Advocate Challenge Transform

Summer 2018

Issues

A Newsletter of the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center

Rethinking Racism - Discovering a New World

By Andrea Koverman, SC - Program Manager

Tamaya Dennard, President Pro Tem of Cincinnati City Council presents at Rethinking Racism

The Rethinking Racism team wrapped up a series of events addressing the racist practice of displacing communities of color in the name of progress, inspired by the recent decision to build an FCC stadium in the West End despite objections from that community. 220 participants learned the history of and current context for this unjust racialized development strategy from local leaders and politicians. In the second gathering, participants connected with organizations that can assist them in their own efforts to become less vulnerable to gentrification and unwanted development.

Rethinking Racism plans its next event as the observance of Columbus Day approaches. On October 8th, attendees will participate in an adapted role play developed by the Zinn Education Project called, "The People vs. Columbus." The experience will highlight the negative impacts of Columbus, recognize wrongs done to the native peoples of the Americas, and honor their culture instead. These aspects include Columbus's role in the extinction of the Taino people, his promotion of slavery and the system of empire that enabled colonization and oppression of Indigenous people.

As we continue to look at the hard truths of our racist practice of claiming the land of people of color both in the history of the establishment of our country and in our current context, we remain committed to working to dismantle institutionalized and systemic racism. A future in which all people are treated justly and equitably is the "New World" we are all longing to discover.

Uncertain But Resolute

By Samantha Searls - Program Manager

For the immigration program, this has been a summer of uncertainty, anticipation and transition. Our YES leaders have stepped up; diligently working to sift through information and news reports to keep its members and the community properly informed.

The fate of DACA currently rests with the resolution of four federal court cases. Three of them have ruled that the government must accept DACA renewals and soon, new applicants. A fourth case, brought by Texas, challenges the other courts and questions the legality of DACA, aiming to end the program permanently. Only time will tell which of these cases will be heard by the Supreme Court, leaving DACA recipients in limbo for several more months to learn their fate.

Amidst such uncertainty and anticipation, the arrival of Sandra Ramirez, IJPC's new Immigration Program Organizer, was welcomed by all. Daughter of Guatemalan immigrants, Sandra is all too familiar with navigating a complicated, uncertain world.

Sandra Ramirez, IJPC's Immigration Program Organizer

Growing up, Sandra was bullied because of the language she spoke and the food she brought to school for lunch. Sandra grew up fast; helping her parents navigate a world with limited English skills, witnessing how her parents were mistreated at work, and losing her brother to deportation last year.

Sandra's story is a story of resilience, one that is much needed in this period of uncertainty. With Sandra by their side, expect to see YES lead the community through whatever comes their way.

A Letter from Allison Reynolds-Berry

What do you think of IJPC's new look? We're hoping these slight changes will turn heads to take note of our upcoming opportunities and dive into the critical ways we are focusing on justice issues.

With a break in executions through the end of 2018, we are using this time to look at the issue of exempting those with serious mental illnesses from execution. We hope making this exemption will encourage legislators to take their own fresh look at our broken death penalty system. Join IJPC as we collaborate with OTSE to offer an advocacy training in advance of advocacy day at the statehouse in November.

The Governor's new Office of Opportunities for New Americans held a listening session to hear the stories of immigrants and refugees this summer. One of our YES leaders shared her story about the injustice of her inability to receive a driver's license because even though she is a US citizen, her mother is undocumented and unauthorized to sign off on the necessary documents. A representative from the BMV thanked her for sharing her story. He said he was unaware of this challenge and planned to look into the issue. A clear opportunity to speak her truth and be heard by those in power!

As we continue to connect real stories and real people with those who are unfamiliar with these realities, we are able to create more opportunities for people to look at issues through a new lens, speak truth to power, and create long lasting systemic change.

Allison Reynolds-Berry

Upcoming Events

For more information on these dates, visit **IJPCcincinnati.org/events**

September 7
The Forgotten Ones: Domestic Child Soldiers in the United States
4:00 - 6:00 PM
Centennial Barn

September 15
Advocacy Training (Death Penalty)
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (tentatively)
Peaslee Neighborhood Center

September 18
Immigration Learning Community
6:30 - 7:30 PM
IJPC Office

September 29
Day of Nonviolence Training
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Congregation of Divine Providence
Needs RSVP - contact
andrea@IJPCcincinnati.org

September 30
Culture of Peace Walk
2:00 - 5:00 PM
National Underground Railroad
Freedom Center

October 8
Rethinking Racism Presents The People vs. Columbus
6:30 - 9:00 PM
Christ Church Cathedral

November 14
Death Penalty Advocacy Day
Ohio Statehouse, Columbus

November 15
Belonging: Undocumented and American, IJPC Annual Gathering
7:00 - 8:30 PM
Cintas Center
IJPCcincinnati.org/belonging

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Social Justice Must Be Intersectional

By Samantha Searls - Program Manager

Over the past few months, IJPC has been leading the Public Education and Awareness Committee of the End Slavery Cincinnati Coalition against human trafficking. The committee's three goals are to address comprehensive anti-human trafficking education in schools, advocate for effective, well-educated media coverage and educate professionals who might interact with trafficking victims in their line of work.

Brought together by the Salvation Army's End Slavery Cincinnati program, this collaborative committee involves eight organizations and a handful of dedicated volunteers. Each come with their own level of experience and involvement with the issue of human trafficking, but all recognize how our own world of experience working with different groups of people intersect with this pervasive issue.

Traffickers take advantage of vulnerable people. More often than not, people are vulnerable in multiple ways, not just one. Victims of domestic violence, people suffering from addiction, children living below the poverty line are all vulnerable to trafficking. At IJPC, we see our advocacy work with the immigrant community intersect all too often with the issue of trafficking.

One of the more recent immigration policy changes involves punishing those who apply for immigration benefits, but are rejected. Advocates have worked tirelessly to win legal protections for victims of trafficking who are also undocumented. T-Visas, for example, are a crucial tool for survivors of trafficking to be able to live and work in the U.S. The new policy now states that if a trafficking survivor applies for T-Visa and is denied, they will be issued a Notice to Appear (NTA), effectively starting the deportation process.

In order to create a truly just world, we must identify and name these areas of intersection. If a politician is passionate about ending trafficking, then they should be equally passionate about an immigrant's access to legal services, funding opioid treatment facilities, expanding food assistance programs and providing support to survivors of domestic violence. Traffickers do not operate within a vacuum, but within a network of deeply connected systems.

The Winds of Change Are Blowing!

By Andrea Koverman, SC - Program Manager

Hundreds of students on local campuses have registered a change in attitude after participating in our Critical Issues in Criminal Justice programs. Those who had been supportive or unsure of their position became openly opposed or doubtful once given factual information as to the futility and cost-ineffectiveness of capital punishment. That more and more young adults "get it" was further demonstrated when our three interns traveled to Washington, DC to participate in a four day fast and vigil calling for abolition of the death penalty. Each of them shared on our blog why they felt called to do this and how their convictions were strengthened by the experience.

Interns & fellow abolitionists at Fast and Vigil in DC

Pope Francis challenged all people who claim to follow the example of redemptive mercy and love to apply those principles to capital punishment by making an official change in the catechism of the Catholic Church. According to this doctrine, it is no longer acceptable in any circumstance to execute another human being.

Hamilton County was in the middle of the sentencing phase for a convicted serial killer. The prosecutor seeking the death penalty publicly contradicted the pope's message and IJPC responded in an op-ed to discuss the evils of the death penalty system. There was a lot of support for our response.

The last ray of hope comes from our neighbors in Kentucky. The Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (KCADP) reported in their newsletter that a prosecutor who ran on a platform including eliminating the use of the death penalty, "trounced" a seven-term incumbent prosecutor who ran on a pro-death penalty platform that "touted" his past record of seeking the death penalty. KCADP reports that this victory continues a national trend in which high-profile prosecutors who use their discretion to seek death sentences are being defeated by reform-minded opponents and voters who support them. May the trend continue and the winds of change keep blowing!

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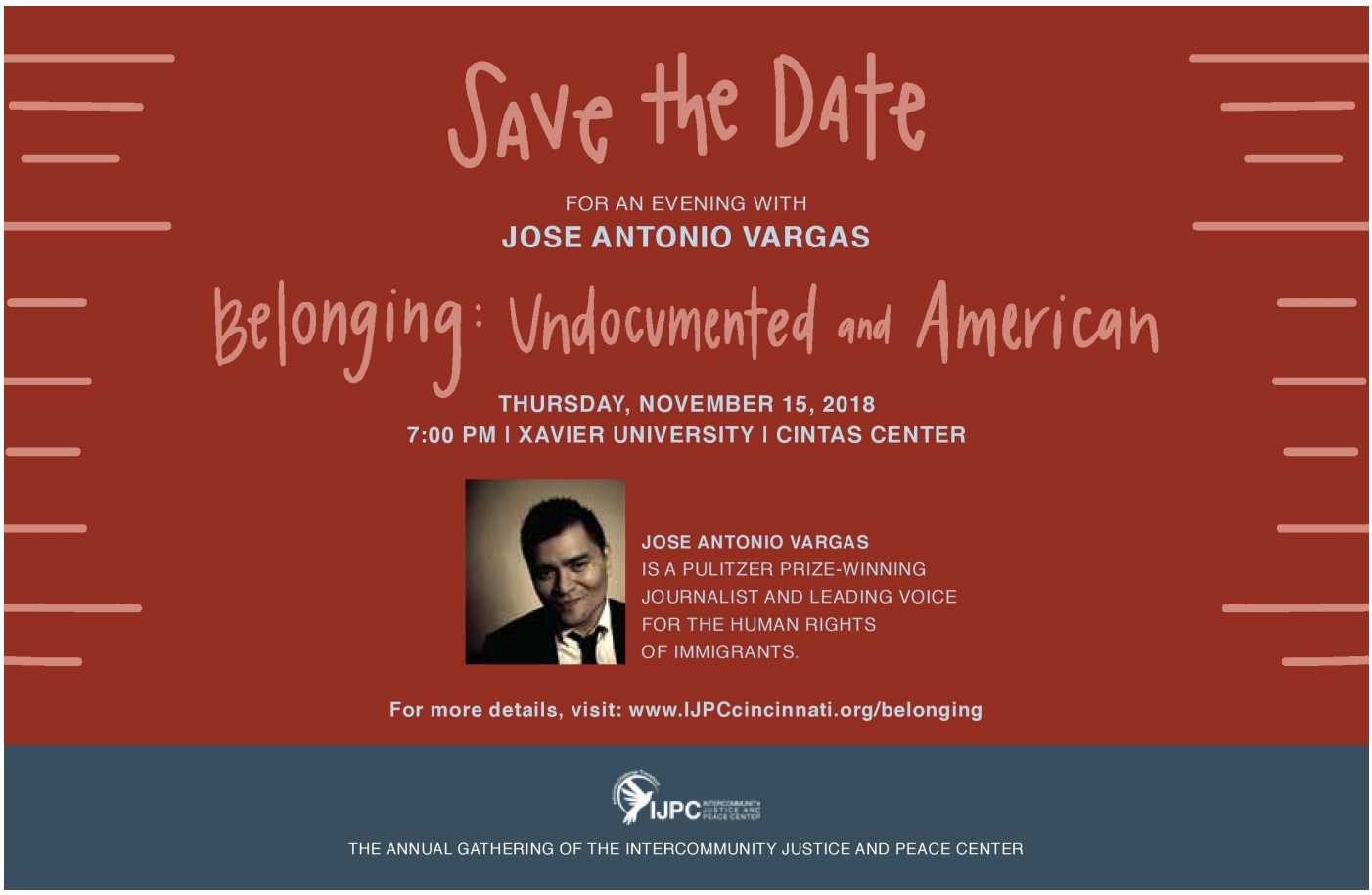

Jose Antonio Vargas' book "Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen" will be released September 18th!
Make sure to purchase a copy of the book when you get your ticket!