

# New Families, New Friends: Organizations Working With Latina Immigrants

Strategy Forum Report

Phoenix, Arizona



## About This Report

This report summarizes the presentations from a strategy forum co-hosted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) and Arizona State University (ASU) in April 2010. Held in Phoenix, Arizona, during the week the Arizona State Legislature passed the controversial legislation SB 1070, the forum brought together researchers, activists, clergy, and other community stakeholders working with immigrant women, especially Latinas. The event and report are part of a larger research project examining the roles of nonprofit organizations and religious congregations in advancing the rights, economic standing, and general well-being of Latina immigrants in Atlanta, GA; Phoenix, AZ; and Northern Virginia, a region within the Washington, DC metropolitan area. IWPR's research highlights not only the work of organizations in these areas, but also the contributions and concerns of immigrant women and their importance in shaping successful public policies. The findings from this research are discussed in IWPR's report, *Organizations Working with Latina Immigrants: Resources and Strategies for Change*.

## Acknowledgements

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# **New Families, New Friends:**

## **Organizations Working With Latina Immigrants**

Strategy Forum Report

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# Introduction

Immigration issues—including comprehensive immigration reform, border security, and the role of police in enforcing current immigration laws—are near the forefront of national discussion and debate. Most people agree that the current immigration system is fundamentally flawed and in need of serious reform, but little consensus exists about what shape this reform should take. Recent polls show an American public divided about the best path forward and frustrated, above all, at the reluctance of our national policymakers to take action that would lead to lasting change.

In April 2010, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research and Arizona State University hosted a strategy forum in Phoenix, Arizona. The forum brought together researchers, activists, clergy, and other community stakeholders to discuss the effects of the current immigration system on immigrant women and promising approaches for addressing the complex challenges this system creates. Forum participants identified a range of difficulties that many Latina immigrants encounter, including separation from their children due to detention and deportation, violence in the home and workplace, inadequate access to health care, and lack of economic security.

The speakers and guests explored how current public policies can compound or mitigate these challenges. They examined the negative effects of national policies such as the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), the Section 287(g) program of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and various laws that restrict the access of both authorized and unauthorized immigrants to public benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, Medicaid, and State Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

Forum participants also discussed state policies in Arizona that have a profound effect on immigrants, including Proposition 200 (requires anyone applying for benefits to provide proof of citizenship and makes it a misdemeanor for public officials to fail to report individuals they suspect are undocumented) and Arizona State House Bill 2008 (adds jail time to the possible penalties against officials who do not report persons they think may be undocumented). Participants also spoke about the anticipated effects on immigrant women and families of Arizona State Senate Bill 1070. Awaiting the governor’s signature at the time of the forum, this legislation requires law enforcement officials, during any lawful stop, detention, or arrest, to investigate the immigration status of individuals they suspect are undocumented. (The U.S. Justice Department filed a suit on July 6, 2010, against the State of Arizona challenging the constitutionality of this law.<sup>1</sup> On July 28, 2010, a federal judge issued a ruling that barred the state from enforcing several key sections of the law, including the provision that required police officers to check the immigration status of individuals they have stopped, detained, or arrested).<sup>2</sup>

In addition to discussing policies that negatively affect immigrant women, forum participants recognized that some policies can be beneficial to Latina immigrants and their families. Specifically, they spoke of national policies and programs designed to protect victims of violence, such as the Violence Against Women Act and the U-visa program, created under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. They also discussed proposed national legislation such as comprehensive immigration reform, the Development, Relief, and Enforcement for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, the Humane Enforcement and Legal Protections (HELP) for Separated Children Act, and the Child Citizen Protection Act.



Following the discussions about the challenges faced by Latina immigrants and families, forum participants shared information about their own advocacy, organizing, and educational outreach, reflecting on how the strategies their organizations employ can help craft better immigration policies and create positive social change. Many pointed to a need for continued conversation about possible solutions to the challenges faced by immigrant women, whose interests and concerns are often overlooked in public policy debates.





## Panel: Latina Immigrants, Family, and Policy

**Moderator:** Lisa Magaña, Associate Professor, Department of Transborder Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies, Arizona State University

**Panelists:** Deborah Bergman, Social Services Coordinator, The Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project

Maricela Flores, former Director, domestic violence program

Magdalena Schwartz, Pastora, Discípulos del Reino

### Deborah Bergman

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The Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project provides free legal and social services to men, women, and unaccompanied children detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Arizona. According to Bergman, in her work she has found that two especially pressing problems for immigrants in Arizona are long-term mandatory detention for immigration violations, and the separation of parents from children due to immigration detention and deportation. Many of Bergman's clients are "mixed" families: families where the children are citizens of the United States, but the parents are either lawful permanent residents or undocumented. When these parents are detained, often for minor misdemeanors such as shoplifting and traffic violations, their children are taken into the custody of Child Protective Services (CPS) if the parents do not have a plan for who will care for them. Many of these parents are held by federal immigration authorities for long periods of time and, therefore, cannot participate in reunification services. As a result, some permanently lose custody of their children.

Bergman identified several factors that lead to this difficult situation. To begin, she noted that there is "no collaboration" or communication between federal immigration authorities and the Arizona state courts. Therefore, when parents are detained they often do not know where their children are, the name of their CPS caseworker, or what their CPS case plan is. Bergman works to educate detained parents so they know the status of their CPS case and CPS caseworkers. She also works with actors in the state court system to help them gain a realistic understanding of the parents' situation. For example, Bergman noted that court personnel often believe federal authorities only detain immigrants for short periods of time, but in fact, many of her clients are detained for a period of eight months to a year. Improving communication between the agencies involved in these cases, argued Bergman, increases the chance that immigrant parents will retain custody of their children.

*"If you have a parent whose case will take eight months to fight and their child is two years old, they will lose custody of that kid, regardless of whether or not there is an allegation of abuse..."*

Bergman explained that the Arizona state court dependency policy contributes to detained immigrant parents' problems with child custody by presenting a timeline for reunification that is too short for individuals held in long-term detention. In addition, the policy allows no flexibility for parents in detention. For example, if a child is three years or younger, the parents have six months to complete reunification services or their parental rights are terminated. Bergman ex-

plained, “If you have a parent whose case will take eight months to fight and their child is two years old, they will lose custody of that kid, regardless of whether or not there is an allegation of abuse against that parent or if a kid was just put into CPS because the mother was detained and there was no one to care for the child at that time.” Many of Bergman’s clients have permanently lost custody of their children “just because [Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio] stopped them at a traffic stop and they didn’t have a plan in place for who would take care of their children.”

In her experience, Bergman has found that family members who could care for these children are often afraid to assume this responsibility due to the provisions of Arizona House Bill 2008, passed in 2009. This law requires all state and local governmental employees in Arizona to report to law enforcement any individual whom they suspect is in the United States illegally. Employees who fail to do so may be charged with a misdemeanor. Many of Bergman’s detained clients whose children have been taken into CPS custody have undocumented family members who could care for their sons and daughters; however, these family members do not come forward because they fear the CPS caseworker will report them to immigration authorities.

Bergman noted that the implementation of Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Agreements of Cooperation in Communities to Enhance Safety and Security (ACCESS) program has placed more immigrants at risk for losing custody of their children by increasing the number of persons in immigrant detention. The ICE ACCESS program allows federal officials to “reach into county, state, and other jails to look for people who.... are undocumented or removable” and transfer those individuals from local to federal custody. Bergman stated that although this program was designed to target the “worst of the worst” offenders, it has been misused by local officials. In Maricopa County, Arizona, Sheriff Joe Arpaio “has been abusing his powers and arresting people for minor traffic infractions” and other minor crimes, then turning over those individuals to federal immigration officials for removal. In her view, the program should be discontinued because it was not intended to “capture the kinds of people” being detained.

Reflecting on the effects of policies at the national level, Bergman cited the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 as the primary “reason that most people are detained in Arizona and across the country today.” The IIRIRA rendered many more people removable from the United States by making relatively minor misdemeanor crimes have “extremely harsh consequences” for immigrants. Bergman said that IIRIRA has affected immigrants in two significant ways. First, it has made detention mandatory for those who have committed minor misdemeanor crimes by removing judicial discretion in these cases. Second, it has made immigrants who are detained ineligible for certain types of immigration relief.

Several of Bergman’s clients are long-term lawful permanent residents who have been in the country 20–30 years but have been put into removal proceedings for minor infractions for which they did not serve any jail time. Even parents who are held on minor charges and then transferred to mandatory detention risk losing custody of their children. Furthermore, noted Bergman, under IIRIRA immigration judges are no longer allowed to release immigrant parents from detention so they may care for their children. Finally, because of IIRIRA, individuals who commit minor crimes are now charged under federal law with aggravated felonies and “no longer are eligible for their day in court where they can get discretion from an immigration judge.”

Bergman concluded her remarks by discussing two acts before the United States Congress that, if passed, would mitigate some of the effects of the policies she described. The Child Citizen

Protection Act would restore judicial discretion in immigration cases so that judges can decide whether individuals who have committed minor crimes can remain in the United States with their children. The Help Separated Children Act would “preserve family unity when there is an immigration infraction” by allowing individuals who are parents or caregivers of United States citizens to be released so that they may care for their children. It would also create protocols for arrest of immigrants so that immigrant parents can make arrangements for the care of their children, preventing these children from entering CPS custody.

## Maricela Flores

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Flores discussed the effects that public policies have on abused Latina immigrant women and their families. She argued that “Latina immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence and their children are among the most disadvantaged populations” in the United States. Public policies restrict their access to key resources that can help them achieve safety, including health care, health insurance, housing assistance, child care, and transitional short-term housing. Moreover, even when they qualify for services, many Latina immigrant women do not apply for them because of language barriers, a fear of interacting with both governmental and non-governmental agencies, and what Flores calls “cultural misunderstandings.”

*“...many women do not access services because they fear deportation.”*

Most importantly, according to Flores, many women do not access services because they fear deportation. This fear is compounded by policies that encourage welfare caseworkers to report undocumented women seeking services. Flores asked, “Can you imagine these women that are in a constantly high risk of danger, how difficult [it is] for them to find services and the necessary support to survive?” During her time as the director of a domestic violence shelter in Phoenix, Flores was often devastated to see women returning to their abuser due to a lack of resources.

Other policies, however, have provided Latina immigrants who are victims of domestic violence with critically important resources. Two policies that have been especially great resources for battered Latina immigrants are the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the U-visa program. Flores stated that VAWA can be used to help immigrant women obtain legal status if they meet the following criteria:

1. they are married to their abuser;<sup>3</sup>
2. their abuser is a legal alien or American citizen; and
3. they can provide documentation of their abuse.

The U-visa program can be used by victims of domestic violence (as well as by victims of other certain crimes) to obtain both temporary legal status and work eligibility for up to four years. According to Flores, to obtain a U-visa, the victim must:

1. prove that she has suffered “substantial physical or mental abuse due to a criminal activity”;
2. provide “information on how the victim can assist government officials in learning more about the crime investigation and prosecution of the individual that committed the crime”;
3. prove that the crime(s) occurred in the United States or violated U.S. law; and
4. be willing to cooperate with law enforcement.

*“...women and their children face a great difficulty due the scarcity of resources available to them.”*

Flores noted that one problem with both VAWA and the U-visa program is that it can take up to nine months for victims to receive their legal status and/or work eligibility. During those nine months, “women and their children face a great difficulty due the scarcity of resources available to them.” Flores emphasized that policy makers need to be better informed about the consequences that public policies have for abused Latina immigrant women and children, including both the dangers these women face and the resources that they need. “As human beings,” concluded Flores, these women “have the right to access resources and services in order to survive and the right to live in a safe and secure environment free of violence.”

## **Magdalena Schwartz**

Schwartz’s presentation focused on the challenges that many Latina immigrants face in accessing public benefits for themselves and, in some cases, their children or other family members. Several state-level policies in recent years have exacerbated these challenges. In 2004, the Arizona State Legislature passed Proposition 200, which requires anyone registering to vote or applying for benefits to provide proof of citizenship and makes it a misdemeanor for public officials to fail to report individuals whom they suspect are undocumented. Under the law, anyone who provides public benefits to those who cannot produce proof of citizenship may be fined. In 2009, the Arizona State Legislature passed another law, HB 2008, which added jail time to the possible penalties against officials who fail to report individuals whom they suspect are undocumented.

A pastor and activist, Schwartz spoke about the important consequences of these laws for many Latina immigrants she knows in the Phoenix area. She noted that some providers have reported to immigration authorities parents who are pursuing benefits for their eligible children or other family members. Schwartz told the story of one woman, a U.S. citizen, who went to apply for benefits for herself and her two children, also U.S. citizens. The agency official asked about the status of the woman’s husband (who was undocumented). The woman replied that she was only applying for herself and her children and showed paperwork confirming their citizenship. The official asked again about her husband. Concerned to protect him, the woman left without completing her application. Immigration authorities later came to her home to further investigate her husband’s immigration status.



Magdalena Schwartz and Maricela Flores

Schwartz’s story illustrates the challenges for immigrant women and their families created not only by current public policies that limit many immigrants’ access to benefits, but also by widespread confusion about these policies on the part of both providers and immigrants. This confusion has helped to create a climate in which immigrant women are often afraid to seek forms of assistance for which they or their family members are, in fact, eligible.

## Panel: Building Communities, Pursuing Justice: Strategies for Policy Change

**Moderator:** Cecilia Menjivar, Professor of Sociology, Arizona State University

**Panelists:** Lydia Guzman, President, Somos America  
Carmen Cornejo, Executive Director, CADENA  
Delle McCormick, Executive Director, Borderlinks

### Lydia Guzman

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Guzman noted that the implementation of current immigration enforcement policies has created problems for immigrant women and families in Arizona. Somos America engages in a collaborative effort to document these problems, especially those caused by ICE's 287(g) program in Maricopa County.<sup>4</sup> According to Guzman, "the 287(g) program nationally isn't meeting its goal of arresting violent criminals," but is instead resulting in the removal of persons who have committed either minor infractions or no crimes at all. In Maricopa County, the 287(g) program has been abused by law enforcement officers who use racial profiling to selectively check the immigration status of individuals under the pretext of "traffic stops." Somos America's documentation of these abuses resulted in the Department of Homeland Security "stripping" the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office of part of their 287(g) program, meaning officers are no longer able to make arrests in the field for immigration violations. "This is why we need to continue to collect these stories," said Guzman.

Somos America has documented several instances where the push to enforce immigration laws in Arizona has had serious consequences for immigrants. For example, said Guzman, law enforcement authorities responding to service calls often prioritize enforcing immigration laws over serving victims. They begin by checking the identification of witnesses to and victims of crimes because "they immediately want to process them for deportation," maintained Guzman. "That becomes a problem when we have situations where perhaps someone is calling because they are a victim of domestic violence...rather than the police helping them and referring them to programs where VAWA [the Violence Against Women Act] can be enacted, they're too busy, worried about... citizenship status."

Guzman also argued that Arizona's "zealous efforts" to enforce immigration laws has resulted in the involuntary signature of voluntary departure forms that can be used to deport immigrants. "Here in Maricopa County, we have reports that [the police] are trying to make [immigrants] sign and they force them...to put their fingerprint on, because in lieu of a signature... they will deport them with that," reports Guzman. She shared the disturbing story of a woman who was arrested for having a falsified identification card, which was later determined to have been issued by a legitimate government agency. While detained, law enforcement officials attempted to force her to sign a voluntary departure form. She refused. In an attempt to get her fingerprint on the form, officials broke her arm. Guzman maintained that documenting, collecting, and reporting these types of stories to policymakers may result in significant changes to current immigration policies.



CADENA's mission, according to Cornejo, is to promote education among immigrant students, to provide information to students about their rights, and to invoke policy change through advocacy. CADENA believes that education is a central issue for the approximately 230,000 undocumented Latinas who live in Arizona. Forty-one percent of Latina women in Arizona do not graduate on time with a standard diploma, said Cornejo. Moreover, education is relevant to many issues that Latina immigrants face today, including poverty, immigration status, English proficiency, parental involvement in families, gender stereotypes, caretaking of family members, anti-immigrant sentiment, and the lack of legal status.

Cornejo cited two Arizona laws that have had serious consequences for undocumented students, preventing them from fully integrating into the community. First, she stated that Arizona's Employer Sanctions Law has prevented undocumented workers from having better jobs. The law requires employers in Arizona to check the legal status of new hires by using a database maintained by the federal government. Second, Cornejo cited Arizona's Proposition 300 as having a particularly negative effect on undocumented students. Under Proposition 300, students who are undocumented are not eligible for in-state tuition or for subsidized financial aid at any of Arizona's institutions of higher education. Cornejo also said that:

- Undocumented families, on average, make about \$20,000 annually “in good times”—almost the same amount that out-of-state tuition costs.
- In 2007, 1,925 immigrant Latinas were denied in-state tuition in Arizona, forcing them to rely on a rapidly-dwindling pool of private scholarships. These students had grades that were 30 percent better than those of other students.

“This is an outrage,” said Cornejo. Furthermore, according to Cornejo, Proposition 300 cut funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) and General Educational Development (GED) programs, both heavily used by undocumented students. Thus, Proposition 300 “basically put education just out of reach of so many undocumented students here in the state.”

Two other Arizona laws “in the pipeline” in Arizona that threaten to diminish educational opportunities for immigrants are Arizona State House Bill 2382 and Arizona State House Bill 2182. The former would require public schools to collect information about the immigration status of students and draft an annual report detailing the services used by undocumented students, including the ratio of undocumented students per teacher and the estimated annual cost of providing educational services to undocumented students. “They are going to use these numbers to continue the hate in the community against undocumented children,” argued Cornejo. She pointed out that these reports will not include information about the funding of public education in Arizona, which is provided by taxes “paid by everyone.” Public education, explained Cornejo, is “something that is their [immigrants'] right to have because they pay sales tax.”

Arizona State House Bill 2182 would require schools to exclude students without proof of legal residence from both average attendance and student counts. Since school funding is based on these counts, this would result in lower funding for schools with undocumented students. Both HB 2382 and HB 2182 would disproportionately affect schools that serve large numbers of undocumented students. According to Cornejo, in some schools in the central Phoenix, Arizona



corridor, undocumented students make up as much as 30 to 60 percent of the student body. Cornejo stated that the cumulative impacts of these types of policies and budget cuts are higher teen pregnancy rates, higher dropout rates, and chronic depression among undocumented students. “What is the message we are transmitting to these young ladies when we do not provide them with access to education?” said Cornejo. The largest impact of these policies on the immigrant community, however, is decreased political participation. Cornejo argued that this is the intention of these policies and cuts.

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*“What is the message we are transmitting to these young ladies when we do not provide them with access to education?”*

Cornejo offered three solutions to the current educational crisis faced by undocumented students. First, she called for the passage of “comprehensive, bipartisan, and humanitarian” immigration reform. Second, Cornejo argued that undocumented students need pathways to citizenship. Finally, Cornejo said that passage of the DREAM Act would help improve access to educational opportunities for undocumented students by offering a path to legalization for students if certain criteria are met.

## **Delle McCormick**

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Borderlinks is a faith-based organization that has worked for 25 years to educate individuals about issues of global politics and economics through the lens of the border. The organization strives to create an educated electorate so that people “know the issues” when discussing immigration. “We believe in raising awareness... accompanied by transforming action,” said McCormick. “We want to see the world change as a result of our educational program.” In her work McCormick also facilitates conversations between “people of great difference... so that we can make policies and practices that are humane and comprehensive.”

McCormick’s presentation focused on the women she encounters who are “really destroyed by our border policy.” Many of these women come to the United States to pursue economic opportunities or to reunite with family members already here. They face a range of vulnerabilities, however, when crossing the border, including rape, sexual assault, physical assault, and dehydration and malnourishment (often as a result of giving their food and water to their children and male partners). Furthermore, some immigrant women crossing the border are pregnant, adding to the health risks they face. Finally, McCormick noted that women are sometimes misinformed about the risks of the journey. For example, they may be told they will need one gallon of water for the seven-day crossing through the Sonoran desert, when in fact they need one gallon per day. For all of these reasons, McCormick explained, women often die during these border crossings. Women accounted for half of the deaths McCormick knows of that occurred in 2008 in the Tucson sector (the deadliest sector on the U.S.-Mexico border).

McCormick called for a reframing of the immigration debate to better capture the complexity of the phenomenon of illegal immigration. For example, instead of talking about “the poor,” McCormick talks about “people made poor.” “Let’s start thinking about how people are made poor—not by God, but by people—and how we can make them unpoor,” said McCormick. Similarly, McCormick reconceptualizes “border security” as “education, health care, dignified work, [and] sustainable development in the ‘Borderlands’ and in the sending communities.” She also suggested that there needs to be further discussion about the North American Free Trade Agree-

ment (NAFTA) and other policies that are “causing the hemorrhage of people from Mexico and Central and South America to the United States.” Finally, McCormick called for a discussion of “state-sanctioned terror” and “the war against people made poor” that can make for “proactive” rather than “reactive” conversations about immigration.



Lydia Guzman

# Luncheon Keynote Address

**Introduction:** **Linell Cady**, Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, Arizona State University

**Keynote Speaker:** **Kyrsten Sinema**, Arizona State Representative, Arizona State Legislature, District15

## Kyrsten Sinema

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Since the “Chandler Round-up,”<sup>5</sup> a 1997 law enforcement operation in Chandler, Arizona, in which police questioned and detained hundreds of immigrants, Sinema has seen a “real advancement in strategies of alienation and oppression and marginalization of immigrant communities, and nowhere has that impact been leveled as heavy as on Latina immigrants.” Latina immigrants face “fear, persecution, and isolation.” According to Sinema, this will only increase with the passage of three pieces of legislation which, at the time of the forum, were pending in the Arizona legislature. The first is Arizona State Senate Bill 1070 (which had passed both the House and the Senate at the time of the forum and was awaiting the governor’s signature). When this bill becomes law, argued Sinema, life will become even more difficult for immigrant Latinas in Arizona.

Sinema noted that one especially problematic provision in SB 1070 would allow individuals to sue law enforcement agencies for failure to enforce all immigration laws, without making an exception that would protect victims of or witnesses to violent crimes. This means, Sinema explained, that if an undocumented woman who is abused in her home calls the police, her abuser could sue the law enforcement agency for failing to enforce all federal immigration laws if the police failed to inquire into her status. In Sinema’s view, the bill’s lack of exemptions for witnesses to crimes and crime victims would make it easier for individuals to exploit and abuse immigrant women.

*“...in addition to increasing the vulnerability of immigrant women, the implementation of SB 1070 would pose problems for law enforcement, putting them in a ‘double-bind.’”*

Sinema observed that in addition to increasing the vulnerability of immigrant women, the implementation of SB 1070 would pose problems for law enforcement, putting them in a “double-bind.” They could be sued for not enforcing current immigration law, but they could also be sued for violating the civil rights of individuals whose immigration status they check.

In her presentation, Sinema spoke about two other Arizona bills related to women’s health and reproductive rights that would “have a very real impact on the lives of undocumented women.” The first would require all local health entities to provide information to the state government when a woman seeks to terminate her pregnancy, regardless of the reason for the termination. Although the bill allows for the redaction of the woman’s name in the interest of protecting her privacy, it will make most other identifying information a matter of public record. Thus, in small rural communities, the risk of women being identified is very high. Sinema is concerned that these women will face backlash and retribution for seek-

ing “the care they need to protect themselves, their bodies, their lives, their families, and their futures.”

Another related piece of legislation would prohibit the use of public funds for the termination of pregnancies, whether through health insurance plans for state employees or through state plans such as Medicaid. The proposed bill contains no exemption for cases of rape, incest, sexual assault, or abuse; the only exemption is to protect the life of the mother. Both these bills, argued Sinema, pose “daunting challenges for women who have been assaulted or abused.”

Sinema also highlighted three pieces of legislation that are either pending or have been recently passed that will have positive effects for immigrant Latinas. The first is an Arizona bill that would change the definition of sex trafficking in the state. Sinema stated that sex trafficking in Arizona is a “very vibrant practice”; Arizona has one of the highest rates of sex trafficking in the United States. At the state level, law enforcement and prosecutors have had “virtually no tools” to combat sex trafficking, but have had to rely on federal laws. If the bill passes, prosecutors will be able to prosecute not only individuals who have physically transported women but also those individuals who have “harbored, enslaved, and exploited” women for sexual purposes.

Similarly, another bill pending in the Arizona State Legislature would give prosecutors better ways of combating child prostitution in the state. Child prostitution often occurs with young teenage girls who lack legal status in this country, making them “easy prey,” since their disappearance will likely not be reported to police. Sinema is moving forward with legislation that would allow prosecutors to punish the “johns” who engage in child prostitution rather than punishing the girls, who instead need “intensive treatment.”

At the federal level, Sinema stated that the passage of health reform will bring “sweeping changes” to the United States. While she expressed disappointment that unauthorized immigrants were not included in the reform legislation, Sinema pointed out that the legislation allocated \$11 billion for community health care centers across the United States. Arizona has 129 community health care centers and will likely receive hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding. Since community health care centers do not ask about the immigration status of individuals seeking care, they have become the primary source of health care services for undocumented immigrants in Arizona, “particularly for women, women who are pregnant, women who have children, and women who are single.” Thus, the federal health reform will have a significant impact on the health of immigrant women, even though these women were not explicitly included in the legislation. Sinema called this increase in services a “bridge” for undocumented women and their families “as we move forward to comprehensive immigration reform.”

# Looking Ahead: Proposing Policies, Creating Strategies, Taking Action

**Introduction:** **Olivia Salcido**, Arizona State University

**Presenter:** **Jennifer Allen**, Executive Director, Border Action Network

## Jennifer Allen

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Allen's talk focused on her work as the director of Border Action Network, a human rights organization that works with immigrant families and border communities to “build the voice, the power, the capacity, and the preparation of low-income immigrant families” on the local, state, and national level. According to Allen, Border Action Network “works to create an informed, prepared, and organized network of low-income immigrant families.... who can impact the very same policies and policymakers who are impacting their lives.” Allen outlined the previous accomplishments of Border Action Network, described the two key principles that guide her organization, and discussed three strategies she uses in her organizing work.

Allen described the previous accomplishments of Border Action Network as an example of what effective organizing can accomplish. On the local level, Allen stated that Border Action Network has been engaged in community organizing and has worked to hold law enforcement accountable for “recognizing the basic, inherent, fundamental rights of every single member of their community.” At the state level, Allen's group has been involved in the “push-back” of anti-immigrant measures proposed in Arizona. Members of Border Action Network, Allen said, were “tired of protesting bills after they get passed” and began to work proactively to lobby members of the Arizona State Legislature about pending “anti-immigrant” legislation. In the past year, Border Action Network generated over 40,000 e-mails to Arizona legislators about proposed bills. Nationally, Border Action Network has developed over 30 policy recommendations and brought them to Washington, building significant relationships “so that congressional offices, the White House, [and] Homeland Security look to our recommendations for information, for suggestions.... about what they should be doing in relation to policy.”

This work is possible, explained Allen, because of two key principles that shape the strategies employed by Border Action Network. The first key principle is that Border Action Network is a human rights organization, not an immigrant rights organization. This distinction, claimed Allen, is “incredibly powerful and critical.” Although Border Action Network prioritizes issues that significantly affect immigrants, its long-term vision is that everyone deserves a minimum standard of living that allows them to “live with dignity.” The second key principle is that immigrants need to proactively propose solutions to social problems, not simply criticize current public policies. “We need to stand with other families and say we need to be an innovative state, we need to be a strong state with solid leadership that can move all of us forward,” said Allen.

To do that requires building both “power and voice” through grassroots organizing. Allen stated that Border Action Network has used three steps to engage in effective grassroots organizing. The first is an “educational process” whereby the organization works to transform community members into “solid, strong leaders” through a 40-hour, 3-month Human Rights Promoter

training. Individuals who undergo the training learn about needs, civic rights, human rights, the Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, how to document human rights abuses, the history of immigrants, and the history of immigration policy in the United States. As a part of the training, individuals put together a work plan that becomes “the base of our organizing.” Currently, Border Action Network has over 100 Human Rights Promoters.

Out of their Human Rights Promoter Training, explained Allen, individuals work to form committees. These committees are important because they provide a “space of confidence” where “people can be fully human.” Allen emphasized that this is important because “there are so many laws, messages, efforts, voices in the state of Arizona that deny the basic humanity of people” and remove people from the larger community.

According to Allen, the third step is the cooperative collaboration of these committees to invoke “effective policy change.” These committees work together to propose policy recommendations. “We aren’t going to denounce something unless we can say what it is we are for.” Allen said that this “transforms how we [at Border Action Network] are perceived.... we are seen as important players because we can bring things to the table [and] articulate what we want.” By following these three steps, Border Action Network is “able to sustain ourselves... that’s how in the face of Arizona, where we are truly at ground zero, we can maintain our hope, we can maintain the struggle because we’re connected, we’re part of a community... [and we] can articulate where we want to go.”



# Forum Agenda

Friday, April 16, 2010

## Welcome and Introductions

### **Carolyn Forbes**

Assistant Director, Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, Arizona State University

### **Deborah N. Losse**

Dean of Humanities, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Arizona State University

### **Sheila Davaney**

Program Officer in Religion, The Ford Foundation

### **Cynthia Hess**

Study Director, Institute for Women's Policy Research

## Panel: Latina Immigrants, Family, and Policy

### **Moderator:**

#### **Lisa Magaña**

Associate Professor, Department of Transborder Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies, Arizona State University

### **Panelists:**

#### **Maricela Flores**

former Director, domestic violence program

#### **Magdalena Schwartz**

Pastora, Discípulos del Reino

#### **Deborah Bergman**

Social Services Coordinator, The Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project

## Panel: Building Communities, Pursuing Justice: Strategies for Policy Change

### **Moderator:**

#### **Cecilia Menjívar**

Professor of Sociology, School of Social and Family Dynamics

### **Panelists:**

#### **Lydia Guzman**

President, Somos America

#### **Carmen Cornejo**

Executive Director, CADENA

#### **Delle McCormick**

Executive Director, Borderlinks

## Luncheon Keynote Address:

### **Representative Kyrsten Sinema,**

Arizona State Legislature, District 15

## Looking Ahead: Proposing Policies, Creating Strategies, Taking Action

### **Jennifer Allen**

Executive Director, Border Action Network

## Open Discussion

### **Moderator:**

#### **Alesha Durfee**

Assistant Professor, Women and Gender Studies, Arizona State University

## Closing Remarks

### **Jane Henrici**

Study Director, Institute for Women's Policy Research

## Endnotes

1. Chishti, Muzaffar and Claire Bergeron, "Focus Remains on Arizona as Justice Department Files Lawsuit against SB 1070." < <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/print.cfm?ID=789>> (Accessed May 10, 2011).
2. *United States v. State of Arizona, et al.*, CV10-1413-PHX-SRB. July 28, 2010. < <http://tucsoncitizen.com/mark-evans/files/2010/07/sb1070boltonruling3.pdf>> (Accessed May 10, 2011).
3. The 2000 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, included in the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act, amended the 1994 VAWA to enable some immigrant women not married to their abusers to self-petition for lawful permanent residence. See National Immigration Law Center, "Immigration Law and Policy: Obtaining Lawful Permanent Resident Status." <<http://www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/obtainlpr/oblpr038.htm>> (Accessed May 10, 2011); Orloff, Leslye, "Women Immigrants and Domestic Violence." in *Women Immigrants in the United States*, eds. Philippa Strum and Danielle Tarantolo (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center, 2002); and "Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000." U.S. Public Law 106-386. 106<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 28 October 2000. < <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/10492.pdf>> (Accessed May, 10, 2011).
4. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement website describes the 287(g) program as "one component under the ICE ACCESS umbrella of programs and services." See < <http://www.ice.gov/partners/dro/iceaccess.htm>> (September 30, 2010).
5. The Chandler Roundup refers to a law enforcement operation in Chandler, Arizona in which police and Border Patrol agents questioned and detained hundreds of immigrants suspected to be undocumented (some were later discovered to be U.S. citizens or legal residents). See Gorman, Anna, "Arizona Immigration Law an Unpleasant Reminder of Chandler's Past." *Los Angeles Times*, (June 6, 2010). < <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jun/06/nation/la-na-chandler-20100606>> (Accessed May 10, 2011).

# **New Families, New Friends: Organizations Working with Latina Immigrants**

## **Institute for Women's Policy Research**

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies. The Institute works with policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups to design, execute, and disseminate research that illuminates economic and social policy issues affecting women and their families, and to build a network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR's work is supported by foundation grants, governmental grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations and corporations. IWPR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that also works in affiliation with the women's studies and public policy programs at The George Washington University.

[www.iwpr.org](http://www.iwpr.org)



## **Arizona State University**

### **The Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict**

The mission of the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict at Arizona State University is to advance knowledge, seek solutions and inform policy on the dynamics of religion and conflict in the contemporary world. By serving as a hub that fosters exchange and collaboration both within and beyond the university, the Center creates new links between the academic world and that of professionals, policymakers, practitioners and religious leaders.

### **The School of Social and Family Dynamics**

The School of Social and Family Dynamics at Arizona State University is designed to address pressing issues facing individuals as they cope with changes in their lives and as they interact within their social environments—be they large or small, near or distant, personal or impersonal—including families, communities and broader cultural and structural changes.

### **The School of Transborder Studies**

The School of Transborder Studies promotes academic excellence and social change by developing cutting-edge interdisciplinary knowledge regarding the populations of the U.S.-Mexico transborder space and beyond. The school strives to affect transborder policy and social practice to promote group and regional prosperity in a globalized world.

### **Women and Gender Studies**

One of the largest, most vibrant Women and Gender Studies programs in the country, Women and Gender Studies at Arizona State University offers an undergraduate major, minor and graduate Ph.D. Located in the School of Social Transformation, the program is committed to empowering our students to make a difference in the world.





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