



Ideas & Tools for Community Change

IMMIGRANT JUSTICE IS RACIAL JUSTICE

A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

WELCOME & SETTING THE STAGE (10 MINUTES)

Immigration has become an increasingly divisive issue in the United States. Some may view immigration rates as a crisis. In reality, immigrants only make up 12-13% of the population, which is similar to previous times in history. Often, immigrants are talked about as taking jobs from other Americans, highlighted as the real perpetrators of crime and many of the other issues we face as a society. Discrimination against immigrants often lines up with racial discrimination, and immigrants of color face the harshest enforcement policies and deportation and detention practices. How can we start to talk about this issue in our communities? How can we address structural racism in our immigration history and today? How can we work towards treating all people with dignity and respect, in order to strengthen our communities?

GROUP AGREEMENTS (15 MINUTES)

To help the conversation go well, let's agree about how we are going to talk together. We can use the following list to start us thinking about our own group agreements.

- Be respectful.
- Everyone gets a chance to talk.
- One person speaks at a time. Speak for yourself, not for others.
- Share the airtime: if you tend to speak a lot, listen more; if you tend to listen more, try sharing your thoughts.
- If you are offended or upset, say so and say why.
- What's said here, stays here; what's learned here, leaves here.

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER (25 MINUTES)

Answer questions in pairs - switch for each new question (4 minutes for each question).

Facilitators model each question before participants answer.

1. Talk for a few minutes about your racial or ethnic background.
2. What's your connection to this land, in the context of immigration? (While some of us are immigrants, some were brought here as enslaved peoples, and some are Native to this land.)
3. Tell a story or give an example of how your background and experiences have affected your ideas about immigration.
4. How do you think about immigration differently than your parents or grandparents did?

Large group: report out (5 minutes)

- What struck you about these stories?
- How do they compare to the narratives we see in the media?

RACIST HISTORY OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION (10 MINUTES)

Watch this video with the group (<http://bit.ly/2V1Tu0o>). Afterwards, ask people to pair up and discuss these two questions

- What's your reaction to the video?
- Was there anything that surprised you?
- What did you learn?

THE MESSAGES WE HEAR (45 MINUTES)

Divide the group into smaller groups of 8-12 people for a discussion about the messages we hear about immigrants. Ask for a volunteer facilitator from each small group. This person will help make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. (35 minutes)

Ask the groups to discuss this question: When you hear the term “immigrant”, what images and stories come to mind for you? Where have you seen/heard these images and stories?

Then give each small group one of these messages to discuss:

- “Immigrants are overrunning our country.”
- “Why don’t they just wait in line?”
- “Immigrants take jobs from U.S. citizens.”
- “Undocumented immigrants don’t pay taxes.”

Ask the groups to answer these questions after looking at the messages:

- After hearing this message, what images and stories come to mind for you?
- Where have you heard this particular message?
- What underlying assumptions or biases relate to this message?

Next Steps:

- What did you learn from participating in this conversation?
- What actions would you like to take individually or as a community, related to immigrant justice?

Large Group: Report out (10 minutes)

A few people report out from each group - something you learned, something that changed your perspective or an action you plan to take.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

The Real Crime (<https://vimeo.com/152590206>)

Watch this video with the group. This video connects structural racism, criminalization and the immigration system. Close with a statement about how you hope this will inspire action after people leave. If there’s time, you can give them examples of actions they can take in their community. There might be particular immigration case people are working on in your community, or a project to support immigrants that you’d like to highlight.

Some information for this guide was pulled from Immigrant Justice Curriculum by the Catalyst Project.

Resources:

- An infographic about the history of immigration and detention: <http://bit.ly/2Gs2WC0>
- A diagram about the process of getting legal immigrant status: <http://bit.ly/2VPbwjo>

Useful terms:

- YWCA Social Justice Glossary: <http://bit.ly/2GsDQ5Z>
- Freedom for Immigrants Terminology: <https://www.freedomforimmigrants.org/terminology>

Written by Brendan Lounsbury and Malana Rogers-Bursen