

## **Session: Aligning with Our Communities**

**Speaker: Vanessa G. Gutierrez, Directing Attorney, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project**

**Community: Immigrant and Refugee**

**Briefly describe the work you and your organization do to advocate for this population/issue.**

- Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) is the largest organization providing comprehensive immigration legal services for low-income people in Washington State
- NWIRP focuses primarily on direct legal services
- Also engages in: impact litigation, systemic advocacy, and community education

**What challenges is this population/issue experiencing?**

- Lack of access to legalization
- Increased focus on anyone who interacts with criminal justice system
- Increased enforcement near border (including northern counties and Olympic peninsula)
- Increased “fugitive operations teams” looking for those with prior deportation orders
- Workplace raids
- Eliminate use of prosecutorial discretion
- Even more immigration detention

**Have these challenges changed over the last year with the election and new administration? If so, how?**

**What might change and when:**

- Quickest Changes: More Executive Actions
  - i.e. DACA, Enforcement Priorities
  - Workplace Raids
- Not As Quick But No Congressional Action Required
  - Regulations: i.e. Provisional Waiver process
- May Take More Time: Congressional Action Required:
  - Budget: More Agents/Detention, More Immigration Courts
  - Changes to Immigration Law:

- Mandatory E-Verify
- Tougher penalties for immigration violation

**Changes to other forms of Protection:**

- Most forms of protections are written in law, so President can't change them:
  - i.e. U visas, VAWA protections, asylum, SIJS
- However:
  - There may be increased risk if applications are denied (i.e. placed in deportation proceedings)
  - Immigration agencies may well become tougher on using discretion
  - President could decide not to extend some protections (i.e. TPS)
  - Congress could modify some of these protections in future

**How has your organization been responding to the challenges you describe above?**

- In addition to direct legal services, NWIRP is:
  - Conducting Know Your Rights presentations for immigrant communities
  - Conducting Immigration 101 presentations for service providers and allies
  - Engaging in Impact Litigation

**In your opinion, how is this population/issue and related challenges similar to the other issues represented on the panel?**

- Immigrants are people. They are diverse and face a variety of challenges.
- The immigrant rights movement is not just about obtaining legal status but about respecting human dignity and ensuring access to fundamental rights, including labor, civil, social, economic, and environmental rights, for everyone.

**Are there other resources you would recommend to the audience members to help us deepen our understanding of this population/issue beyond the information you provided in the panel? (articles, books, trainings, movies, etc)**

NWIRP Resources Page - <https://www.nwirp.org/resources/>

**Advisory to Nonprofit Organizations and Service Providers Regarding Immigration Enforcement** - <http://nwirp.org/nonprofit-org-advisory.pdf>

**Recording of Know Your Rights Workshop for Allies & Service Providers** - <http://www.seattlechannel.org/publicAffairs/?videoid=x71016>