



# national network for immigrant and refugee rights

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## *National Immigration Policy:*

### **NNIRR's Vision & Principles for the Challenges and Hopes for 2009 and Beyond**

As the country enters the last stretch before the November 2008 Presidential elections, advocates, organizers, and community leaders from across the political spectrum are promoting their issues and developing strategies on post-election campaigns. The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) believes that the election of a new president will bring both perils and opportunities to the immigrant rights and social justice movements for advancing an inclusive human rights agenda.

**Promoting and defending the rights of immigrants will be key to rolling back the past eight years of draconian laws, policies and measures that have had a disproportionate impact on immigrants, working people and communities of color.** A new presidential administration must turn away from the repressive and mean-spirited policies and practices that are being played out against immigrant workers, families and communities, even as hundreds of thousands of people turn to the elections seeking political change.

**In the remaining weeks before the November elections, the immigrant rights movement must continue to raise its voice for fairness and justice for all immigrants.** To turn things around and create a respite from the repressive policies, raids and operations, NNIRR believes that immigration reform, policies and other related measures must be de-linked from the politics of national security and a corporate-driven economic agenda. We should seek an immediate end to the immigration raids, detentions and deportations, and demand that due process rights be restored. Moreover, we must insist on fair and just immigration reforms that ensure human rights and labor protections for all immigrants.

Framing the immigration debate around the "war on terror" manipulates public fear and produces heavy-handed, misguided and costly enforcement policies and practices that are inhumane and enable further exploitation of migrant labor. **Immigration reform proposals should be informed by the following values and principles:**

- **A legalization program that offers opportunities to regularize the status for all undocumented immigrants, protects rights and ends deportations.** We oppose the type of "tiered" legalization program in the last congressional session's compromise bill that set onerous hurdles, drastically limiting the number of undocumented immigrants who could actually legalize and subject hundreds of thousands of immigrants and their children to a precarious existence without guarantee of permanent residency at the end of a lengthy conditional process.
- **Maintain and uphold family reunification as a core principle of U.S. immigration policy.** Expand legal immigration opportunities, immediately process and resolve the backlog of currently-eligible visa applications as well as the harsh obstacles to immigrating, including the "3 and 10 year bars," unfair and burdensome political asylum procedures, and high income requirements for immigrant sponsors.

- **Restore and preserve due process rights, to ensure equality before the law for all persons, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.** This means protecting and expanding the civil and labor rights of all immigrants and community-based oversight and accountability of the Department of Homeland Security for immigration law enforcement and services.
- **End the criminalization of immigrants, including:**
  - Repeal employer sanctions, which have led to employment verification requirements and the criminalization of immigrant workers. End the electronic worker verification program and the sending of SSA no-match letters to employers.
  - End criminal prosecutions for immigration-related conduct such as unlawful entry, driving without a license, or so-called “identity theft.”
  - End immigration raids and collaboration with local, county and state police as well as other government agencies.
  - End and roll back border militarization policies, practices, measures and laws, including the use of high technological surveillance.
  - End indefinite or mandatory detention.
  - End inhumane conditions and treatment of detainees in detention facilities, immigration prisons and DHS-contracted facilities.
- **Oppose guestworker programs in their various forms,** whether they are tied to legalization for undocumented immigrants already living and working here, or as a means for “managing future flows” of immigrants into the United States, especially as components of international trade partnership agreements.
- **Prioritize funding for immigration services** to clear the backlog of pending applications for family reunification visas, green cards, citizenship and services for immigrant integration.
- **Strengthen and ensure enforcement of labor law protections for all workers, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.**
- **Ensure access and support for all public services and benefits including education, health care, and drivers’ licenses.**
- **Recognize the right of mobility and return for all displaced peoples, refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked persons and migrants** to return voluntarily to their homes in dignity and safety. Displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable, and gender-based violence should be a recognized basis for refugee status. U.S. policies should be in full compliance with the UN Conventions and Protocols related to the status of refugees and the right to asylum.
- **Shift away from the current trend of bilateral and multilateral economic partnership agreements** that only exacerbate the displacement of communities and forced migration. International trade, economic and other foreign policies should instead support sustainable development programs and fair trade that builds viable and healthy communities.
- **Ratify and actively enforce the UN Convention for the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families,** the international standard of human rights protections for all migrants.