

IMMIGRANTS UNDER SIEGE: Learn the Facts. Work Together. Take Action

Free public forum, Sunday, October 26, 4:00pm to 6:00pm, First United Methodist Church of Germantown, 6001 Germantown Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19144. The forum, organized by the Northwest Regional Refugee and Immigrant Network (NWRRIN), will feature national and local experts and representatives of local immigrant communities discussing how we can protect our neighbors.

Speakers include:

- Rev. Greg Holston, Just Nation -Event Master of Ceremonies
- Anna Marie Gallagher, Catholic Legal Immigration Network
- Lilah Thompson, Nationalities Service Center
- Cathryn Miller-Wilson, HIAS Pennsylvania
- Lance Briggs, SEIU 32B (Service Employees International Union)
- Blanca Pacheco, New Sanctuary Movement
- Elizabeth Porter, educator working in the African community
- Jasmine Rivera, Pennsylvania Immigration Coalition
- Mohan Seshadri, Asian Pacific Islander Political Alliance
- Remarks by Anh Vongbandith, owner of Das Good Café; her husband, Chef Anou Vongbandith, a Laotian refugee who has resided in the U.S. for 45 years, is facing deportation and currently being held at Moshannon Valley Processing Center

NWRRIN is an interfaith group founded in August 2024 by Judith Bernstein-Baker, a pro bono immigration attorney, in collaboration with the Newcomer Housing Alliance and Welcoming Homes. It is comprised of individuals and congregations concerned about current federal policies and ICE enforcement actions that have dramatically increased deportations, detentions, family separations and withdrawal of legal status from millions of refugees and immigrants. In addition to advocacy, NWRRIN connects volunteers to support new residents in need of services such as affordable housing and employment.

Questions? Email nwrefugeeandimmigrant@gmail.com

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Immigrants Under Siege: Learn the Facts. Work Together. Take Action.

Join the Northwest Regional Refugee and Immigrant Network (NWRRIN) to hear from national and local experts, immigrant leaders and advocates about the crisis facing immigrant and refugee communities and how we can respond together.

Sunday, October 26, 4 to 6 PM
First United Methodist Church of Germantown
6001 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19144

Master of Ceremonies:

Rev. Greg Holston, Exec. Director, Just Nation

Opening Panel:

Anna Marie Gallagher, Esq., Exec. Director, The Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC): The National Perspective

Lilah Thompson, Esq., Supervising Attorney,
Nationalities Service Center: The Local Perspective

Community Response:

Blanca Pacheco, New Sanctuary
Movement

Jasmine Rivera, Pennsylvania
Immigration Coalition

Mohan Seshadri, Asian Pacific
Islander Political Alliance

Lance Biggs, SEIU 32BJ

The NWRRIN advocates in Northwest Philadelphia to provide direct support to refugees and immigrants, and engage in advocacy.

Questions? email
nwrefugeeandimmigrant@gmail.com





Dear Friends

Our community meeting was a big success with 200 attendees! . I am also attaching the program. Many thanks to the Community Meeting Committee/NWRRIN volunteers, FUMCOG staff and volunteers who played a critical role in staffing sign-in tables and supplying excellent technology and to our fabulous keynote speakers Anna Marie Gallagher and Lilah Thompson, to Rev. Holston, our MC, to community activists and providers who engaged and inspired us and to those who participated in our "immigrant fair."

We learned of the critical need for immigration lawyers to represent low income immigrants and how providing an attorney increases the chances of success in immigration court -- especially for those in detention--from a 3% chance to 46%. Rev. Holston reminded us that immigrant communities of color were being especially targeted and that the fight for immigrants is the fight for a multicultural, just society. There were sobering stories of the victims of mass deportation like the 45 Bhutanese refugees of ethnic Nepali background, deported last summer to Bhutan which would not accept them, then to Nepal, and many have simply disappeared into statelessness.

But we also heard compelling stories of how front line advocates like New Sanctuary Movement were training and organizing accompaniment of immigrants to immigration court and even traffic court to show support; of health and educational services that are continuing to be provided to African and Caribbean newcomers, how a union like SEIU is defending its immigrant members; how the Asian community, represented by API PA, is engaged in voter registration and giving its members a voice. . Lance Biggs from the SEIU exhorted us to "change the narrative" about immigrants and Cathryn Miller-Wilson stressed the importance of exposing lies that label immigrants as "criminals". The event ended with moving remarks by Anh Vongabandith, wife of Anou, who is detained in Moshannon. Although the Immigration Judge granted bond, Anou remains detained as of this moment, since the electronic system that accepts payment is blocking access. This could change quickly, and if so, an update will be provided. After the presentations many participants joined the "immigrant fair" downstairs to talk with providers and advocacy groups about how they could get involved.

Judith Bernstein-Baker October 28, 2025



After the event many people stayed for snacks and discussion at the “Immigrant Fair”, where they could talk with providers and advocacy groups about how to get involved.

 Good discussions and positive energy	 Positive vibrations, apathy is not an option
 Welcoming Homes information table	 Signing up for the NWRRIN mail list
 Encouraging one another to action	 We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly, we are called to love one another, to walk humbly with God

A good summary of the event was published online from Resolve Philly .

<https://resolvephilly.org/gih/immigrants-under-siege/>

Our next NWRRIN meeting is Tuesday, November 11, 2025 at 3:30 PM at the Unitarian Society of Germantown, 6511 Lincoln Drive. Parking is accessible. I have invited Sen. Haywood to attend, but if he is unable to come, we will discuss what is going on in our congregations and community and ways to structure NWRRIN so we reach as many people as possible. Please plan to attend.