



DIALOGUE FOR IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS: * ENCOUNTER, ENGAGE, AND EXCHANGE *

A FEW IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HAVING GOOD CONVERSATIONS ON JUSTICE-BASED APPROACHES TO THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE IN MOVEMENT, MIGRATION POLICIES, AND PRACTICES TO BUILD COMMUNITIES THAT INCLUDE IMMIGRANT FAMILIES.

Considerations for Good Conversations

Most of us who become committed to building inclusive communities come to this through our personal experiences, connections, and relationships. However, learning and talking with others about their experience is also important.

Some of the deepest concerns about immigration are not easy to “debunk” with a myths v. facts approach (although some are). However, many people are open to new perspectives that offer a way forward, by re-framing both problems and opportunities.

Dialogue works best as a tool for social transformation when we:

- listen well
- speak authentically
- educate our selves on the issues
- hold fast to our values, and state them clearly
- express care for our conversation partner

Prepared by Dr. Miranda Cady Hallett, PhD

** mhallett1@udayton.edu **



Miami Valley
Immigration Coalition



University of Dayton
**Human Rights
Studies Program**

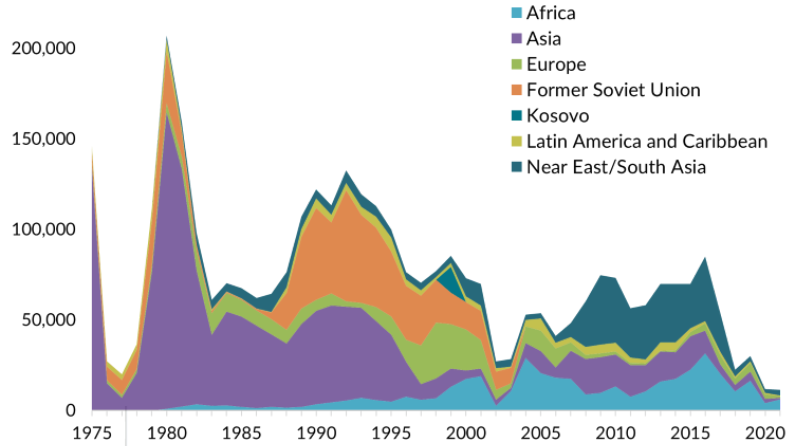




	heard often or v. often	heard never/infrequently
“Immigrants take jobs away from native-born Americans.”	39.13%	17.39%
“Immigration is important to the country and benefits our communities.”	39.13%	21.74%
“The border just seems out of control.”	82.61%	4.35%
“Refugees have a right to sanctuary.”	26.09%	43.48%
“Today’s immigrant families just don’t want to assimilate.”	21.74%	30.43%
“I just don’t know what to think about immigration.”	30.43%	8.70%
“Our political leaders are scapegoating immigrants and giving them a bad name.”	39.13%	26.09%
“I don’t have a problem with immigrants, but they should come legally.”	60.87%	13.04%
“If we keep allowing illegal immigration, then we’re rewarding people for breaking the law.”	52.17%	17.39%
“Immigration policy is too harsh and restrictive, and some immigrants are being treated very unfairly.”	39.13%	34.78%
“I worry that with the new people coming in, local schools and clinics won’t be able to keep up with the increased demand.”	39.13%	34.78%
“My own family were immigrants, so I feel personally connected and want to help people feel welcome and find their way.”	26.09%	34.78%

- Concerns overheard in our local communities around immigration:
 - Perceptions of law-breaking and a chaotic border are top negative responses. They outweigh the top positive response, "Immigration benefits our communities"
 - Many people could use a reminder that (most likely) they are related to immigrant people, and that immigration as well as the accompanying discrimination is part of their personal history.
 - There is a complex and ambivalent set of perceptions. People may simultaneously be concerned about impacts and legal order, but also feel they want to welcome immigrants.
 - The absolute top perception is that the border is "out of control." This is interesting since we are so far from the border; most likely people see this through mass media representations that are not perfectly accurate, and filter for a negative or alarming story. There could be opportunity to counter this viewpoint in various ways.
 - There is some awareness and discussion among communities of the excessive restrictions and harshness of immigration policies.





Immigration is NOT a THREAT! Racist stereotypes & Anti-immigrant backlash

- ▶ Immigrants are falsely portrayed as *inherently* a security threat (and often as an economic drain)
 - ▶ It's NOT TRUE! (the research says)
 - ▶ Immigrants are *less likely* to commit crimes than US-born people
 - ▶ Immigration typically has a positive economic impact



- People are at risk of *extremism and radicalization* when:

- they feel frightened
- they feel disempowered
- they have lost trust in authorities and institutions



- It's important to acknowledge that people have well-founded reasons to be concerned about immigration, and validate their perception that "the system is broken," but it's also important to openly discuss how many of our views and perceptions may have been distorted by media sensationalism, disinformation, and moral panic.

- *media sensationalism*: things that are alarming get into the news, and things that aren't so alarming often do not
- *disinformation*: some people and groups are deceiving the public on purpose, scapegoating immigrants for broader social problems
- *moral panic*: humans have a tendency to "jump on the bandwagon" when others see a problem, so we can often have an oversized fear of certain things because of our society and cultural context





Article 1, Right to equality:

You are born free and equal in rights to every other human being. You have the ability to think and to tell right from wrong. You should treat others with friendship.

Article 2, Freedom from discrimination:

You have all these human rights no matter what your race, skin colour, sex, language, religion, opinions, family background, social or economic status, birth or nationality.

Article 3, Right to life, liberty and personal security:

You have the right to live, to be free and to feel safe.

Article 4, Freedom from slavery:

Nobody has the right to treat you as a slave, and you should not make anyone your slave.

Article 5, Freedom from torture and degrading treatment:

Nobody has the right to torture, harm or humiliate you.

Article 6, Right to recognition as a person before the law:

You have a right to be accepted everywhere as a person according to law.



the full [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/UDHR/1948) at [Amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org)

Core values of MVIC:

1. Dignity of the person
2. Unity of the family
3. Richness in diversity
4. Equitable treatment
5. Freedom in the pursuit of purpose
6. Democratic process



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Article 7, Right to equality before the law:

You have a right to be protected and treated equally by the law without discrimination of any kind.

Article 8, Right to remedy by capable judges:

If your legal rights are violated, you have the right to fair and capable judges to uphold your rights.

Article 9, Freedom from arbitrary arrest and exile:

Nobody has the right to arrest you, put you in prison or to force you out of your country without good reasons.

Article 10, Right to fair public hearing:

If you are accused of a crime, you have the right to a fair and public hearing.



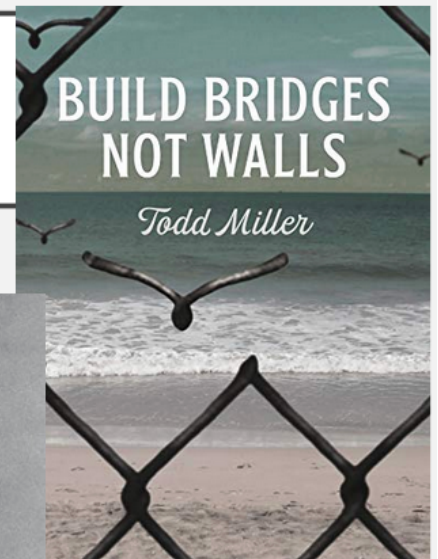
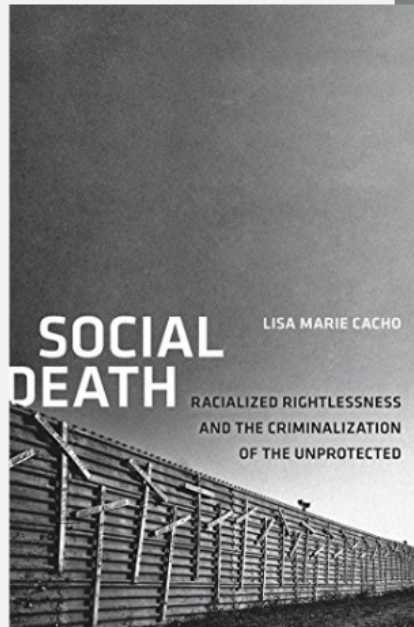



- Positive, true, rights-based statements regarding immigration
 - a. Reminders that most of us have migration stories in our past, or in our family’s past. Emphasize shared experiences of struggle, social integration, and contributing to families and communities.
 - b. Observations and information about the ways immigrant families and workers help build strong and successful communities, ex. “On the whole, people coming to the U.S. have always contributed a lot, and that’s true today.”
 - c. Statements that everyone has basic rights. “Everyone present in the U.S. has basic constitutional rights, no matter how they got here.” or “No human being is illegal. People have rights regardless of their legal status, which is often more complicated than we might think.”
 - d. Dialogue about what you see as strengths that come from the migrant experience. “Immigrants I know are very resilient and hard-working,” and “People who migrate bring a lot of gifts and abilities, it would be good if they had opportunities to use those to benefit themselves and others.”
 - e. Express support for the right to refuge. “Migration is something that happens for a lot of different reasons, including reasons beyond peoples’ control, and it would be great if there could be good support for people to move in a way that doesn’t put them or others at risk.”
 - f. Discuss how important immigration is to the survival of democracy and to building strong, safe, welcoming communities. “This is a nation where we have worked hard for equality and access to citizenship, and this is part of that fight,” or “We need immigrants to build strong and democratic communities, and ”We all do better when we work together to include all of our neighbors.”

- Ideas and framings to use for the *disruption* and *transformation* of common assumptions about migration
 - Reject the idea that immigration policy is a partisan issue
 - Tell stories about how communities you know are adapting well to immigration
 - Proclaim the benefits and positive outcomes of both migration itself and welcoming of new neighbors
 - Model and express empathy for people in movement
 - Let people know how much they can do to fix the system
 - “I know it’s frustrating that the government isn’t doing its job well and the system is broken, but there is a lot we can do to...”
 - advocate for better policy at all levels
 - stand up for human rights protections, fair treatment, and access to legal help by working with community organizations and some government offices that do help
 - take care of new neighbors and build strong communities in the meantime



RESOURCES



- Books:
 - Hiroshi Motomura Americans in Waiting (2008)
 - Joseph Nevins Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond (2010)
 - Juan Gonzalez Harvest of Empire (2011)
 - Lisa Marie Cacho Social Death (2012)
 - Leo Chavez The Latino Threat Narrative (2013)
 - Jason de León The Land of Open Graves (2015)
 - Susan Coutin Exiled Home (2016)
 - Wendy Vogt Lives in Transit (2018)
 - Todd Miller Empire of Borders (2019), Build Bridges Not Walls (2021)
 - Naomi Paik Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary (2021)
 - Karla Cornejo Villavicencio (2022) The Undocumented Americans
 - Ming Hsu Chen (2022) Pursuing Citizenship in the Age of Enforcement
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- Films and television:
- “The Other Side of Immigration” - hour-long documentary available in full on Youtube on the economic displacement from Mexico that plays a large role in 21st century immigration, from perspective of families
- “Immigration Nation” – Netflix – 6 hour documentary series covering harsh immigration enforcement under the Trump administration
- “Torn Apart” – HBO 2019 documentary about family separation and its impacts on one migrant mother
- “Trafficked in America” – *Frontline* – story of Guatemalan kids who were exploited at an Ohio egg farm in a 2014

- Podcasts:
- “Trafficked” – WYSO podcast about Ohio anti-trafficking efforts
- “The Out Crowd” – *This American Life* series – about asylum seekers forced to remain in Mexico

- Newspaper coverage:
- Lynn Hulsey for the *Dayton Daily News*

- Websites/organizations:
- Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
- National Day Laborers Organizing Network
- Interfaith Worker Justice
- Jewish Center for Justice
- Justice for Immigrants: the Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops
- American Friends Service Committee Migration and Immigrants Rights Work



