



## NNIRR'S FIRST 30 YEARS: TEARING DOWN WALLS, LIFTING UP JUSTICE

We share here a few highlights from our 30 years in building the movement for migrant rights in the U.S. and globally. We begin with our founding in 1986--phenomenal in itself as NNIRR emerged from a largely voluntary, collaborative organizing process among diverse groups to give critical voice to the immigration reform debate.

### CHALLENGING BAD POLICIES, ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, AND REFRAMING THE DEBATE

NNIRR has been a consistent voice for human rights, for the defense of the rights of migrants and refugees, regardless of status. We have sought to provide thoughtful and strategic analysis, reliable research, and organizing opportunities for unifying the movement on rights-based values. For example:

- We sought the repeal of employer sanctions, included in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act; we warned that employer sanctions heightened discrimination and criminalized immigrant workers.
- In our 1990 national conference, "Immigrant Rights: A Civil Rights Issue for the 90's", we pushed for "intersectional" framing across race-gender-class-border lines.
- We took on the greening of hate, working with environmental allies to push back on rightwing attempts to blame immigrants for environmental degradation.
- In the mid-90's, we partnered with the American Friends Service Committee to "reframe the immigration debate", calling attention to the roles of race and globalization in the face of state and federal-level anti-immigrant bills and policies.
- We fought against immigration raids, forming the National INS Raids Task Force and in 1998 published Portrait of Injustice: The Impact of Immigration Raids on Families, Workers and Communities. Six months later, the INS drew back on its practice of massive workplace raids.
- We convened HURRICANE--the Human Rights Immigrant Community Action Network in 2007, pioneering community-based documentation, including an accessible online abuse documentation program and engaging communities to identify rights abuses and organize for resolutions and remedies.

- Our Open Letter to President Obama, spelled out proposals for fair and just immigration policies and garnered some 4,000 endorsements on the eve of Obama's 2009 inauguration.
- We have advocated for "fair, just and humane" immigration reform; and critiqued comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) proposals that were badly compromised, increased enforcement and undermined fair legalization. We have continued to challenge detentions, deportations, and border enforcement.
- In 2015 we initiated Just Borders, to spotlight outrageous rights abuses, migrant deaths and the fallacy of deterrent immigration policies, and build nationwide support for rights at borders.

### ORGANIZING STRATEGIC SPACES TO BUILD UNITY AND CAPACITY

We have supported numerous convenings for strategic and frank discussions, shared information and analysis, and collaboration, including:

- In 2000, nationwide consultations to renew the call for legalization (although potential legislative initiatives failed to move forward after the 9/11 attacks in 2001).
- A national gathering of immigrant rights community activists to share lessons, analysis and commitments to strengthen the key work of grassroots organizing.
- A collaborative effort in California in 2004 to organize Mobilize the Immigrant Vote (MIV), modeling strategic movement-building with diverse immigrant community capacity-building and engagement in civic participation.
- A strategy meeting at the Highlander Center in Tennessee in 2005 on the growth and danger of racist, rightwing anti-immigrant activity.
- The National Emergency Border Delegation in June 2006, to call attention migrant deaths and a humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border due to heightened border enforcement.
- Gatherings in four regions in 2011 to address the intersection of LGBTQ and immigrant rights.

## BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT RIGHTS MOVEMENT

In 1994, NNIRR helped to found the International Migrants Rights Watch Committee, the first global network for migrant rights advocacy, and we are proud of our continued efforts with U.S. and global partners for the human rights of migrants and for a stronger international movement.

We have organized U.S. delegations and convened in numerous spaces, including UN world conferences and summits, the World Social Forum, the intergovernmental Global Forum on Migration and Development, and many other international initiatives. We've published several key reports, including: *Hands that Shape the World* (2000), describing conditions of immigrant and refugee women in the U.S. 5 years after the UN's women's conference in Beijing; *From the Borderline to the Colorline* (2001), on anti-immigrant racism, and *A World on the Move* (2002), were published in conjunction with the UN World Conference Against Racism and Xenophobia in South Africa.

Along the way, we have helped build the Global Coalition on Migration, the Women in Migration Network, as well as the People's Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights (PGA) that organizes independently alongside official governmental events.

Every year we organize for International Migrants Day (December 18) and advocate support for the UN Migrant Workers Convention. We recently contributed to the development of new UN principles and guidelines for human rights at international borders, and we are now immersed with global partners to center human rights in UN deliberations to address the "migration crisis".

## PROVIDING TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR THE MOVEMENT

NNIRR has produced key advocacy and capacity building tools:

- Network News – NNIRR's signature newsletter, published for some 20 years, provided updates, sharp analysis and inspiring organizing profiles for a growing immigrant rights movement.

- *Uprooted: Refugees of the Global Economy*, released in 2001, a key video raising awareness about the roots of current migration in globalization.
- *Human Rights and Human Security at Risk* in 2003 condemned the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the slew of anti-immigrant bills and practices following 9/11.
- *BRIDGE—Building a Race and Immigration Dialogue in the Global Era*, our popular education resource published in 2004, provided key tools to raise awareness and challenge racism and xenophobia, sexism, homophobia and more.
- The Immigrant and Refugee Rights Training Institute (IRRTI) conducted in areas around the country, used BRIDGE to "train trainers", expanding community-based learning, capacity-building and empowerment.
- *HURRICANE* reports exposed human rights abuses against immigrants and refugees, and provided critical analyses and recommendations on the evolution of the U.S. immigration enforcement regime:
  - *Over-Raided, Under Siege: U.S. Immigration Laws and Enforcement Destroy the Rights of Immigrants*, 2008
  - *Guilty by Immigration Status*, 2009
  - *Injustice for All: The Rise of the U.S. Immigration Policing Regime*, 2011
- *Excluded and Exploited: The New Regime of Trade, Managed Migration and Repression* shed light on the problematic global framework on migration, 2010.

Today, our website (nnirr.org), Facebook pages and Twitter feed are broad and accessible vehicles to share information, connect our members and movement, and support organizing and mobilization.

In 2016, NNIRR's story continues...national elections, pushing back on detentions and deportations, revisiting the potential for immigration reforms, stepping into the international arena to advance migrant rights—*tearing down walls and lifting up justice, in the U.S. and around the world.*