

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/organizing-and-activism-it-takes-all-kinds-aclu-oberlin>

Campaign and Advocacy

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In this time of fear and uncertainty, **one of the best things we can do for ourselves to maintain energy and positivity is to gather in a room with others**, face-to-face, to strategize about a way forward. On February 28, Oberlin College students, faculty, members of the Oberlin community, and ACLU of Ohio staff did just that.

At the all-day symposium entitled Offering Sanctuary, Northeast Ohio clergy explored the role of religious leaders in providing support for immigrants. I attended a powerful panel discussion featuring Cleveland Marshall College of Law Professor Doron Kalir, City of Lorain Police Chief Cel Rivera, and Oberlin College Dean of Students Meredith Raimondo.

Most moving for me was hearing Chief Rivera speak about how he became a fierce advocate for immigrant families in Lorain. He fought back tears as he recounted a 2013 community meeting where he was invited to simply listen to immigrant families testimonials, and he learned that two officers had been reporting undocumented Lorain residents to ICE. He told the room how he went home that night and wrote a policy that Lorain Police were never to call ICE in situations like traffic stops where no violent crime was committed. He continued, indignantly, And I don't believe that's a betrayal of my badge. I didn't sign up to be an immigration officer, and I'm not going to do it.

Chief Rivera imparted a valuable lesson that afternoon: that we must resist, from whatever position we occupy. Because, to have any chance at mounting a powerful resistance to the threats we now face, it will take all kinds. It will take civil servants and politicians, grassroots activists and retirees, college students and faculty, citizens and non-citizens alike, all serving as the objectors for their communities and institutions.

The ACLU has numerous resources available to help individuals understand their Constitutional rights. Whether you are a [Muslim facing discrimination](#) or a [non-citizen encountering law enforcement officers](#) or an [immigrant being stopped by immigration agents](#), the ACLU wants you to [know your rights](#).

The audience at the final two events of the day represented a diverse mix of people. Cleveland immigration attorney Brad Ortman led a session on rights when travelling or stopped by the police for students attending under visas and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The next session Advocating on Immigration Issues, given by ACLU of Ohio policy associate Katrice Williams, was open to the public. Katrice's talk was incredibly engaging and informative, demystifying a tactic too seldom used: contacting our Senators and Representatives to urge them to defend civil liberties.

I left Oberlin feeling inspired by the thoughtful determination of those who attended and presented. Very little can match the energy of being in a room of people strategizing to make America more compassionate and humane.

Now more than ever we need to encourage each other to use whatever position we occupy to effect change. More importantly, we must recognize that there are many people who have been doing precisely that, and for some time. Oberlin is full of such people. The students, clergy, and community members exemplified the maxim get in where you fit in.

We all must work for change, but there are countless ways to do so. If you are a member of the clergy, you fight for justice in your congregation. If you are a college student, you fight for justice on your campus. If you are a resident of a small Ohio town, you fight for justice in your small Ohio town. There was no hesitation there.

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