



IMMIGRANT
JUSTICE
NETWORK

IMMIGRANT JUSTICE NETWORK
STRATEGIC PLAN
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2020-2024

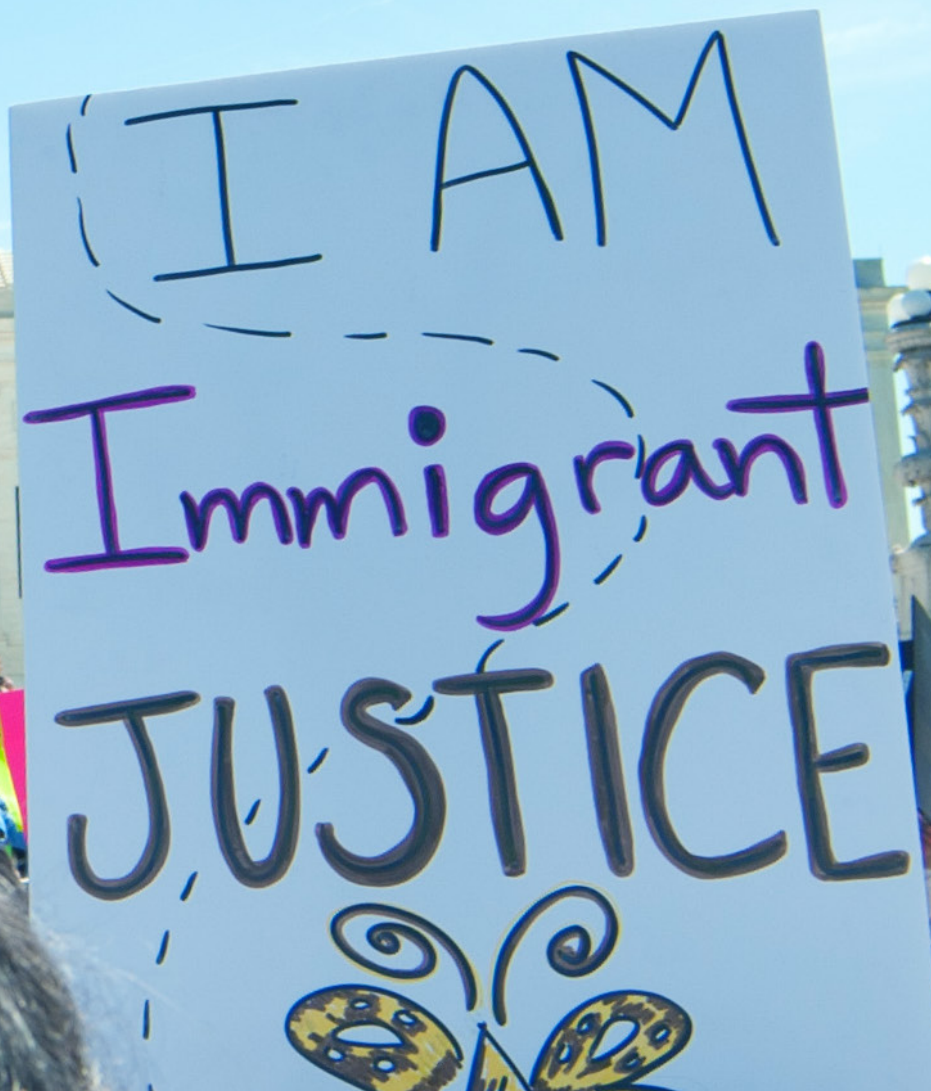


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Photo by José Centeno-Melendéz / Cele León Barrera

OUR MISSION

The Immigrant Justice Network (IJN) is a leading advocacy voice against the criminalization of immigrants in the United States. Grounded in racial justice values, we build power to defend the dignity of all immigrants.

OUR VISION

We fight for a world where our communities are thriving and free from policing, deportation and imprisonment.

OUR HISTORY



The IJN was formed in 2006 as a strategic collaboration between the Immigrant Defense Project (IDP), the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC), and the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild (NIPNLG). Since that time we have been fighting for justice for all, including those most targeted by the unjust and racially-biased immigration and criminal legal systems. We do this by working intersectionally to create and promote holistic, innovative solutions that address mass deportation and incarceration; building capacity of those directly impacted by the criminal and immigration systems and those on the frontlines defending their rights; and shifting narratives to embrace the human rights of all immigrants. Since our inception we have contributed our unique expertise on the intersection of the criminal legal and immigration systems to the movement; built and strengthened authentic alliances across movements; created innovative and effective strategies and wedges that test boundaries; led federal advocacy on the most difficult issues involving immigrants with criminal legal system contact; and shaped the narrative to ensure advocates do not leave immigrants with criminal records behind.

In 2019, Just Futures Law (JFL) joined IDP, ILRC and NIPNLG as a core member of IJN. Also

US immigration policies have resulted in immigrants facing higher rates of workplace exploitation, being subject to over-policing and racial profiling, and living with the fear of deportation.

in 2019, IJN expanded to form an Advisory Board of individuals directly impacted by the criminal and immigration systems who are social justice movement leaders to advise IJN on campaign and policy strategy. That same year, IJN along with our partners, launched the New Way Forward Campaign, a multi-faceted campaign that seeks to energize and build a base around inclusive policies that dismantle the architecture of criminalization, detention and deportation; shift the narrative and public discourse around criminalization; build support for these issues among legislators and advocates across movements; and advance federal policies and legislation that repeals harsh 1996 immigration laws

and decriminalizes migration. As a result of this campaign, The New Way Forward Act was introduced in Congress in 2019 – first of its kind legislation that addresses systemic injustices in the immigration system and promotes racial equity and fairness in our immigration system.

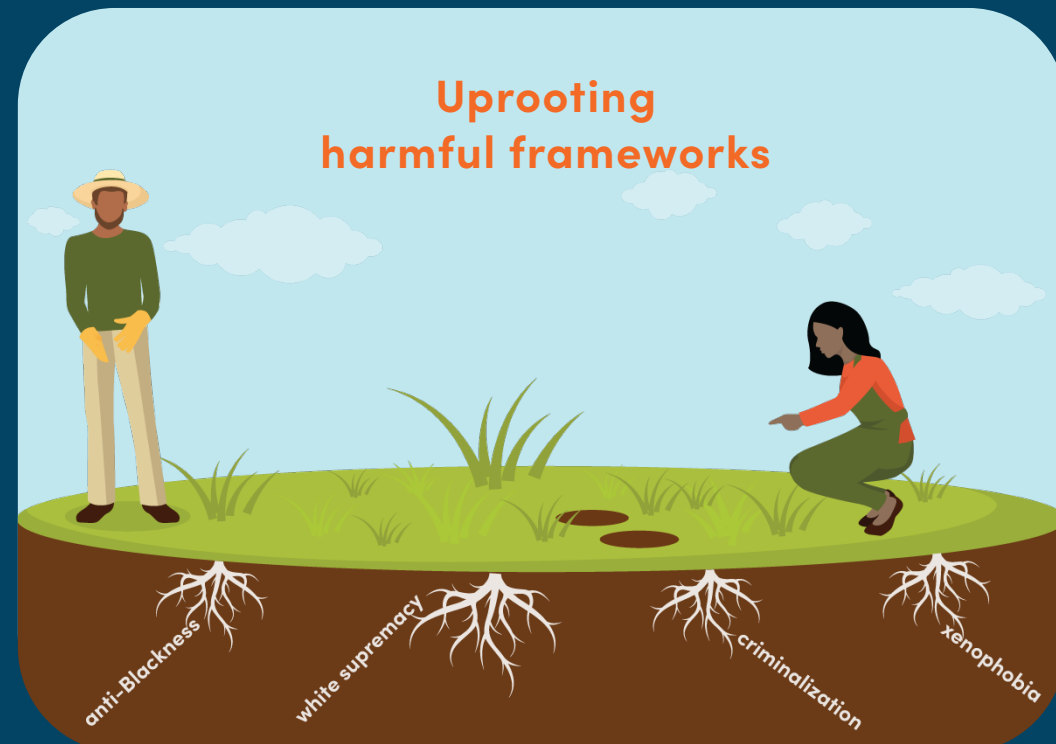
In 2021, IJN further expanded to include five new members to power our network: Families for Freedom, Grassroots Leadership, Puente Human Rights Movement, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) and the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN).

Today, IJN is staffed by a network coordinator, New Way Forward Campaign organizer and digital strategist. We continue our work partnering with community groups and directly impacted individuals who have navigated or survived the detention, deportation, or criminal legal system and helping to build long-lasting power for transformational change.



Photo by José Centeno-Melendéz / Cele León Barrera

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE



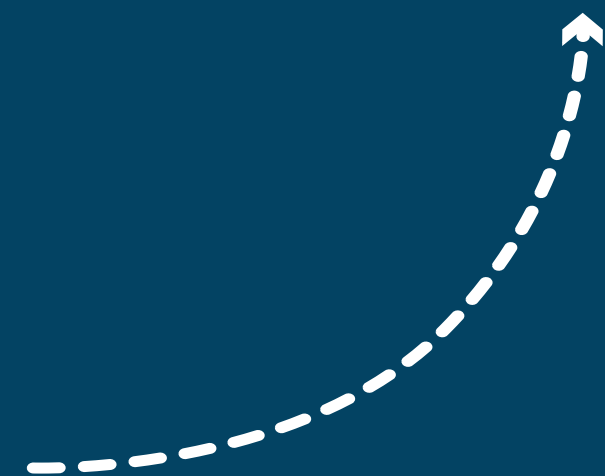
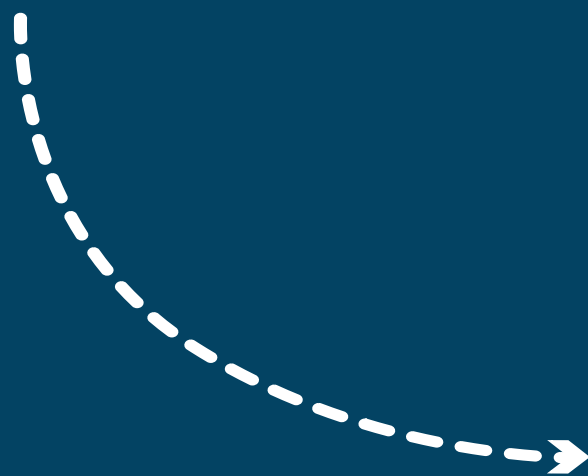
The Challenges We Face: White Supremacy and the Criminalization of Immigrants



The Need for a Bold Vision that Centers People's Humanity



Addressing Disconnected Movements & False Binaries



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE (CONTINUED)

The Challenges We Face: White Supremacy and the Criminalization of Immigrants

White supremacy and white nationalism are deeply embedded in American history and our immigration system is a by-product of these forces. White supremacy helped fuel the systematic genocide of indigenous communities to make way for white settlers and justify the enslavement of millions of Black people with the aim of enabling whites to amass wealth while also claiming moral and racial superiority by delegitimizing the humanity of Black people. After slavery ended, new forms of racial control, exploitation and disenfranchisement were created. From the Black Codes to segregation and mass incarceration, the criminal legal system has served as the ultimate enforcer of these discriminatory laws and policies.

Today, the criminal legal system has ballooned to incarcerate more than 2 million individuals in the United States. Today, the criminal legal system has ballooned to incarcerate more than 2 million individuals in the United States. Black men face a one-in-three chance of being imprisoned at some point in their lives. The odds for Latino men is one-in-six. In contrast, one in twenty-three white men will experience imprisonment in their lifetime.

The US immigration control system is also an essential part of the apparatus of racial control and exploitation. It began by discriminating against and excluding workers based on racial categories. The first naturalization laws applying to “free white persons,” Chinese Exclusion laws enacted from the late 1800s, Special Mexican Deportation Parties led by Border Patrol in the 1940s, Immigration and Naturalization Service’s (INS’s) rapid expulsion program targeting Haitians in the 1970s, and “special registration” programs and the Muslim Ban in the 21st century all stand as stark examples of how the US immigration system uses racial identity to exclude and target Black people and people of color.

These policies have resulted in the marginalization and demonization of immigrant communities and further cemented the association

between being American and whiteness. Moreover, these immigration policies have resulted in immigrants facing higher rates of workplace exploitation, racist-policing, and racial profiling, and living with the fear of deportation. IJN's theory of change acknowledges and focuses on the historic role that white supremacy plays in the oppression of immigrants and the US culture of incarceration.

Addressing Disconnected Movements & False Binaries

Struggles to reform the criminal legal system have often been grounded in racial justice, yet many reformers have historically viewed the criminalization of immigrants as a distinct issue, despite the forces and interests at play in both the immigration and criminal systems.

Historically, the immigrant rights movement has been quick to differentiate immigrants as outside of the criminal legal system, often arguing that, in contrast to those with criminal records, immigrants are good, hard-working and deserving of relief. At the same time, the immigrant rights movement has struggled to center the leadership of immigrants with criminal system contacts and has only recently begun to address anti-Blackness within movement spaces.

Often activists from both sectors are not in communication, let alone considering how to build power together or how their policy demands might impact other groups. However, this has begun to shift as a result of intentional and deep collaborative work.

IJN's theory of change recognizes the common goals between these two movements – reforming the criminal legal system and undoing the criminalization of immigrants – and seeks to build bridges for learning, collaboration, and leveraging power.

The Need for a Bold Vision that Centers People's Humanity

At the federal level, policy solutions are often crafted by lobbyists and policy experts who are not necessarily connected to individuals who have been criminalized and harmed by both the criminal legal and immigration systems. The exclusion of constituent voices prevents policy makers from addressing how systemic racism has undergirded both of these systems.

Moreover, policy experts have advanced the calculation that liberation for all individuals harmed by these racist systems is not feasible and so they seek solutions rooted in false binaries of people who are deserving/non-deserving, violent/non-violent, economic contributors/system dependent. These binary frameworks are ultimately rooted in anti-Blackness and harm individuals who have been criminalized, immigrants seeking relief from deportation, and IJN's constituents – those that are simultaneously harmed by both of these systems. The history of the immigrant rights movement teaches us that these calculations and false binaries have failed to achieve significant victories and have instead fractured the movement. In addition, the trope of the good hard-working immigrant who deserves the empathy of policy makers has actually harmed all of us within immigrant communities and divided us from other fights for social justice. Shifting the balance of power so that federal policy solutions are rooted in inclusiveness and not compromises requires us to unify our agendas and advocacy more deeply. There is still a great need to forge dialogue, develop a shared vision and create mechanisms of accountability to ensure directly impacted immigrants are centered within the movement and harmful frameworks are rejected.

IJN's theory of change resists the forces that drive a wedge between immigrant communities and broader communities of color that are impacted by the criminal legal system. Neither movement is served by dividing our power or sacrificing one for the advancement of another.

THE WAY FORWARD



IJN seeks to advance a transformative policymaking paradigm that centers the experiences and leadership of immigrants who have had contact with the criminal legal system. By doing so, we can open up the imagination of our allies and policymakers to dream of solutions that are rooted in humanity and liberation, that reject the false dichotomies between good (deserving) and disposable (undeserving). Because our constituency understands most clearly and tangibly how the criminal legal system and immigration system work and intersect, their powerful voices are poised to challenge the prevailing model of policy solutions devised by lobbyists and power brokers.

The Immigrant Justice Network creates a leadership space for individuals directly impacted by the criminal legal and immigration systems who have been left out of federal policy solutions. By doing so

we intend to change the dominant narrative of good versus bad to one of humanity and liberation and to develop policy solutions that reject the commonly held belief that rights for some come at the cost of others, namely people who have been criminalized. Instead the solutions and narrative will be rooted in the vision that relief for all Black people and people of color – including immigrants who have been criminalized – are necessary steps to ending the disease of white supremacy.

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IJN will seek to close a key intersectional gap in the criminal justice and immigrant rights movements. Through our work the criminal justice sector will begin to advance solutions that allow all individuals – regardless of immigration status – to benefit from policies that begin to dismantle policing, prosecution and incarceration. Similarly, immigration activists will begin to imagine solutions that acknowledge the racism in the criminal legal and immigration systems and fashion solutions that do not further dehumanize individuals who have been criminalized.

The Strategic Pillars of our work include:



Forging a Common Agenda

Working with diverse groups, we will develop a common agenda for action that addresses criminalization of Black people, immigrants and people of color in this country.



Building a Broad-based Coalition to Win, Led by Those Most Impacted

At the core of our work, we seek to build an authentic, intersectional policy coalition that centers the leadership of immigrants who have been criminalized in the United States, and allies in the immigrant rights and criminal justice movements. We will continue to convene a leadership space for network members and increase re-granting to these members to ensure capacity and sustainability for the network.



Changing the Cultural Narrative

Develop a culture shift campaign that educates the public on the criminalization of immigrants, brings attention to more humane policy solutions and begins to shift public opinion.



Providing Capacity Building to Help Scale-up Advocacy Efforts

Provide analysis, tools and capacity building resources, and leadership development support to grassroots organizations so they are more fully engaged in winning federal policy campaigns.

Through these efforts we will shift the established model for federal policy-making and win solutions that humanize and liberate all immigrants, regardless of contact with the criminal legal system. We fight for the rights of all immigrants and seek to end the senseless division of “good versus bad” immigrants, which are ultimately rooted in white supremacy, xenophobia and anti-blackness. We believe that such scapegoating harms all of us and perpetuates discriminatory policing, mass incarceration and unjust deportation that tears apart families and communities.



I am a community organizer.
I'm more than an immigrant with a
conviction on Trump's target list.

I'm here to tell Congress who I really am

#DefundHate & Oppose #PoisonBills

ImmigrantJusticeNetwork.org



Photo by Jocelyn Augustino

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS FOR 2020-2024

Policy Advocacy

Decriminalizing immigrants is the north star of the IJN's policy agenda. In our highly polarized and anti-immigrant political climate, this means taking down narratives that criminalize immigrants. It means countering immigration laws and relief that leave out people with criminal convictions. And it means building bridges between immigration and criminal justice advocates, movements that often work in silos. To achieve positive policy reforms and build the powerful voice of directly impacted individuals, IJN leads the New Way Forward Campaign. Our upcoming policy goals include:

- Disentangling the criminal and immigration legal systems by reducing the impact of criminal bars that prevent immigrants with criminal convictions from gaining legal status and stability for them and their families.
- Shifting immigration policy conversations to center directly impacted people.
- Emphasizing cross-movement partnerships and campaigns. We believe that the struggle for immigrant rights and the struggle for racial justice can walk the same path together, and thereby create more lasting change for all.
- Normalizing the practice of introducing anti-criminalization bills and amendments on the Hill to change the starting point for legislative remedies to immigration.

Research & Thought Leadership

Broad-based thought leadership and robust and targeted research will bolster IJN's ability to advance policy solutions. Towards that aim, IJN will:

- Conduct field scans and other research that yield issue briefs to document the negative impact of current criminal-legal policies and to lift up affirmative approaches to immigration that do not depend on deportation and incarceration.
- Develop working groups of legal organizations and advocates to develop new, innovative strategies to advance our agenda.



Network Development to Build a Healthy, Sustainable and Impactful Network

In order to strengthen IJN's expertise, impact and credibility, we will continue to nurture our network of core members, grassroots members, directly impacted movement leaders and other allies. IJN will:

- Continue providing re-grants to network members and honoraria to Advisory Board members to build their leadership voice and ensure capacity and sustainability.
- Increase network staffing and budget to achieve our strategic planning impact goals and execute a long-term fundraising plan.
- Conduct annual evaluations of the network.

Strategic Communications to Support Culture Change

As a developing network, IJN's communications plans are focused simultaneously in two directions. Externally we will inform, educate, and influence the movement, policy makers and public officials, and the public. Internally we will build our capacity as thought leaders. IJN will:

- Create and disseminate broadly new infographics and human stories to call out the abuses and inhumane treatment of the current criminal-legal system while lifting up accompanying policy change proposals.

- Disseminate a monthly e-newsletter to the field that shares emerging knowledge and new tools for criminal-legal advocates and activists.
- Conduct teach-ins and training on criminal-immigration issues to expand the knowledge of other groups engaged in efforts to shift public opinion.
- Develop a strategic communications work plan including more robust use of social media, blogs, e-zines, and op-eds to disseminate our work as thought-leaders.
- Strengthen IJN's branding in order to put forth a cohesive, consistent identity that raises the visibility of our work.
- Conduct or utilize polling and other opinion research to improve framing and messaging of the issues.



OUR INTENDED IMPACT

By 2024, IJN will have made significant strides toward shifting the established model of federal policy making to ensure that policy solutions are centered on the experiences of individuals directly harmed by the criminal legal and immigration systems and grounded in liberation and racial justice. Using IJN's thought leadership, narrative change efforts, policy advocacy and intersectional movement building, we will change the norm of policy making that categorizes certain classes of immigrants as disposable because of their contact with the criminal legal system. This includes:



- Winning policy solutions that begin to dismantle the criminalization of immigrants and defeating policies that further entrench white supremacy by treating immigrants who have been criminalized, have contact with the criminal legal system or criminal convictions as disposable.
- Growing IJN as a leadership space for individuals directly harmed by the immigration and criminal legal system to build an impactful voice that shifts the norm for federal policy to demand solutions grounded in liberation.
- Cementing relationships and developing a shared intersectional analysis with federal criminal justice reform advocates to encourage criminal legal system reform solutions that benefit immigrants.
- Supporting Black-led advocates who are actively rooting out anti-Blackness in federal policy spaces and promoting inclusive policies.
- Creating a space for individuals who are directly impacted by the criminal legal and immigration system to share their stories, promote their solutions and build their identity as a powerful political voice.
- Dismantling the prevailing narrative that immigrants who have been criminalized are disposable and are undeserving of policy solutions.
- Supporting intersectional movement building to promote greater alignment between the criminal justice and immigrant rights sectors.

ABOUT OUR PLANNING PROCESS

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- Subhash Kateel, Alliance for Safety and Justice
- Lisa Moore, National Domestic Workers Alliance
- Carlos Saavedra, Ayni Institute

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HUMAN RIGHTS ARE NOT OPTIONAL



Love has no Borders
Freedom!

I WAS JUST A VOTER
YOU MADE ME AN ACTIVIST

MORE LOVE

END FAMILY SEPARATION &
CRIMINALIZATION OF IMMIGRANTS!

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