

Core values

- **Families are the basic unit of strong communities**
- **All families belong together, regardless of immigration status**

Family is a cornerstone of American values. Across a diversity of traditions, the faith community upholds the intrinsic value of individual human life within the context of family and community. Biblical representations of family show the sacredness of a united family. There are many examples of close relationships between adult children and their parents in the Hebrew Bible and in Christian texts: Abraham and Isaac, Mary and Jesus. Today, family remains the fundamental unit of society through which people are raised and become contributing members of our communities. It is essential that American immigration laws uphold our values as a nation that values family unity and as a nation of immigrants.

"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them' for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

Luke 18:15-16

Unfortunately, thousands of families are separated for years through the red tape, bureaucracy and harsh enforcement tactics of our broken immigration system. Backlogs at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the limited number of visas force many families to choose between being separated for extended periods of time or entering the country unlawfully. Additionally, many families in the United States that have "mixed status"—such as parents who are undocumented may have U.S. citizen children or an undocumented immigrant who is married to a U.S. citizen or a legal permanent resident—are often separated due to differing immigration statuses when the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) conducts immigration enforcement actions. *(continued on next page)*

The face of immigration

Leydi

After Leydi's husband was deported, Leydi and her children spiraled into homelessness before finding a roommate and apartment. In order to turn on the utilities, however, the local utility company required a social security number. Leydi was arrested for identity fraud and subsequently sentenced to three years in prison.

Her children, between the ages of 4 and 10, were then placed into three different foster homes. A non-profit ministry and friends stepped in and now the children, all U.S. citizens, live with a family whose own husband is in deportation proceedings and who struggle financially to care for them.

Due to the Secure Communities program, Leydi's arrest triggered an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainer and so, once she completes her sentence, she may find herself further detained by ICE as she seeks relief from deportation. Many obstacles remain but, with the help of friends and advocates, Leydi will hopefully be reunited with her children, even if it means a de facto deportation of her U.S. citizen children as well.

Thousands of other families are not so lucky. Over 5,000 U.S.-citizen children of deported immigrants have been placed into foster care in the U.S. Because their parents are usually unable attend child custody hearings, most of these families will never be reunited (arc.org/shatteredfamilies).



A fair immigration system must improve and strengthen the family immigration process by:

- **recapturing visas** lost to bureaucratic delay to reduce the current backlog;
- **reclassifying spouses and minor children** of lawful permanent residents as immediate relatives;
- **raising the per country visa limits** from seven to ten percent of total admissions to reduce long wait times for certain nationalities;
- **eliminating unlawful presence bars** for the spouse, child, or parent of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents;
- **admitting surviving members** of deceased family petitioners;
- **eliminating the cap on the total number of family-based visas** available; and
- **increasing the use of discretion** to address hardships caused by removing the parent, spouse, son or daughter of a U.S. citizen or green card holder.

The love, commitment, and support of family is a great gift that creates purpose for individuals, is central to our faith, and grounds the very structure of our society.

Rev. Dr. Gerald L. Mansholt, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

How do current immigration bills compare to our faith principles?

Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act (S. 744/H.R. 15): Provides sufficient visas to erase the current backlog of family visa applicants within seven years and reduces future wait times, allows spouses and children of Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) under the current family-based system to petition as immediate relatives, allows parents joining a U.S. citizen child in the U.S. to bring their minor children with them, and allows immigration judges to consider the impact of an immigrant's deportation on his or her U.S. citizen or LPR parents, spouse or children. However, the bill would end opportunities for U.S. citizens to petition for immigrant visas for their sisters, brothers and married children over the age of 31.

Reuniting Families Act (H.R. 717): Contains provisions that enable family members to reunite with their loved ones more quickly and reduce hardships faced by families at risk of being separated by reducing the time that some family members must wait before being able to be with their loved ones and providing for faster reunification for the spouses and minor children of lawful permanent residents.

Help Separated Families Act (H.R. 2604): Prohibits the termination of parental rights of parents who have been deported unless it is not in the child's best interests to be in that parent's custody and requires the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Homeland Security (DHS) and State to consult with experts to develop guidance that takes into account the best interests of children whose parent or caregiver is detained, deported or removed.

CIR ASAP Act of 2013 (H.R. 3163): Includes many of the positive provisions above in addition to permitting the "recapture" of unused employment-based visas and family-sponsored visas from fiscal years 1992-2013, allowing future unused visa numbers to roll over to next fiscal year, exempting immediate relatives from the annual cap on the number of immigrant visas, increasing the number of visas which may be issued per country per year and providing the government with greater discretionary authority to waive unlawful presence and other bars in order to reunite families.



4.5 million

Approximate number of U.S. citizen children who have at least one undocumented parent

46,686

The number of parents of U.S. citizen children who we deported in the first 6 months of fiscal year 2011

17

The estimated number of children placed under state care each day as a result of the detention or deportation of their parents

23 years

The longest family visa wait time for relatives of U.S. citizens

19 years

The longest family visa wait time for relatives of legal permanent residents



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