



# Turning the Tide on Immigration Enforcement

## Women and Children's Advocacy Day

### Report and Update

Thank you all for helping to make the **Turning the Tide on Immigration Enforcement Women and Children's Advocacy Day** such an overwhelming success! On Thursday, July 15<sup>th</sup> we came together to lift up the voices of Arizona's children whose lives and communities have been affected by immigration enforcement policies such as Arizona's SB 1070, and ICE Access programs like Secure Communities, and 287(g). We held a dynamic press conference; met with over 25 legislators, and witnessed the testimonies of 11 year-old Mathew "Mateo" Perea, 12 year-old Heidi Ruby Portugal, Kavitha Sreeharsha, staff attorney for Legal Momentum and Carola Suarez-Orozco Ph.D, Professor of Applied Psychology and representative of the American Psychological Association.

### **The Press Conference**

We began the day with a press conference at 10am at the House Triangle. Ai-jen Poo of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, introduced the over 30 co-sponsoring women's and children's advocacy organizations, with our common goal of turning the tide on immigration enforcement. U.S. Representative Jared Polis opened the press conference by calling on his colleagues to hear the stories of the women and children. Sylvia Herrera of the Puente Movement in Arizona spoke of the abuses that families have endured. "I have here the letters from children who have been terrorized by ICE agents," she emphasized, "we are asking Obama to take action and stop SB 1070 from going into effect."

### **Cosponsors**

- 9to5 National Association of Working Women
- AFL-CIO
- Break the Chain Campaign, Institute for Policy Studies
- Casa de Maryland
- Casa Latina
- Center for Community Change
- Central American Resource Center of Washington, DC
- Centro de Legalizacion/American Dream Community Agency
- Cities for Progress, Institute for Policy Studies
- Coalition on Human Needs
- CODEPINK
- CLASP
- DC Jobs for Justice
- DC Latino Caucus
- Family Values @ Work Consortium
- First Focus Campaign for Children
- Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights
- Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
- Jobs with Justice
- Legal Aide Justice Center

Mateo and Heidi, the two children from Arizona who testified at the hearing later in the afternoon also addressed the press. Heidi described not only the pain and fear she experienced after the notorious Sheriff Arpaio detained her mother, but also the overwhelming responsibility of having to care for her three younger siblings while her mother was detained. She remembered wondering, “What was going to happen to them? And what about my little brother that my mom was breast-feeding?” Mateo added, “I am 11 years old and . . . I am always worried when my family leaves the house that something might happen to them. I think about it when my dad goes to work that he might not come back or when I go to school that there might not be someone to pick me up when I get out.” He then called on Congress “to take care of mothers, brothers, and sisters” and to stop SB 1070.

Karen Nussbaum, Assistant to the President and former director of the AFL-CIO’s working women’s department, said she was honored to stand with the “brave children of Arizona” and commended them for “bringing their stories out of the shadows and into the halls of Congress.” She described the situation of immigrants who are exploited by employers and afraid to speak up for fear of retribution by immigration officials. “Arizona makes a bad situation worse,” explained Nussbaum while also acknowledging the important range of constituencies coming together that day to protect children.

Maria, an immigrant from El Salvador who now lives in Maryland, described her experience of calling the police for help because of domestic violence and rather than receiving protection, she was arrested on suspicion of selling phone cards. “They held me for five days and turned me over to ICE,” described Maria, “I thought I would never see my children or my husband again. Now I have a tracking device and a deportation order.



The press conference ended with Nadia Marin-Molina of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network who explained, “ICE access policies have led to workplace abuse, families being torn apart, and children being traumatized...ICE undermines public safety,” and called on the Federal Government to pass the Help Separated Children Act, exert more control over immigration policies, and “end all programs that combine local law enforcement with Immigration and Customs Enforcement.”

- Legal Momentum
- MomsRising
- National Coalition for Immigrant Women’s Rights
- National Council of Women’s Organizations
- National Day Laborer Organizing Network
- National Domestic Worker Alliance
- National Employment Law Project
- National Immigration Law Center
- National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
- National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
- New Labor
- Puente Movement, Arizona
- Pushback Network
- Right to the City Alliance
- Tenants and Workers United
- Unitarian Universalists Association of Congregations
- Wider Opportunities for Women
- Wind of the Spirit

## The Legislative Visits

After the press conference the delegates, cosponsors, and other supporters split into teams to meet with twenty-five different legislators. Groups urged legislators to support the HELP Separated Children Act and send a strong message to President Obama to end ICE access programs. Many of the groups found interest and support from the legislators they met with while others had important conversations and were able to provide vital information about the human impact of these policies for legislators who were less sure where they stood or had questions.

## Hearing

Delegates from across the country, supporters from a range of coalitions, and staffers from the offices of Congressman Lincoln Davis, Congresswoman Linda Sanchez, and Representative Ruben Hinojosa packed a Rayburn hearing room. Also present were a number of children from New Jersey, many of whom had prepared their own statements about the effects of immigration enforcement in their lives. Heidi Ruby Portugal; Mateo Perea; Kavitha Sreeharsha, staff attorney for LegalMomentum; and Carola Suarez-Orozco Ph.D, Professor of Applied Psychology all testified before Congressman and honorary chair of the hearing, Raul Grijalva; Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee; Representative Gwen Moore; Representative Grace Napolitano; Representative Jared Polis; and Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey.



Representative Grace Napolitano shared her own experience of growing up half-Mexican and being stopped by immigration enforcement, having to carry her birth certificate with her as a

### HELP Separated Children Act

- Keeps state and local authorities in the know. It's the state schools and child welfare agencies that address the aftermath of immigration enforcement actions.
- Effectively identifies at-risk kids. This bill permits child welfare agencies and local NGOs to screen detainees to identify parents and locate at-risk children.
- Allows parents to arrange for care of their children.
- Protects kids during interrogations. Kids should not be forced to witness their parents' interrogations or translate for ICE agents.
- Allows parents to participate in family court proceedings – and alert authorities to abuse.
- Protects the best interests of children. This bill requires ICE to consider the best interests of children in detention, release, and transfer decisions affecting their parents.



child. Congresswoman Woolsey discussed how in her district in 2007 and 2008 immigration enforcement was carried out against parents who were taking their children to the school bus; even after complaints and hearings, the ICE raids on parents did not end.

Congressman Grijalva shared lessons his parents taught him on becoming a successful American: “do good in school, respect the police, respect your teacher and everything will be ok and to a certain extent, they were absolutely right. And now we have ruined that balance for so many children.”

Dr. Suarez-Orozco testified about the growing population of children whose parents are immigrants, 30% by 2030, and the negative effects of children who experience the trauma of immigrant enforcement and separation from their parents, “including anxiety, frequent crying, changes in eating, changes in sleeping patterns, withdrawal, and anger...the children also experience dramatic increases in housing instability and food insecurity, both basic dimensions of well being.” She also touched on the detrimental affects of racial profiling and how they have cognitive, behavioral, and emotional effects on children, documented or otherwise, who are constantly made to feel that they are outsiders in their own home. Dr. Suarez-Orozco reinforced the American Psychological Association’s position that Congress should discourage the involuntary separation of children from their parents.

My little baby brother, I had to teach him to drink the canned milk because he was used to my mom breast-feeding him. For my little brother Miguel, I was getting him ready to enter kindergarten ...making sure he was eating because he was losing his appetite. He got really sick from asthma and had to be put on his inhaler every three to four hours. My sister Maria, her grades were dropping really fast.... I had to take her to school really early, around 5:45am on the bike. At that time it was really cold.

-Heidi Ruby Portugal 12 years old, describing her responsibilities after her mother was detained.



Staff attorney Sreeharsha of Legal Momentum focused her testimony on gender and immigration enforcement, testifying to the fear that programs like 287(g) and SB1070 have instilled among immigrant women, encouraging law enforcement to prioritize immigrant status over victim status. “287(g) and SB1070 create a two tier society where immigrants don’t have the same police protection as their other community members” Sreeharsha warned, “as long as local law enforcement agencies are seen as a threat as opposed to a safe haven, immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other violent crimes will continue to be harmed with no where to turn for help.”

Mateo and Heidi presented their experiences before Congress. Heidi in particular discussed the difficulty of caring for her three younger siblings while her mother was in detention. Young children from New Jersey added their voices to the dialogue, saying that the problem is not only a problem for Arizona, families and communities around the country are facing a human rights crisis.

On July 15, the courage and leadership of children and women provided hope for the future as the movement to turn the tide on immigration enforcement took a step forward.

### Media

“Broken System, Broken Families” By Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Carola Suarez-Orozco, Members (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ and Co-Directors of Immigration Studies at NYU), Huffington Post, July 19, 2010: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marcelo-m-suarezorozco-and-carola-suarezorozco/broken-system-broken-fami b 650395.html>

### Video Footage

The Advocacy Day: <http://vimeo.com/14095472>

Related short clips:

<http://www.puenteaz.org/MEDIA.html>

<http://www.90daystophoenix.com/>

### Further Actions

As we continue to protect families and end harmful immigration enforcement programs, below are several actions you and your organization can take to stay active and turn the tide on immigration enforcement.

1. Sign on to a letter to President Obama urging him to stop the administrations support of ICE and local law enforcement collaboration. *See below for a copy of the letter. To sign on, contact Marlena Fuentes, [Marlena.A.Fontes@gmail.com](mailto:Marlena.A.Fontes@gmail.com)*
2. Participate in our Update from Arizona and NEXT STEPS conference call – Tuesday August 31, 2:00 pm EST/11:00 am PST

Call in number: 218-339-4300

Passcode # 470762

RSVP for the call to [Marlena.a.fontes@gmail.com](mailto:Marlena.a.fontes@gmail.com) by 8/26



President Barack Obama

The White House

Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We, supporters of women's and children's rights, urge you to address the growing human rights threat against women and children in the United States as a result of failed immigration enforcement programs. In the last two years, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Bureau has expanded programs that enlist local law enforcement to help enforce federal immigration law with particularly disastrous consequences for women and children. Programs like 287(g) and the "Secure Communities" initiatives undermine family safety, deter women survivors of violence from seeking protection or help, facilitate workplace harassment and employer abuse, and create tremendous suffering and psychological trauma for separated mothers and children.

Last year you acknowledged the horrors children and mothers face because of enforcement policies. You stated, "When communities are terrorized by ICE immigration raids – when nursing mothers are torn from their babies, when children come home from school to find their parents missing... When all that's happening, the system just isn't working." These problems have only deepened as deportations and detentions increased this past year. Interior enforcement has created a dragnet that captures innocent victims of crime, mothers and children. Mothers have been forced to give birth in shackles, children have been torn from their parents for minor traffic offenses, and domestic violence survivors have suffered in silence for fear of deportation.

We applaud your recent action on Arizona's SB1070, which you described as creating "divisiveness" and hurting public safety. In line with this assessment, we urge you to stop the administration's programs that support ICE and local law enforcement collaboration. In fact, ICE programs that enlisted police enforcement of immigration laws such as 287(g) and "Secure Communities" program opened the door to the passage of Arizona's SB 1070. These programs compromise public safety and do not address the nation's immigration crisis. This growing crisis for women and children demands immediate, administrative action.

This week a delegation of children from Arizona and throughout the country are testifying before Congress about the suffering they've experienced under this inhumane system. Their mothers, aunts and other women's advocates will be visiting with members of Congress on the matter. We hope our call for change will be heard in the White House. Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

9 to 5 National Association of Working Women

9to5 Atlanta Working Women

9to5 Bay Area, CA

9to5 Colorado

9to5 Los Angeles

9to5 Milwaukee

Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)

Family Values at Work Consortium

Grassroots Global Justice

Jobs with Justice

MomsRising

National Domestic Workers Alliance

National Day Laborer Organizing Network

New Moon Productions, Milwaukee, WI

Puente Movement, Arizona

Right to the City Alliance

Pushback Network

Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations (VACOLAO)

Voces de la Frontera, Wisconsin