



national network for immigrant and refugee rights

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An Open Letter to President Barack Obama On the Eve of His Announcement of Executive Action on Immigration

Nov. 20, 2014

Dear President Obama:

We write to support use of your executive powers to bring relief from deportation to millions of immigrants and their families, and to call upon you to use this opportunity to boldly address critical immigration concerns.

When you took office in 2009, thousands of organizations and individuals joined us to urge that you do all that you could—including administrative action—to “ensure the human rights, safety and well-being of immigrant communities.” In the absence of sweeping immigration reform, we again call upon you to commit to just and humane immigration policy. Not only can your executive action positively impact the health and safety of millions of immigrants living in this country, but you can give momentum towards a durable legislative solution to a seriously flawed immigration system.

We urge you use your executive powers to:

- Advance a broad program of relief from deportation for the greatest number of undocumented immigrants, many of whom have resided in the U.S. for many years, who have worked and raised families here, including parents of DACA recipients and of U.S. citizen children; ensure work authorizations, access to social programs such as health care, as well as a path to permanent immigration status;
- Expedite adjustments to our immigration system to give permanent resident visas to family members who have been waiting in line, and provide adequate resources to facilitate the program; this is a particular concern for Haitian and Filipino families, among others;
- Ensure inclusive refugee protection for the tens of thousands of Central American children and their families who have fled that region due to widespread violence;
- End discriminatory and punitive programs such as Secure Communities and 287g, which would also negatively impact enrollment of immigrants in any program for even temporary relief;
- Suspend detentions and deportations, including Operation Streamline, and ensure access to due process; a safe and trusting environment is needed to maximize the benefits of an administrative relief program.

We are especially concerned about increasing and focusing enforcement operations at the border. Present border enforcement policies have resulted in thousands of migrant deaths, have negatively affected border communities, and have fostered harsh and deadly practices by border agents. *We urge you not to increase border enforcement* and to instead take steps to ensure human rights standards and protections for all at the border, and to prioritize enforcement accountability and human security.

We are all too aware of the global complexities of migration, and of the need to address its “root causes”. As part of the international community, we have called upon all governments and international agencies and institutions to ensure that the human rights of migrants are central to economic, political and social deliberations. We will continue to look towards long-term strategies, including people and nature-centered development, so that migration takes place more “by choice” and not out of necessity.

We urge immediate action and implementation to alleviate the anxieties, pain and suffering in immigrant communities. We will certainly continue our efforts to promote and enact a more fair and just immigration policy.

Sincerely,

Eduardo Canales, Chairperson, NNIRR Board of Directors

Catherine Tactaquin, NNIRR Executive Director