.

Kathryn Stockett’s best-selling novel, *The Help*, released as a motion picture in 2011, captures the challenges faced by ordinary people who decided to do something about the evils of segregation in Jackson, Mississippi, 1963. A white, wealthy writer comes together with two African American maids to tell the stories of what it was really like to be “the help” in the privileged, white world of the Jim Crow South. One of the maids, when asked why she took such a risk, referred to a moment in her church, when the minister preached about Moses being called by God to free his people from Egyptian slavery. “Moses,” she said, “did not feel he had the strength for this mission. But God gave him the strength.” And, she felt, God gave her the strength and the courage needed to stand against a system that she knew to be unjust.

Jim Crow came down because millions of Americans found the strength to challenge an evil system, and successfully organized to bring that system down. Today, here on Long Island, we confront another evil system: America’s broken immigration laws. There are an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. They live in an underground world of fear, discrimination, and exploitation. Some have even been murdered, as Marcello Lucero was in Patchogue on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008, for no reason other than the fact that he was a Latino immigrant and a person of color.

**Such pain and suffering would not have to occur if Federal Immigration laws were not so restrictive and provided pathways to citizenship in order to meet the needs of the growing U.S. economy.**

Yet, as President John F. Kennedy wrote, we are “a nation of immigrants.” Repeatedly we have successfully absorbed millions of mostly-poor immigrants –Irish and Germans and Scandinavians in the 1840s and 1850s; Southern and Eastern Europeans in the 1890s and early 20<sup>th</sup> century - despite fears that these immigrants would overwhelm us and never “fit in.” It should be noted that the arrival of millions of African-Americans as slaves, and their lives under slavery and Jim Crow, need to be treated separately from the immigrant experience.

Today, we are experiencing a third wave of mass immigration – primarily Hispanics and Asians. Again we hear the same fears expressed about the earlier immigrants: they will take our jobs; they will never be assimilated; they cause crime; they will cost taxpayers money.

**The injustices of America's broken immigration laws permeate Long Island.** More disturbingly, a climate of anti-immigrant hatred is emerging. Now is the time for good men and women on Long Island to do something. Now is the time for people of faith to take action, as so many did during the Civil Rights Revolution 50 years ago.

**People of faith need to act now to make their congregations and communities places that welcome immigrants.** We recognize that this is a challenge. Many myths are being circulated about immigrants. Some congregation members may themselves harbor prejudices against immigrants, or may fear their new immigrant neighbors. Some clergy may not want to take on a potentially divisive political issue like immigration.

Yet, to paraphrase the Jewish philosopher Hillel: If not us, who? If not now, when? Recognizing these challenges, this Toolkit and accompanying Educational Resources Packet, have this simple premise: **we are all immigrants.** Americans are generally proud of their own immigrant heritages. They like to talk about them and to share their family stories and memories.

Surveys have shown that many native-born Americans have positive feelings about immigrants, seeing them as hard workers and as having strong family and religious values. Other surveys show that Americans generally recognize that our immigration laws are broken. Lacking is a consensus on how to fix them.

**This toolkit is therefore divided into three sections:**

- **Part I: Getting Started with a Discussion: *We Are All Immigrants***
- **Part II: Making Yours a Welcoming Long Island Congregation**
- **Part III: Organizing Your Congregation to Advocate for Immigration Reform**

The toolkit contains clear, specific instructions on how to facilitate a discussion as well how to organize your congregation for education and advocacy. The strategies, activities and resources provided in the Toolkit and accompanying Educational Resources Packet stress our common values and foster dialogue rather than confrontation. The Toolkit provides a congregational menu of prayers, reflections, activities and actions to make Long Island houses of worship welcoming spaces for immigrants and prophetic voices so that ordinary, good people can do something about the injustices faced by immigrants today.

**If not us, who?**

***We Are All Immigrants* was written and edited by Charlene  
Oberbauer and Richard Koubek, PhD, Long Island Jobs with Justice**

Collaborators include Maryann Slutsky and Margarita Espada of LI WINS; Fr. Bill Brisotti, Pastor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church in Wyandanch; Rev. Tom Goodhue of the Long Island Council of Churches; and Luis Valenzuela of the LI Immigrant Alliance.

We are especially grateful to the faith---based representatives who participated in the two focus groups that helped shape this toolkit.

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# **Part I**

## **Starting the Conversation:**

### ***We Are All Immigrants***



## Organizing Your Congregation to Welcome Immigrants

Once you've decided that you want to organize to support immigrant rights in your congregation, the first step is always to get together a group of supportive community members and start planning! If you already have a social justice group in your congregation, start a "We Are All Immigrants" working group or task force, and get started.

### Starting your own group:

- Meet with your pastor, rabbi, imam or other clergy leader to discuss the importance of making yours a welcoming congregation for immigrants. Ask him/her to:
  - Identify members of the congregation who might want to serve on your Welcoming Committee.
  - Provide space in your congregation's bulletin or newsletter to explain the campaign and to announce the meeting.
  - Provide time during the religious service for you to announce the campaign and invite people to the organizing meeting.
- For your first meeting, you will need a facilitator and someone to take notes. You will also want to give people clearly defined roles so that they can actively participate.
- Print out an agenda so that you stay on task.
  - Begin the meeting with a prayer for immigrants (See the Educational Resources Packet, pages 3-11 for sample prayers (Jewish, Muslim, Christian, interfaith))
  - Open with a discussion of immigrants in your congregation and community. A good icebreaker: "Why do you think our congregation needs a welcoming the immigrant campaign?"
  - Make sure you include next steps as both a group and as individuals so that you can accomplish tasks between meetings. Remember that the majority of work happens once the meeting is over.
  - Use our tips on facilitation (pages 9-11 below) to ensure that your meeting runs smoothly.
- Prepare a sign-in sheet and use it to create an internal list serve for your group so that you can organize events online, as well as at in-person meetings.

# Facilitation Techniques

*You can use these techniques both to facilitate smaller meetings and to facilitate discussions and/or debates.*

## Ground Rules

- **Enjoy yourself:** relax and do not hesitate to laugh.
- **Listen carefully:** understand others without interrupting.
- **Fully participate:** participate actively and equally. Ask questions and say what's on your mind.
- **Respect others:** use inclusive and respectful language (e.g. non-racist, non-sexist). Respect privacy if someone says something is meant to be confidential.
- **Value difference:** if you do not agree, challenge each other constructively.
- **Be open---minded:** be open to learning new ideas and taking some risks.
- **Challenge yourself:** and others with the use of "I" statements.
- **Be on time:** please respect the work and time required to implement this agenda. Everyone's promptness, cooperation, and responsibility are needed.
- **Reserve side conversations for breaks:** we will work to have breaks with respect to the timeline of the agenda.



# ***Facilitation Cheat Sheet***

## **Primary roles of the facilitator are:**

- Encourage full participation
- Promote mutual understanding
- Help foster inclusive solutions
- Stay neutral
- Suspend judgment

## **What are some challenging meeting dynamics to address?**

- People get stuck on a topic
- People talk too much and repeat themselves
- Some people don't talk
- People ask for your input but don't listen
- People interrupt
- Fastest thinkers and most articulate speakers get most airtime
- Fastest thinkers make a decision and need everyone to get on board whether or not they understand the logic
- Because they can't be direct in the meeting, people talk about each other after the meeting

## **What's the role of a facilitator?**

- Encourage **full participation**
- Promote **mutual understanding**
- Help foster **inclusive solutions**

## **How does a facilitator do this?**

- **Stay neutral** – so everyone can feel the meeting was facilitated fairly
- **Suspend judgment** – withhold your own judgment so everyone can feel the meeting was facilitated fairly

## **How does a facilitator handle challenging meeting & group dynamics?**

- **Too quiet** – Facilitator needs to create space and draw them out, silence is ok.
- **Talks too much, repeats** – Participant is not feeling heard. Facilitator should try mirroring and paraphrasing. Ask participants if you heard them correctly.
- **Diverse perspectives** – Facilitator should create a process, encourage diverse perspectives and explore broad, inclusive options before moving towards closure.

# How to Facilitate a Discussion

- **Introductions, ground rules, set expectations, know your audience**
- **Mirror** – repeat what you heard verbatim.
- **Paraphrase** – consolidate and re---phrase what you heard.
- **Draw people out** – encourage participants to tell you a little more.
  - “Would you like to add to that?” “Please say more”
- **Check for clarity and accuracy** – ensure that you understand the speaker.
  - “If I heard correctly, you said \_\_, did I get that right?”
- **Stacking** – place people in a speaking order.
  - **Breaking the stack** – to explore topics a little further, always let others know that you will return to the stack.
- **Tracking** – summarize the different lines of thought occurring.
  - “What I’m hearing is \_\_, then \_\_, and \_\_, did I get that right? Am I missing anything?”
- **Balancing** – give equal weight to the different topics.
  - “I’ve heard people express their opinions about A and B, would anyone like to say anything about C?”
- **Encouraging** – create an opening to participate without putting any one person on the spot.
  - “Who else has an idea?”
  - “Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t spoken in a while.”
- **Keeping time** – use the clock so the group can manage itself.
  - “It’s 10:45, and we were going to stop at 11, is this ok or should we cut our next item short and extend this discussion to 11:15?”
- **Making space** – keep an eye on quiet members, be aware of body language that may indicate a desire to speak. Intentional silence is ok.
  - “Did you want to add anything?”
- **Body language** – be relaxed, standing, avoid distractions (hand in pockets, drink in hand, playing with markers).

## **TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT IMMIGRATION**

**Listen before speaking.**

Few of us listen very long to any salesman, preacher or community organizer who wants our attention without giving it. Try to know and understand your audience and remember, as Margaret Melkonian says, "You never know who is in the room." If you are a pastor, priest, or rabbi, call on your flock at home or at work before plunging into controversial issues. Ask a lot of questions. Listen long and hard to those with whom you disagree. Try to understand their concerns. Bill Coffin often said at Riverside Church, "You should always try to listen to your opponents carefully enough that you can state their position to their satisfaction."

**Let people know you have heard them.**

All of us are more open to discussion if someone says, "I hear what you are saying, but I see things differently." Preachers are likely to find a more receptive audience if they begin their sermon with "I know this is a divisive issue but one of you asked me. . ." or "We have many different opinions among ourselves on this issue, but this is what I am hearing from you."

**Confess your own sin, screw-ups, ambivalence and confusion.**

Try to never condemn something without first locating it in your own life. Are you sure that all of your own ancestors arrived with visas, for example? Be willing to acknowledge the messy feelings that you have. It never hurts, either, to admit that you are uncomfortable addressing a divisive issue.

**Use humor, particularly if you and your people are the brunt of the joke.**

You can make many points more effectively with a funny story than you can with a shrill argument. In Hawaii, ethnic humor is common but people mostly tell jokes about their own group. I sometimes joke, for example, that when my Puritan ancestors landed in Massachusetts the local residents said, "There goes the neighborhood!"

**Address concerns directly, speaking to their enlightened self-interest.**

It does little good to urge people not to feel what they feel, but there is much to be gained by addressing real needs. When people express objections to immigration, I ask, "Don't you want someone to help you when you are sick?" and remind them of the shortage of nurses and home health aides.

**Keep your eyes on the prize.**

It is easier to hear a summons to do better than it is to accept a condemnation of what you are doing now, so preach grace more often than judgment. Focus on the goal we seek rather than the evil we deplore. Hold out hope that we truly will become the beloved community.

--Excerpted from *Many Names for God: Living Ecumenically in an Interfaith World*,  
by the Rev. Thomas W. Goodhue. Used with permission



## **How to Facilitate a Discussion at your congregation:** ***WE Are All Immigrants***

Once you know how to facilitate a meeting and discussion, you are ready to lead a “We Are All Immigrants” discussion at your congregation. One strategy for getting people to change their perspective on immigration is getting them to talk about their own immigrant backgrounds and stories as a way to celebrate the cultural diversity of your congregation. Such conversations open the door for comparisons of their family’s immigrant experiences with those of today’s immigrants.

Our discussion guide can be used for a large-group presentation or for a small group of six to ten people. Not including the time used to eat, the discussion should last 1.5 to 2 hours. (Note: It would be good to have a chalkboard, white board, or flip chart to summarize the key points made during this discussion). You will also need to duplicate and distribute pages from this Toolkit and the accompanying Educational Resources Packet as indicated below.

### **Here are some specific instructions on how to facilitate the *We Are All Immigrants* discussion:**

1. Invite congregants to attend at potluck dinner at your home or congregation and ask them to bring a dish native to their culture.
2. When participants arrive, ask them to introduce their dish and the story behind it. Leave some time for people to eat and talk to one another. Begin the program with a prayer. See the Educational Resources Packet, pages 3-11 for sample prayers: Jewish, Muslim, Christian, interfaith).
3. Using a large map of the world (which can be purchased at most office supply stores or online), and using one pin, ask them to place on the map where they were born. Then, using string, ask them to connect that place to another pin—where their parents were born. Using another color string and a new pin, ask them to connect their parents to their grandparents. You can also use different colored markers for this exercise. In most groups, an individual’s family history will show that we are, indeed, all immigrants.
4. Ask each group member to identify his/her ethnic background(s) and to briefly tell their family’s immigrant history:
  - a. When their ancestors came to the U.S.
  - b. Why their ancestors came to the U.S. (religious persecution, poverty, war, political oppression, etc.)
  - c. How their ancestors got here.
  - d. What legal documents were required for them to enter the U.S.? (Facilitator’s Note: From 1924 to the present, immigrants have faced stringent quotas and legal restrictions. Between 1890 and 1924, minimal legal limits were placed on immigrants such as being required to read in their own language, be free from communicable diseases, mental

illness and criminal backgrounds and to show that they could be self-sufficient. Prior to 1890, with the exception of the Chinese who were excluded in 1882, immigrants had almost no restrictions on their ability to enter the U.S.)

- e. What happened to them when they arrived?
  - Who helped them adjust?
  - Where did they work?
  - Where did they live?
  - What hostility or prejudice did they encounter?
5. Distribute pages 12-15 of the Educational Resource Packet, which will be used to lead the group in a discussion of the myths and facts about immigration today, the assimilation of immigrants throughout American history, as well as the contributions immigrants make to the Long Island economy. Refer to the facilitation tips above on pages 9-11 for tips on how to lead a discussion if you have not already done so.
6. This discussion should help people:
  - a. Understand the role that immigrants have played throughout history in the U.S. economy.
  - b. Appreciate the ways in which immigrants who are now assimilated into U.S. society were once feared by native-born Americans.
  - c. Identify similarities between the experiences of past immigrants and today's immigrants.
  - d. Separate current myths from facts about immigrants.
  - e. Recognize the need for reform of America's "broken" immigration laws.
7. Ask if anyone was ever treated as an "outsider", or "stranger", or "alien" by a group to which they belonged. Follow up with these questions:
  - a. What circumstances caused you to be singled out as "the other?"
  - b. In what ways was the treatment you received based on "myths" or untruths people expressed about you?
  - c. How did you feel?"
  - d. How did you react?
  - e. Did anyone help you?
  - f. Ask the group to identify some of the negative comments they hear people saying about immigrants, which causes them to be treated as "outsiders". Here are some common "myths" about immigrants today:
    - Immigrants take the jobs of Americans because they work for cheap wages.
    - Immigrants lower the wages of Americans.
    - Immigrants cost American taxpayers money.
    - Immigrants refuse to assimilate into American life.
    - Immigrants cause crime.
    - Immigrants refuse to come to the U.S. legally the way my ancestors did.
  - g. Ask the group to use "Some Common Facts About Immigrants in U.S. History ... and Today" and "Immigration on Long Island" (pages 12-16 in the *Educational Resources Packet*) to fact-check the common myths about immigrants heard today. If the group is large enough, break them into research groups to report back on these broad themes:
    - Do Immigrants take the jobs of Americans and lower American wages?
    - Are immigrants a strain on American taxpayers?
    - Has America been able to assimilate immigrants of many diverse backgrounds?

- h. Ask the group to identify the myths about immigrants that their ancestors encountered, such as:
    - Irish and German Catholics would cause crime and threaten American jobs.
    - Southern and Eastern European Catholics and Jews (1890s to the 1920s) were too different to assimilate into American life.
    - Asians (1880s to the 1940s) were too alien to ever fit in to America.
  - i. Ask the group to summarize the positive impacts that immigrants are having on today's American and Long Island economies. How have immigrants benefitted your local community and congregation?
8. Ask the group if they think that our current immigration laws need to be changed. Among the need changes they are likely to identify will be:
  - a. Punishment for employers who hire undocumented immigrants
  - b. More visas for needed-immigrant workers
  - c. Policies to reunite families
  - d. Sensible border security
  - e. Addressing the status of the approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants:
    - Deportation
    - Pathway to citizenship without penalties (amnesty)
    - Pathway to citizenship with requirements: paying back taxes; paying a fine; criminal-free record; a job; etc.
  - f. Don't be afraid of the topic of undocumented immigrants, but remember to avoid language like "illegals"! Emphasize that the immigration system as it now stands is broken and does not provide fair paths to legal immigration.
  - g. If time permits, distribute pages 29-35 of the Educational Resources Packet, which details Comprehensive Immigration Reform proposals and concepts. This will give the participants a good idea of why the system is broken and how we need to fix it.
9. Close the discussion with a way for supporters to "take action." Invite them to an upcoming meeting of your local pro-immigrant group, or have another event planned as a next step such as launching the *Welcoming Long Island* campaign found on pages 17-20 below. Also, ask people to sign the *Welcoming Long Island* pledge found on page 17 below.
10. Consider a follow-up discussion on advocacy steps that can be taken in your congregation for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. See Part III, pages 23-27 below.

**Part II**

**Making Yours a**

**Welcoming**

**Long Island**

**Congregation**

# Welcoming Long Island

*Welcoming America is a national, grassroots-driven collaborative that works to promote mutual respect and cooperation between foreign-born and U.S.-born Americans. The ultimate goal of Welcoming America is to create a welcoming atmosphere – community by community – in which immigrants are more likely to integrate into the social fabric of their adopted hometowns. Welcoming Long Island is an affiliate of Welcoming America and it is hosted by Long Island Wins.*

## **STRATEGY**

Using a set of consensus principles as an education platform, Welcoming Long Island will aim to gather organizational and individual signatures in support of a pledge to make Long Island a welcoming place. Organizations and leaders will spread Welcoming Long Island principles and message through organizing, education and dialogue. Organizations and individuals joining this effort will be encouraged to have conversations regarding immigration and immigrant rights with their memberships, constituencies and/or communities in ways that are most appropriate for them. Once our goal is reached, we will have a public action that will manifest the collective power and intention of Long Island residents in their desire to create a more human, welcoming, and respecting environment for immigrants in the state. We believe that this will create the conditions for humane and sensible public policies regarding immigrants.

## **HOW YOU AND/OR YOUR GROUP CAN GET INVOLVED WITH WELCOMING LONG ISLAND**

- 1. Sign the Welcoming Long Island pledge! (See pledge)**
- 2. Endorse the campaign!**
- 3. Engage in any or all of the activities described below**

## **#1 Sign the Pledge**

### **The Welcoming Long Island Pledge**

*Our country's core values rest upon the following, — “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all [people] are created equal and endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights and that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.” Today these values are imperiled by attacks on Long Island residents who have immigrated to this country in search of a better life. A rhetorical war has dehumanized immigrants, while our broken immigration system leads to inequality and violates the very principles upon which our country was founded, creating much suffering among people, their families and our communities.*



# Welcoming Long Island members:

- I. Believe Long Island residents are empathetic and compassionate people and proud of their history as a bastion of American democracy;
- II. Believe Long Island residents are hospitable, welcoming and inclusive of diversity and that we have a shared responsibility to treat all our neighbors with respect and decency;
- III. Uphold the basic principles upon which the United States was founded, establishing the equality of all people, including immigrants, endowing them with unalienable rights;
- IV. Recognize that immigrants are fellow human beings and we reject the use of de-humanizing language;
- V. Believe that new Long Islanders share our values, contribute to our economy, enhance our combined culture, and strengthen our communities;
- VI. Are committed to raising the level of public discourse concerning immigrants and immigration, so that public policies reflect our highest values; and,
- VII. Are committed to better understanding the contributions that immigrants make to Long Island and the effects of immigration on our communities, and to challenging common myths and stereotypes.

**Given these principles, therefore, I pledge to make Long Island a welcoming community. I commit to publicly reject the politics of division and isolation that fan anger and hate against any person or community and to work toward just, workable and humane immigration policies that are anchored in America's finest ideals and core values.**

*Name*

*City/Town*

*Zip Code*

*E--- mail*

## #2 Endorse the Campaign

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### **Individual endorsements**

Many of us have both smaller e-mail lists of our most active folks, and larger lists of 100, 500, 1000 or more people. We can send to these larger lists to ask for online endorsements. It's a good way not only to get these endorsements, but to spread more information about immigrant rights and Welcoming Long Island. To sign the pledge, have your friends to [www.welcominglongisland.com](http://www.welcominglongisland.com) and visit us at Facebook: Welcoming Long Island.

### **Group endorsements**

Launching a Welcoming Committee in your town or city is easy! First, invite your welcoming friends to a first meeting at a local library or public space. Be ready to talk about the mission of Welcoming Long Island, and start planning your first event! You only need a few committed people to host a committee, and you have all of the resources you need at your fingertips!

## #3 Action

Once you've gotten some people together and have started to dialogue, you can begin to plan your first actions! Whether a vigil, letter to the editor, or other event, these recommended actions will help you plan what works in your community!

### **Hold a vigil in your community and gather signatures**

Example from Welcoming MA: Cambridge United for Justice with Peace holds a vigil every Wednesday evening from 5:30 --- 6:30 PM in Central Square. During the week of action, we will gather for a silent, candlelight vigil. We will stand to show our solidarity with all immigrants and to express our anguish at the plight of the detained and deported. While most of the participants will stand or walk in a circle in solemn silence, 2 --- 3 members of the group will gather Welcoming MA pledge signatures and talk with passersby.

#### **Materials needed:**

- a) large sign or banner letting people know who you are and why you're there --- one idea is to blow up the pledge
- b) petition forms (Be sure to add an address at the bottom where petitions can be returned) and/or pledge cards
- c) candles, matches, and paper cups (to put the candles in to protect them from the wind) (It's also possible to ask people to bring flashlights and use those instead of candles.) If lights seem too complicated, it is of course possible to hold a vigil earlier in the day without lights

### **Write Letters to the Editor**

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the Welcoming Long Island campaign. Letter can focus on: the campaign itself, an activity associated with the campaign or it can be written in response to an article in the paper that illustrates how immigrants are welcomed or aren't welcomed in your community.

**Ask your rabbi, imam, minister or priest to support the Welcoming Long Island campaign** You could encourage your rabbi, minister, imam or priest to include a message of Welcoming and reference the Welcoming Long Island campaign (if appropriate) in their sermon or homily. You could also host a discussion at your congregation/synagogue/temple about Welcoming Long Island and how being Welcoming relates to your faith.

### **Presentation in Classes**

High School, ESOL , GED and other adult education classes provide an excellent opportunity to present the Welcoming Long Island campaign. Take advantage of the opportunity to organize students, teachers, and other participants in such programs so they get excited about creating their own activity during the week of action, At the same time invite them to the larger Welcoming Long Island meetings, and encourage them to create their local long term Welcoming Long Island committee chapter.

### **Having a Welcoming Long Island table at local Fairs / Events**

During this time of the year, in many different cities and towns across the commonwealth there are a variety of community-wide events that range from celebrating the start of fall season, independence celebrations (in several immigrant communities), to getting out the vote for the November elections. This is a tremendous opportunity to have a table with information about the Welcoming Long Island campaign, to collect signatures, to get other people excited about it and particularly the week of action on Nov. 6 -12, but most importantly to connect with other folks in the community and to make immigrant rights also an important issue for progressives to take on at the very local level.

### **Movie & discussion**

Host a movie that touches on immigration and lead a discussion about what it means to be a welcoming community.

*The typical Welcoming campaign would include public opinion research, community organizing, media training, spokespeople, earned media, strategy and evaluation components. The campaign would include following elements: Focus groups, polling, public and community outreach, media tool kits, radio advertising, billboards, website and new media, video production, education forums and town halls.*

### **For ideas and resources, please visit the following websites:**

Resources from Interfaith Worker Justice: <http://www.iwj.org/actnow/imm/immigration.html> The

Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform, Justice for Immigrants:

<http://www.iwj.org/actnow/imm/immigration.html>

Immigration Toolkit from the Jewish Council on Public Affairs:

[http://tools.isovera.com/organizations.php3?action=printContentTypeHome&orgid=54&TypeID=1289&User\\_Session=4c71204db439f6c45e1d95cfd29ae9c2](http://tools.isovera.com/organizations.php3?action=printContentTypeHome&orgid=54&TypeID=1289&User_Session=4c71204db439f6c45e1d95cfd29ae9c2)

Jews for Racial & Economic Justice: <http://www.jfrej.org/index.html>

Adapted by Margarita Espada of Long Island Wins, from Welcoming America Strategy and Welcoming Massachusetts Toolkit

## How to Organize a Film Screening

The hardest part about organizing a film screening is deciding on a film. In general, you can organize a screening in five easy steps:

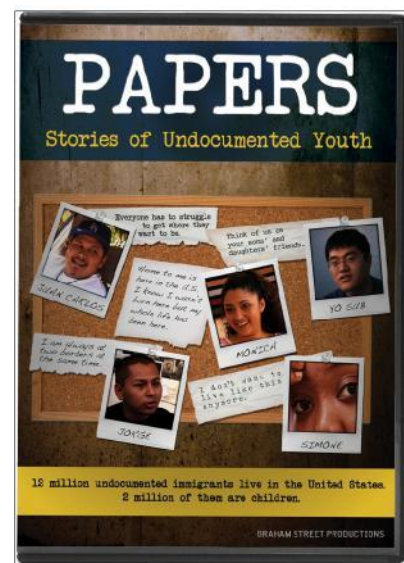
- Choose a film and get the appropriate approval for screening
- Pick a location
- Invite attendees
- Prepare a post---film discussion and action items for the actual screening, invite a couple of speakers to present on the topic, or be prepared to present!
- Have a few volunteers the day of to sign people in and introduce the film.

**Papers** is a great film that highlights the life of undocumented students and their struggle for obtaining legalization once they pass the age of eighteen. Many people, regardless of how “liberal” or “conservative” they are, have a hard time arguing against the legalization of undocumented young people.

Get a copy of the film online here: <http://papersthemovie.com/buy---now/index.html>, or email us at [lijwj01@gmail.com](mailto:lijwj01@gmail.com) and we can help you through the process.

### Discussion on *Papers*, Seven Sample Questions for Panelists:

- Was anything surprising to you about the individual’s stories?
- What has changed with the DREAM Act since this film was released?
- What is the main opposition to the DREAM Act in the U.S.?
- Do you think the DREAM Act has a chance of passing this time around?
- In the film, the director makes a strong link between the LGBT movement and the immigrant rights movement. Is this a commonly shared identity?
- How can we utilize the DREAM Act to talk about immigration reform in general, or the oppression faced by immigrants across the country?



## A Menu of Other Ideas to Create a *Welcoming Long Island* Congregation

Here are some additional ideas to help make members of your congregation more welcoming to immigrants and to each other.

1. Work with clergy to include prayers for immigrants and just immigration laws into your liturgies. For sample prayers see the prayers on pages 3-11 of the Educational Resources Packet or, for more denominational prayers, consult *For You Were Once a Stranger* published by Interfaith Worker Justice at: [http://www.iwj.org/template/guard\\_process2.cfm?where=inline](http://www.iwj.org/template/guard_process2.cfm?where=inline)
2. Provide time for an immigrant to tell his or her story during a liturgy or prayer service.
3. Some congregations are already diverse, made up of immigrants from many different countries as well as native-born people. Sometimes there are tensions between and among these groups (e.g., Central Americans and South Americans or Hispanics and Haitians) or they have little contact with one another. If your congregation fits this description, consider these ideas to bridge differences:
  - a. Bring the various groups together for special multi-cultural liturgies such as a Thanksgiving service.
  - b. Host a potluck dinner to showcase the ethnic foods and dress of nationalities that make up your congregation. Consider seating people by their birthdays or some other random seating pattern so that the different ethnic groups mix.
  - c. Encourage people to visit the liturgies of the other ethnic groups in your congregation.
  - d. Host a congregational activity that all can participate in such as a spring cleanup.
4. Suggest that members of your congregation visit places of worship that are culturally different from their own. Create a committee to develop on-going activities between the two congregations.
5. Assign each ethnic group a month during which they can display photographs, clothing and cultural artifacts from their nation in the lobby of the congregation.
6. Place a world map in the lobby of the congregation with large pins identifying the nations from which the various members originated. Include both native-born and new immigrants.
7. Have a welcoming ceremony during the liturgy for new members of the congregation. Publish their names and country of origin in the bulletin.
8. Set aside bulletin space for profiles about the major countries of origin that make up the congregation.
9. Use the arts as a vehicle to integrate the various ethnic groups in the congregation. Here are a few examples:
  - a. Encourage a mural-painting activity in which congregation members paint depictions of their country of origin.
  - b. Organize a "Welcome the Immigrants" poster contest or essay contest for young people in the congregation.
  - c. Have students in the religious education program create skits or a short play depicting the problems encountered by immigrants.
10. Engage the older religious education students (Confirmation, Bat or Bar Mitzvah classes) in the *We Are All immigrants* discussion outlined in Part I above, page 7. Ask (or require) that their parents participate in this program.

**Part III**

**Organizing Your Congregation  
to Advocate For  
Immigration Reform and  
Support Immigrant Rights**

## How to Facilitate A Discussion on Comprehensive Immigration reform

Democrats and Republicans, union and corporate leaders, religious leaders from many different denominations, many members of Congress and the last several American Presidents all agree: America's immigration laws are broken. There are about 12 million undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S., many thousands more enter this country illegally or without proper documents each year. Businesses and farms need the work of undocumented immigrants, yet current laws severely restrict the number of work visas that are made available to people seeking entry into the U.S. And, despite millions of dollars spent on border security, undocumented immigrants continue to enter the U.S. Yet, **all attempts to enact Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation have been stalled in Congress since the 1990s.**

This discussion guide is an excellent follow-up to your congregation's *We Are All Immigrants* discussion (see above, Part I, pages 6-14) and to the launching of your congregation's *Welcoming Long Island* campaign (see above, Part II, pages 16-19)

The discussion should last 1.5 to 2 hours. Again, a chalkboard, white board, or flip chart would be helpful in summarizing people's ideas. The guide can be used for a large group or a small group presentation. You will also need to duplicate and distribute pages from this Toolkit and the accompanying Educational Resources Packet as indicated below.

### **Here are some specific instructions to facilitate a discussion on Comprehensive Immigration Reform.**

1. Ask the group to brainstorm what they think is wrong with America's current immigration reform. Expect responses such as:
  - a. America's borders are too open, allowing anybody to enter the country illegally.
  - b. There are too many undocumented immigrants in the U.S.
  - c. Businesses encourage undocumented immigrants to come by hiring them at low wages.
  - d. Current immigration policies make it too difficult for immigrants to get a work visas so they can enter the country legally.
  - e. Current policies do not satisfy the economy's need for low-wage and seasonal workers.
  - f. U.S. immigration laws divide families and encourage an underground economy that makes immigrants scapegoats and targets for hatred and discrimination.
2. Distribute the Long Island Council of Churches "Statement on Immigration Reform", which can be found on page 17 of the Educational Resources Packet. Ask the group these questions about their faith and the issue of immigration reform:
  - a. Is immigration reform an issue that connects with the faith perspective of your congregation?
  - b. Using your faith as a lens, what principles would you want to see included in the reform of U.S. immigration laws? (List the principles on the chalkboard or flip chart. Try to get the group to reach consensus on the principles.)
  - c. Compare your principles with those of the Long Island Council of Churches. Where do your principles coincide or differ with this statement?

- d. (Facilitator's Note: Pages 18-22 of the Educational Resources Packet contain excerpts on immigration policies from many religious leaders and denominations. If your denomination is included, distribute that excerpt and ask the group to react. You might also want to discuss a statement another denomination.)
3. There have been many complex proposals of immigration reform. One specific, understandable bill is the DREAM Act that would allow undocumented students up to 6 years of legal residence. This bill has been stalled in Congress for years. Refer the group to the handout from pages 23-27 of the Educational Resources Packet, which explains the DREAM Act. Ask the group to respond to these questions:
- What educational burdens and barriers do undocumented children confront?
  - What are the goals of the DREAM Act?
  - How does the proposed act achieve these goals?
  - Discuss why you do or do not support the DREAM Act?
  - Using the lens of your faith, what arguments would you use to support the DREAM Act?
4. Immigration discussions often touch on this question: Why don't today's immigrants get a visa and enter the country legally like my ancestors did? Distribute "Why doesn't everyone just apply for a visa" on page 28 of the Educational Resources Packet. Ask the group to discuss:
- What are the current rules for obtaining a visa?
  - Why do so many immigrants by-pass the visa system?
  - What would you do to change the current visa system?
5. Despite broad support from many diverse segments of the American population, Comprehensive Immigration Reform bills have stalled in Congress since the 1990s. Distribute "Comprehensive Immigration Reform Talking Points" (page 29) of the Educational Resources Packet. Ask the group to review the talking points. Then pose the following questions for discussion:
- Eleven reasons are outlined in the Talking Points for why we need Comprehensive Immigration Reform. Again using the lens of your faith, which of these are the five most compelling reasons? (Facilitator's Note: These eleven points reflect the 2013 Senate that has been stalled in House of Representatives. A timetable of failed immigration reform can be found on pages 32-33 of the resource packet.)
  - An interfaith statement of immigration reform principles and the Long Island Jobs with Justice(JwJ) analysis of the stalled Senate bill can be found on pages 31 and 34-35 of the resource packet. Using these principles and the JwJ analysis, discuss why you support or oppose the various provisions of the Senate bill.
6. Distribute the advocacy tips on pages 26-27 below. Take a few minutes for the group to review these tips. If the Senate bill or some other sound Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill finally moves in Congress, which of these actions would they be willing to take on behalf of a sound immigration reform bill?
- Visit a member of Congress
  - Call a member of Congress
  - Collect letters or postcards, or organize an e-mail campaign to members of Congress
  - Circulate a petition
  - Write a letter to the editor
  - Participate in or organize a pro-immigrant rally



# Tips on Effective Advocacy

*"It is not yours alone to complete the work (of justice), but neither are you free to desist from it."* - Jewish teaching

The commitment required to be an effective advocate can be as short as a 1 minute phone call or as long as organizing a coalition visit to an elected official. Below are some tips on each of the most likely methods, organized from most effective to least effective.

After a visit, writing letters and making telephone calls are by far the most effective means of advocacy. Postcards, petitions, and emails (provided they include your name and address) have some impact, but considerably less. Online petitions can be good for raising awareness, but may be inaccurate and are typically not effective advocacy. Petitions forwarded by email are almost always outdated and/or wrong and should be avoided.

Please remember to identify yourself as a member of the religious community when communicating with Members of Congress and their staff. You'd better believe that they're hearing from conservative religious activists all the time. They need to hear from the Religious moderate and Left a whole lot more!

## Visiting Members of Congress

A face-to-face visit with an elected official, or their staff, is the most influential form of advocacy. This direct lobbying can be time-consuming, but it can also be fun, interesting, and rewarding. Elected officials, particularly on the federal level, have very demanding schedules.

Don't be disappointed if you have to meet with a staffperson—chances are good that they know more about the issue than the member anyway! Group visits are particularly effective, especially when different organizations or constituencies (such as religion, labor, and business) are represented. If you're determined to meet with your Member in person, a group visit increases your chances. For more information on how to prepare and conduct a visit, consult [Tips on Visiting Members of Congress](#) resource.

## Letters

Writing letters in your own words is an efficient and effective way to influence Members of Congress. Since congressional offices receive only a handful of letters on most issues, each carries real power. Identifying yourself as a person of faith makes your letter even more compelling! Please keep in mind that due to irradiation, it could take weeks, even months, for your letter to reach Congressional offices. Therefore, it's best to fax your letter rather than

using conventional mail. For more information on how to write the most effective letter, consult [Tips on Writing Members of Congress](#) resource.

### **Telephone Calls**

Although not as effective as letters, telephone calls are very important—especially when the respective legislation is being debated or voted upon. A constituent will rarely get through to a member of Congress on the telephone, but talking to or leaving a message for the relevant staff person definitely has an impact. For more information on how to prepare and conduct a call, consult the Immigration Call Script on page 28 below.

### **Petitions**

It is precisely because petitions are easy to gather and circulate that they are not particularly influential. Taking the extra time and effort to write a letter is considerably better. The exception is if the petition (containing a lot of signatures) will be delivered **in person** to the elected official.

### **Postcards**

Like petitions, due to their ease, postcards are not nearly as effective as letters in influencing legislators. However, like petitions, a large number of postcards hand---delivered to a member during a meeting can be very compelling.

### **Emails**

Although few if any emails actually reach the Members themselves, most are seen or addressed by the staff in some way. Keep in mind that a faxed or mailed letter is much more effective than an email. If you are going to email—which is certainly better than nothing—be sure to include your home mailing address in your message, as it will be given much more weight.

### **Internet Petitions**

Online petitions – whether via websites, emails, or social media sites --- can be good for raising awareness about a subject, but are typically not effective advocacy. Where internet petitions are often most useful is in identifying people interested in a common cause and building excitement.

If you do sign an internet petition, make sure that the petition asks for your full address. Elected officials do not pay attention to signatures without street addresses. Also, make sure that the petition identifies the target and when the petition will be delivered. There is no point in signing a petition to the president if the president's office is never going to receive it.

# Tips on Writing a Letter to the Editor

**A letter to the editor is a briefly stated opinion generally written in response to a current issue or a previously published article.**

## **Tips on Content of Letter**

- If a publication receives multiple letters on the same subject, the editor will choose one that says something in a new way or takes a unique angle.
- Focus your letter on one point on one subject. If you can, comment on a specific story in the paper, do so, mentioning the headline and date. Cite the specific reference and sum it up in a sentence to refresh readers' memories. Then point out facts that were left out, or refute or support facts that were stated.
- Be clear and concise. Shorter is better. Most papers want letters of 250 words or less. Magazines such as Time want even less.
- State your point early in the letter and support your point with facts.
- Know the audience of the publication. Technical information and long, multi-syllable words are often not appropriate for a general audience.
- If appropriate, mention your motivation or expertise in writing. For example, "As an American, I believe... and therefore x," or "I direct a social service agency. Here's what my experience has been ... That's why I believe y."

## **General Logistical Tips**

- Know and follow the policies and specifications of the publication to which you are submitting your letter. Except as noted, it is OK to send the same or similar letters to more than one publication. But don't submit the same or similar letters to multiple papers in the same media market.
- Always include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Include exactly one e-mail address in the To: field. Don't send to editors via Cc: or Bcc:. Send your letter in the body of the e-mail message, not as an attachment.
- Don't submit a letter to a paper that has already run another of your letters in the past month or two.
- Don't send specifically local letters to other localities.
- If your letter ran, get a print version of the letter with the front page banner of the paper's name.
- Send your letter to your legislators. Keep copies for future lobbying visits.
- Send a copy of the printed letter to the group that encouraged you to write or to the group that is working on your topic so that the organization can follow the bigger picture.

## How to Organize a Successful Rally

Oftentimes, legislative advocacy just doesn't seem like enough. While we recognize that lobbying is important, it is only one tactic in activism, and it's likely not going to make it in the papers. Rallies are an opportunity to creatively frame your issue and get your message out there for the world to see. A well-executed rally (or two) can often win you a campaign.

1. Pick a local issue that you support or oppose (i.e. the DREAM Act).
2. Put together a planning committee that will organize the protest. Will you have a sit-in, a rally, a march, a festival? Be creative! You want to organize a rally that you would *want* to attend. The more memorable, the better, as long as it relates directly to your issue.
3. Put together a list of press who usually cover immigration topics in your community. Be sure to send them a Media Advisory (to be sent 2 weeks beforehand) and a Press Release (to be sent the day before and the day of).
4. With the planning committee members, create a list of people you will invite. Do not just use social media and/or email lists! Invite community members who do not have internet access!
5. Pick a location that is 1) symbolic and 2) central.
6. Message your rally carefully. Remember that people usually do not care because of facts; they care because of emotion.
7. Identify diverse spokespersons and non-traditional allies to speak on the topic. Be sure you give the spokespersons talking points so they stay on message.
8. At the rally, be sure to:
  - a) Identify someone to deal with the media, armed with Press Packets.
  - b) Have a pre-printed schedule and a person who will enforce it
  - c) Be fun and energetic, stay on topic, don't let the opposition take over
  - d) Bring a sign in sheet!
  - e) Pass out a "Why We Rally" sheet to both attendees and passers-by.
9. Make sure the rally has a concrete demand!
10. Send rally attendees off with concrete next steps, as well as the organizers' contact information.

