

# SANCTUARY IN THE AGE OF TRUMP

The rise of the movement a year into the Trump administration

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

In January 2017, just days before the inauguration of President Donald Trump, Sanctuary movement leaders announced the rapid growth of congregations willing to offer Sanctuary to immigrants facing the threat of deportation after the election. In just a few short weeks, the number of congregations signing up to be part of Sanctuary doubled to 800, as faith communities rose to the challenge of creating safe spaces for immigrants in need. Since then, the movement has continued to grow with more congregations signing up and building with immigrant leaders to meet the needs of the communities they are a part of. The Sanctuary movement now represents Sanctuary coalitions across twenty-five states and the level of sharing, coordination, collaboration, and prophetic action has also increased. A glimpse into this growth and organization of the Sanctuary movement is portrayed in the pages to follow of this report, one year into the Trump administration.

## WHAT IS SANCTUARY?

In the struggle against injustice, Sanctuary dates back thousands of years and often resurges when most needed. Rooted in faith communities, Sanctuary dates to the ancient Hebrew people, who allowed temples and even whole cities to declare themselves places of refuge for persons wrongly accused so that they might negotiate for a just outcome. This practice of sanctuary continued in Europe through the Roman Empire up through the medieval period.

In today's context, a congregation that declares itself a Sanctuary congregation is one willing to follow the leadership of impacted immigrants. Sanctuary congregations engage in a spectrum of solidarity actions designed to shield immigrants from deportation and create communities in which we can live together without fear. These actions include transforming congregations into welcoming spaces, advocacy and accompaniment to help stop deportations, assisting with legal clinics, forming rapid response teams to stop raids and deportations, and, if the need arises, physically housing an immigrant in danger of immediate deportation. Each congregation has the opportunity to go through a discernment process of education and dialogue to decide their role in the movement.

As the U.S. struggles with an uncertain political pathway under the leadership of a President whose platform is grounded in an anti-immigrant agenda, Sanctuary is needed more than ever. People of faith from many traditions recognize the increased need for Sanctuary as the harsh anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-black and anti-Muslim policies come to life under the Trump administration.

## SANCTUARY IN ACTION: ALEX'S STORY

Rene "Alex" Garcia entered Sanctuary on September 21, 2017 after he was denied a stay of removal even though he had been receiving one for several years.

Alex is the father of five U.S. citizen children and has been residing in Missouri for over ten years. Alex came to the U.S. from Honduras thirteen years ago seeking safety and a better life. Since then, he has become a respected member of his community and a pillar of support for his family. His oldest son was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome in 2014 and depends on his strong relationship with his father to calm his stress and anxiety.



*Alex with his wife Carly, and his children.  
Photo courtesy of Carly Garcia, Alex's wife*

Alex and his family are petitioning the government to grant him a stay of removal so he can return home to his family, until then, he will remain in Sanctuary.

# THE SANCTUARY MOVEMENT IN THE U.S.

In the 1980s, the United States backed dictators in the civil wars in Central America causing thousands of refugees to flee for their safety. The U.S. government did not recognize them as political refugees, but instead said they were economic refugees, denying them legal entry to the United States. The US government deported those who came here seeking safety. Death squads awaited them at the airports and many were murdered as they stepped off the planes. In response, the Sanctuary Movement as we know it was born.

The Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s reminded the United States government that it was not following its own asylum and refugee laws. Thousands of stories from refugees were highlighted through the media with speaking tours that raised the consciousness of the unjust nature of these civil wars and questioned the U.S. deportation policies that would have sent asylum seekers back to their death. It was during this time that Sanctuary took root in American religious life as a faithful response to the practices of the state that were in clear contradiction to faith teachings.

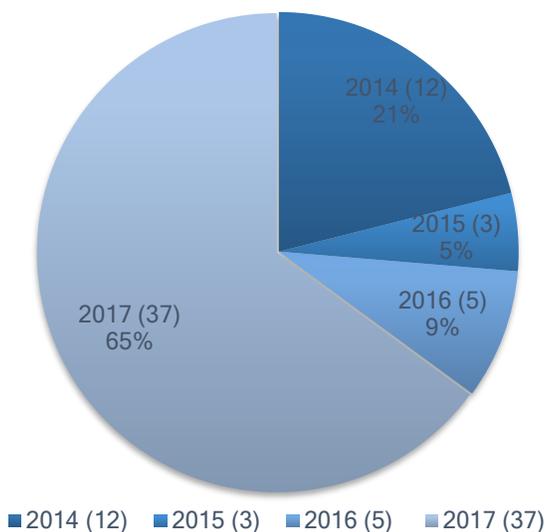
The massive mobilizations of 2006 against the Sensenbrenner anti-immigrant bill and in favor of immigration reform were met with increased workplace raids impacting thousands of people and the beginning of formal partnerships between local law enforcement and Immigration. In 2007, the New Sanctuary Movement formed among coalitions of congregations across the United States. As immigration raids in neighborhoods and work places escalated in a climate of political paralysis for immigration reform, these congregations opened their doors to provide refuge to those facing deportation. This new model of providing Sanctuary adjusted to the times -- no longer were congregations only receiving arriving refugees, but instead fought alongside of neighbors who had been in the U.S. for decades and had built their lives here.

That Sanctuary Movement fought to hold the Obama administration accountable for increasing deportations and pushed for changes. In 2011, the Sanctuary movement helped win prosecutorial discretion, which was granted through a June 17th, 2011 memorandum issued by John Morton, the then-Director of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The memo, "Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion Consistent with the Civil Immigration Enforcement Priorities of the Agency for the Apprehension, Detention, and Removal of Aliens," created legal space to stop deportations by granting DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) the ability to exercise prosecutorial discretion and grant deferred action on a case-by-case basis.<sup>1</sup> Agents were encouraged to use their authority to take certain factors into account when considering an immigrant's case, such as whether the individual had a U.S. citizen child or spouse, the length of time spent in the U.S., a person's ties to their community, and contributions to it, as well as whether they had been victims of crimes in the U.S. That same year, with continued pressure and advocacy, the administration issued a "sensitive locations" memorandum on October 24, 2011<sup>2</sup>. The memo was written to ensure that enforcement actions did not occur and were not targeted at a defined list of places, including schools, hospitals, and - important to the Sanctuary movement - places of worship. These memos became a tool for the Sanctuary Movement to fight back as the number of deportations soared under the Obama administration.

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As families were being torn apart, devastating communities, congregations once again turned to the work of Sanctuary, believing it to be an act faithful to the command to love our neighbors. During President Obama’s second term, Daniel Neyoy- Ruiz was the first person to publicly enter sanctuary in 2014. Then, 28 days later, he left Sanctuary with a stay of deportation in his hand. These faithful acts of resistance, in addition to pressure by the immigrants’ rights movement, led to President Obama’s Executive Actions on Immigration, announced on November 20th, 2014<sup>3</sup>. These Executive Actions sought to expand the categories of those who were able to receive administrative relief from deportation. However, under the administration of President Trump, these policies have been rolled back, making anyone who is undocumented a target for deportation<sup>4</sup>. **As a result, more people are taking Sanctuary in congregations than at any time since the 1980’s.** Many people who were granted a stay of deportation under the Obama administration’s Morton memo, so long as they continued their routine check in’s with ICE, are the very same people that are being detained and deported during these check in’s under the new administration. It goes without saying that, for Sanctuary seekers and millions of people who are undocumented, Congresses’ inaction means there is no pathway to citizenship, no line for them to get into. Their claim to Sanctuary is a courageous and bold act of faith, a rejection of deportation as they advocate for a more just way forward, a claiming of the US as their home. Our movement’s response to host is an act of love and support of their witness.

### Public Sanctuary Cases by year




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Out of the 37 people that went into public Sanctuary in 2017, 9 of them were able to leave Sanctuary with some sort of reprieve.

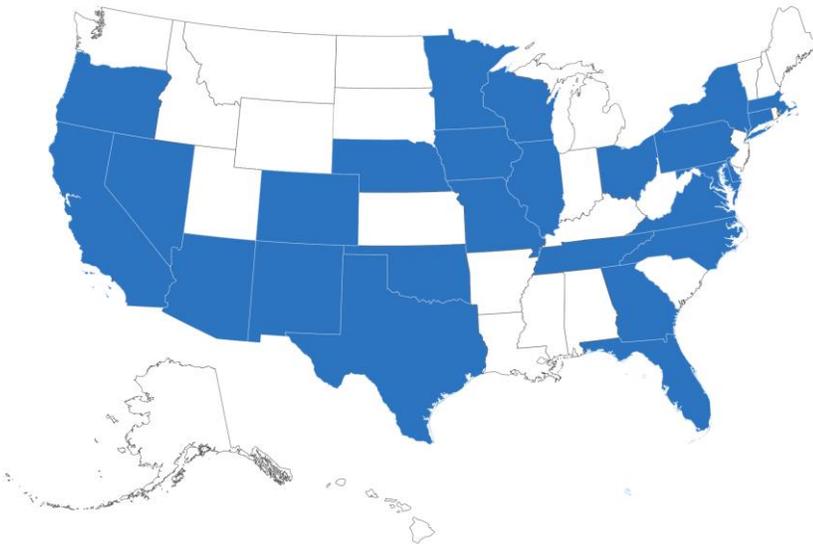
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# GROWTH OF THE MOVEMENT UNDER THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Immediately after the 2016 election, faith communities rapidly joined the Sanctuary Movement. Knowing that President Trump had run his campaign on policies of exclusion and punishment, the numbers drastically spiked from 400 to 800 congregations during several months. Faith communities signed up to prophetically confront the administration's immoral and unjust deportation policies. **As of January 2018, there are more than 1,110 congregations in the Sanctuary Movement**, showing the faith resistance continues to grow against harsh and inhumane immigration policies.

Not only are these 1,110 congregations directly connected to and engaged with immigrant communities, but they are also creating a strong network. Since 2016, 12 Sanctuary coalitions have grown to **40 coalitions or networks**, a 135+% increase in the past year alone. The geographic trends have also shifted significantly from cities that have a long tradition of receiving immigrants like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, to regions that have only recently seen an influx of immigrants, states such as North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Virginia. There has also been a profound shift from predominantly urban spaces, to rural and suburban spaces.

An illustrative, though not comprehensive, list of spaces where people are currently claiming Sanctuary include: Mancos, CO, Amherst, MA, Forest Hill, OH, and Las Cruces, NM.



The map on the left represents the states that have active Sanctuary coalitions/network as of January 2018.

## Sanctuary Movement Today



**1,100+**

houses of worship



**36**

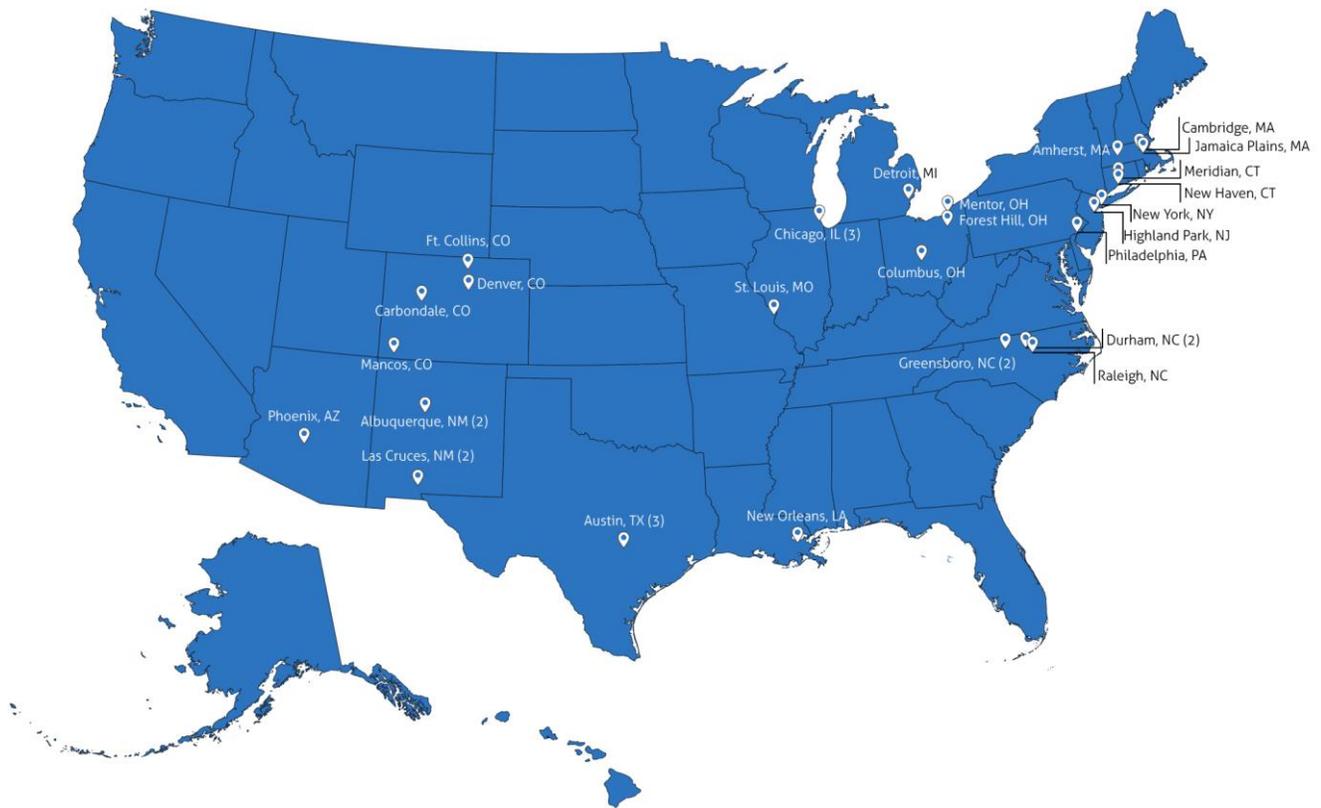
people in public Sanctuary



**40**

state networks/coalitions

## Public Sanctuary cases today



The map above depicts the 26 cities where people are currently in Sanctuary across the U.S. To date, there are 36 people in public Sanctuary.



*Minerva Cisneros with her children.  
Photo courtesy of Rev. Julie Peoples*

### SANCTUARY IN ACTION: MINERVA'S STORY

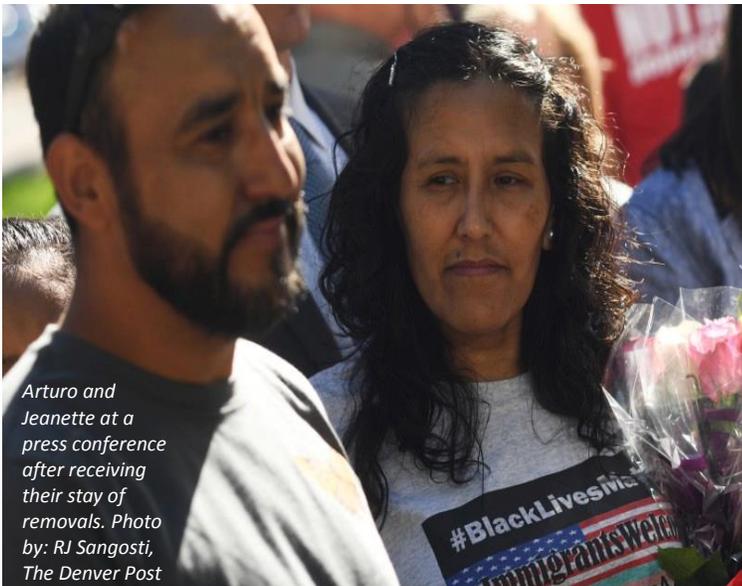
After 100 days of living in Sanctuary at the Congregational United Church of Christ in Greensboro, North Carolina, Minerva Cisneros Garcia was allowed to go free after a judge vacated her deportation order. This was a huge victory for Minerva, her three children and the entire community. Soon thereafter, ICE called Minerva to their office in Charlotte where she was accompanied by about 100 supporters. She was informed that ICE would re-open her case and require her to wear an ankle bracelet. This was a huge shock to Minerva, her family and all her supporters wondering her fate and whether ICE was acting in retaliation for Minerva's victory.

# ENFORCEMENT IN THE ERA OF TRUMP

Within the first five days of taking office, the Trump administration began issuing a series of Executive Orders on immigration to fulfill his campaign promises of being “tough” on immigration. To date, the President has signed seven executive orders related to immigration and has terminated and limited protections that have been granted to undocumented immigrants under previous administrations<sup>5</sup>. These protections include terminating the DACA program - which is currently in effect given a recent court ruling<sup>6</sup> - and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations for Sudanese, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Salvadorans in the United States.<sup>7</sup> Through these actions the administration has created a new population of immigrants eligible for deportation. Key changes made by the administration to limit the ability of immigrants to obtain relief from deportation include:

1. Expanding the Department of Homeland Security removal priorities to include people who do not specifically have a criminal record,<sup>8</sup>
2. Increasing the number of 287(g) agreements with local law enforcement,<sup>9</sup>
3. Pressuring and threatening local communities that limit their cooperation with ICE,<sup>10</sup>
4. Detaining immigrants at their ICE check ins<sup>11</sup>, regardless of good standing with ICE or having received multiple stays of removal,
5. Changing the effects of private congressional bills on an immigration case<sup>12</sup>, and
6. Shifting the processing guidelines for Stay of Removal applications to require the person under threat of deportation to apply at the field office in person.<sup>13</sup>

## SANCTUARY IN ACTION: ARTURO AND JEANETTE'S STORY



*Arturo and Jeanette at a press conference after receiving their stay of removals. Photo by: RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post*

On Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the Trump administration announced it would end a decades-long courtesy granting community members, with private bills pending, stays of deportation. In a letter to Congress, then-ICE director Thomas D. Homan informed members that private bills would no longer defer action based solely on the introduction of the private immigration bill. Both Jeanette Vizguerra and Arturo Hernandez Garcia secured the introduction of private bills by their Members of Congress, and it is believed they were the last community members granted stays of deportation under the previous policy.

Jeanette was able to leave Sanctuary after 3 months, and now continues to wait on an answer to her U-Visa application. Arturo Hernandez Garcia was detained on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at his workplace, despite having previously granted him a stay of removal. Arturo had been in Sanctuary in Colorado for 9 months in 2015. Nothing had changed in his case except the administration. Supporters quickly mobilized to ensure Arturo's release and he was able to secure another stay and is now pursuing residency with his wife, Ana.

## Encroachment on Sensitive Locations

While ICE has yet to go into a house of worship to detain someone in Sanctuary, they have been getting more aggressive in their proximity to sensitive locations. In February 2017, ICE detained six men as they were leaving a hypothermia shelter at Rising Hope Mission Church in Alexandria, VA. As soon as they crossed the street the men were surrounded and detained by ICE agents. The movement responded aggressively calling on the administration to honor its “sensitive locations” memo and steer clear of houses of worship. There have been reports that ICE have been routinely picking up parents on the way to drop off or pick up their kids from school. Border Patrol agents have followed those in need of emergency medical care to the hospital and waited for them, such as the case of 10-year-old with cerebral palsy, Rosa Maria Hernandez. Although ICE has not gone into a house of worship to enforce an immigration action, the fear exists that they could decide to change or break their own policies as they escalate their attacks on the immigrant community and allies.

## Criminalization of Immigrants

The Trump administration would have the broader public believe that ICE is only detaining and deporting people in the interest of public safety, but this is false. A May 2017 ICE report showed a 150% increase immigration arrests of individuals with no criminal record. ICE reports also fail to show that many have previous convictions as a result of their immigration status - such as from driving without a license or using a social security number that is not their own.

Even with a history of complying with ICE check ins, thousands of community members have discovered that ICE gives them a month to pack up their lives and move back to their country of origin.

For leaders who speak out against unjust laws by claiming Sanctuary, ICE has now labeled them “ICE Fugitives” as another form of criminalization and a tactic to doctor their statistics. A December ICE report claimed that 92 % of their arrestees had a criminal record or were “ICE Fugitives.”<sup>14</sup> ICE data does not publicly release how many of those “fugitives” previously had no record, or how many of them had minor non-violent offenses. As people of faith, we believe in the power of redemption, reconciliation, and the possibility of transformation. We believe in the humanity and dignity of all people and in keeping families together. We do not believe that people are disposable. We support those who have already completed what the courts required of them for mistakes they have made. We name that the only true reason people are deported is their lack of a piece of paper, one our Congress has refused to give them a process to access.

For leaders who speak out against unjust laws by claiming Sanctuary, ICE has now labeled them “ICE Fugitives” as another form of criminalization and a tactic to doctor their statistics.

When people are deported back to their countries of origin without connection or resources, it destabilizes their countries, forcing unsafe, unstable migration. Deportation does not erase someone from the earth. Deportation uproots people causing instability in the community here and in the receiving community in their country of origin.

## ICE Retaliation and Intimidation Tactics

Policy changes are not the only way the administration is scaling up its enforcement actions. Over the past year, their attempts to intimidate Sanctuary and immigrants' rights leaders have also increased. Below are examples of ICE intimidation tactics and retaliation of Sanctuary leaders.

In April 2017, ICE detained Sanctuary leader Arturo Hernandez Garcia without warning at his jobsite. Due to intervention by Senator Bennet and Congressman Perlmutter, Garcia was ultimately released just in time for his daughter's high school graduation.

The following month, ICE lured Marco Tulio into a check in with written promises to his lawyer and pastor that he would be fitted with an ankle monitor. Instead, ICE waited for Mr. Tulio's lawyer to leave the building, put Marco in a van alone and drove him across the border -- deporting him without warning.

In August, as Araceli Velasquez prepared to publicly announce she had entered Sanctuary, ICE went to her husband's workplace. The agent insisted on seeing and questioning Jorge and his co-workers, only leaving when the manager insisted that he show a warrant or leave.

The start of the New Year also brought the apprehension, detention, and deportation of several founders and leaders in the immigrants' rights movement. On January 3, 2018, before his stay had expired, ICE sent six vans to Jean Montrevil's house to detain him. One of the founders of the New Sanctuary Movement of New York, Jean wasn't due for his check-in for a week and half. On January 11th, ICE detained Sanctuary leaders in New York and Colorado, the current Executive Director of the organization, Ravi Ragbir, and Eliseo Jurado, partner of Ingrid Encalada Latorre, who is currently in Sanctuary in Colorado. ICE did not have a warrant to detain Eliseo Jurado. They surveilled his house and detained him as he drove to Home Depot, pulling him over with flashing lights despite the fact that he had had no previous contact with immigration.

The targeted actions resulted in the deportation of Jean on January 16th, despite the fact that he still had a pending legal immigration case. Mr. Montrevil had been in the U.S. since the 1980's and has a wife and U.S. citizen children.

Both Mr. Ragbir and Mr. Jurado remain in immigration detention awaiting hearings and next steps. Both have had a show of support across the country, with faith leaders organizing Jericho walks, protests at the courthouses and detention centers, and organizing calls to the local field offices, letter writings, and petitions.

## Attack on Indonesian Asylum Seekers

In 2010, ICE launched what was known as "Operation Indonesian Surrender," allowing approximately 100 Indonesian Christian asylum seekers the opportunity to register with ICE in exchange for a stay of removal.<sup>15</sup> This agreement carried on with regular check ins until 2017 when ICE suddenly started deporting people from the Indonesian community. Rev. Sandra Pontoh of Maranatha Indonesian UCC along with the American Friends Service Committee of New Hampshire have been leading community mobilizations to support a lawsuit wherein a judge has temporarily halted the deportations of forty-eight Indonesians. Rev. Seth-Kaper Dale and the Reform Church of Highland Park have now taken in three Indonesians in Sanctuary. After signs of ICE surveillance, Harry Pangemanan recently claimed Sanctuary while two other Indonesian Christians, Roby Sanger and Gunawan Liem, were detained.

Sanctuary leaders around the country are in agreement that an attack on any leader is an attack on the Sanctuary movement as a whole and on the hundreds of faith communities that support their work throughout the country. As the administration escalates their attacks against activist leaders, the faith community will also respond through prophetic resistance.

# SANCTUARY RISING: CONTINUING THE GROWTH & RESISTANCE IN 2018

The last year has been one of growth for the Sanctuary movement which continues to be an effective form of resistance to the unjust and immoral immigration policies this administration is implementing. In 2018, the Sanctuary Movement is ready to build on that growth and equip leaders to take their work to the next level and advocate for policy change. We will continue to build out Sanctuary networks and/or coalitions of congregations across the country. This year our focus will be on expanding to the Southeast and the Midwest regions, as well as hosting regional trainings and strategy convenings.

This President's discriminatory attacks on immigrants include ending or curtailing family-based immigration that reunites families. The agenda of exclusion is clear and in direct contradiction to our faith teachings and commitment to family unity. As Congress debates preventing families from coming together, families already here are under threat. As people of faith, hundreds of thousands of undocumented youth and young adults participate in a faith community. As they work towards justice and advocate for a clean Dream Act, we support them and are ready, should the need arise for dreamers to enter Sanctuary.

Sanctuary is rooted in our faith principles and those principles call us to civil initiative, to act and to live into laws that are in keeping with our values and ethics as a nation, and that respect the dignity of every resident of this country. We believe the "sensitive locations" policy is in keeping with those ethics, but we will engage whether the policy stands or not. We will respond to the prophetic witness and call of our siblings until we have peace with justice.

## SANCTUARY IN ACTION: EDITH'S STORY

Edith Espinal has been living in Sanctuary in Columbus, Ohio since October 2, 2017. Edith is active in her community and leads organizing efforts around her case. She fears that ICE has been retaliating against her by having her son attend ICE check in's and placing a tracking device on her ankle. The device has gone off and caused vibrations she could "feel on my whole body," at all hours of the night.

Edith remains in Sanctuary awaiting a stay of removal with her family.



## Top Ten Policy Recommendations

As communities of faith, we remain steadfast, resolute in our commitment to advance justice, equality, and peace. The movement to offer Sanctuary is critical today, as it was decades ago - but it is not a permanent solution. All levels of government should take the following steps to implement just and humane policies that have a positive impact on our communities, our congregations, and our immigrant neighbors' lives.

1. The U.S. government should take every step to uphold family unity, respect and dignity to all immigrants regardless of their documentation status.
2. The administration should take seriously the civil rights repercussions of their attacks on immigrant leaders, faith leaders, activist leaders, and humanitarian aid workers by developing a policy that explicitly directs ICE and federal law enforcement agencies to refrain from enforcement actions that inhibit freedom of speech or expression.
3. Immigration enforcement officers should honor, strengthen, and expand the "sensitive locations" memo and should immediately stop patrolling near, nor encroaching further around places of worship, schools, hospitals, shelters, courthouses, public demonstrations, and other areas, such that DHS practices are in keeping with our values and ethics and respect the dignity of all.
4. The federal government should restore and maintain judicial and prosecutorial discretion as a core component of a fair immigration system and see that cases are heard and assessed on an individual, case-by-case basis.
5. The administration should respect limited detainer policies of each jurisdiction and their right to not honor ICE detainer holds that certain federal courts have declared to be unconstitutional.
6. The administration should do away with the 287(g) program and work to separate local law enforcement from federal immigration enforcement.
7. The administration should take into account risk factors of extremely dangerous countries at war or with high homicide rates and stop deporting people back to what could mean certain fatality, such as by utilizing the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program, which is in keeping with our moral and legal obligations to offer protection.
8. The administration should honor the profound violence faced by asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, refugees, and other vulnerable populations and see that they are welcomed and protected from being returned to harm or life-threatening conditions.
9. Congress should immediately pass a permanent, legislative solution to offer a pathway to citizenship for as many dreamers as possible, like the Dream Act, without compromising family unity, border communities, or any other immigrant population.
10. The administration, Congress, and all communities should strive toward creating long term policy solutions through legislation that lift up the core values of every faith tradition -- to love ones neighbor and protect the inherent dignity and rights of every human being, including migrants, immigrants, and refugees.

As we continue to move forward into the second year of the Trump administration, we remain committed in our call to live out our faith through prophetic action. We will continue to provide Sanctuary, organize alongside immigrants, following their lead and direction, and advocate for lasting solutions.

# ENDNOTES

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- <sup>10</sup> Don Thompson, “California officials concerned about possible ICE sweeps,” *The Washington Post*, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/california-officials-concerned-about-possible-ice-sweeps/2018/01/17/95cd917a-fbdd-11e7-9b5d-bbf0da31214d\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.b569f13b58bc](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/california-officials-concerned-about-possible-ice-sweeps/2018/01/17/95cd917a-fbdd-11e7-9b5d-bbf0da31214d_story.html?utm_term=.b569f13b58bc)
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