2019 Immigrant Integration Summit

Turning the Tide in Orange County: Insights on Advocacy and Policy

**Moderator:** Carlos Perea

**Speaker:** Salvador Sarmiento

Excited to have dialogue around advocacy. Conversation start to advocate for systemic change and policies. County is changing. Unique opportunity to create long-term systematic change to achieve dignity and respect for I&R. NDLON leading work around nation, very effective. Salvador is a trouble maker, agitates and incites. Fighting for human dignity and human rights.

Folks working on immigrant integration vs current wave of refugees. Are their folks working specifically with refugees. Political response on enforcement, issues of deportation, rapid response, detention, visitation?

When we talk about advocacy, we need to be honest. Take a step back and look at entire picture. So much advocacy has been so focused on DC, on one branch of govt- Congress, on one bill. Really focused for 20 years. Capacity building, strategizing has been directed toward enacting one bill. Has defined how we build advocacy and how to engage. How has it all gone in the direction of one strategy, one bill solution?

There are 3 branches of Govt, 3 levels of Govt (federal, state, local), 50 states and additional “territories” - one moving positive things forward, need to be thinking beyond 1 branch of govt in DC. It is very important to know that things that happen in any city in the country can have a huge national impact. But we can’t have impact without good local examples. “As long as we are playing tic tac toe, and our opponents are playing 3-D chess, we are not going to win.” We need to know there is a big playing field.

Popular education workshop, puzzle that is a tug of war. Forces pulling in different direction. One direction, inclusion, other direction, exclusion/attrition. Memo written by Chris Kobach, Secretary of State in Kansas, Pres Trump Commission on Voting Rights. Memo “Strategy of Attrition” how to get rid of non-white immigrant population in US. People who want to deport immigrants, need to deport enough, and treat rest that makes their lives so miserable that they self-deport. Mitt Romney- self-deportation plan. Block access to services. Example, Prop 187. English only policies, No solicitation policies for day laborers (Orange, Costa Mesa, Lake Forest). Prohibiting this- national fight. Right to stand outside and ask people for work. That was a huge federal lawsuit and it came out of Lake Forest, Orange County, CA. Went to the Supreme Court with NDLON. Won the right to stand outside and look for work. 287G- federal provision in INA deputizing local law enforcement to enforce immigration enforcement, prohibited in CA. Public Charge rule- issue, federal change is happening. Another strategy, County DA Offices, putting a charge or conviction on an I&R record will make them deportable now or in the future. Wanting to put charges on their records. Forces toward exclusion, strategy of attrition. Wear them down. Up to 55,000 immigrants in detention. Actual deportations, numbers of deportations have gone down because of sanctuary policies. TRUST Act, Truth Act, SB54 CA Values Act these have ensured
that it is going to be difficult for Trump Admin to get back to Obama deportation numbers. While we are pushing toward inclusion in CA, FL passed 287G in Florida. In Texas, announced 2 dozen new 287G programs. There are an unprecedented number of Sheriffs being deputized by Trump Admin. FAIR and CIST are two groups immigration restrictionism think tanks - basically are White Nationalist Groups covered in language as if they are professional research think tanks, their policy proposals, pushing SB 170 in AZ, SB 168 in FL. FAIR is providing free consulting to National Sheriffs Association, promoting 287Gs. Know strategy is to make immigrant lives miserable so they will self-deport. When immigrant commits a crime, there is a whole ecosystem to publish this. Use Fox News and media outlet. Troy Edgar has a whole national cable news platform to echo what he says for 2 weeks.

Orange County has historically been a bastion of conservative funding, thinking, and campaigning. Jim Gilchrist, founder of Minutemen is from OC. Joe Arpaio doesn’t exist without other cities enable him, his funders were from OC. Fundraiser at Original Mikes in Santa Ana. Orange County is complicated. Historically have found supporters in Orange County. Played an oversized role in buttressing these policies. CA Values Act SB 54 is the strongest anti-deportation legislation in the country. Sheriffs Association poked holes in it. But in terms of preventing local law enforcement from supporting deportation, it is the best in the nation. We might not have clarity on how important it was. The groups funding FAIR, CIST, they know that this is a big obstacle to them. This positive, inclusive message. If this message wins and gets out, that wins the day. What is going to defeat these policies, going to come from multicultural communities that ensure there are policies that protect this pluralism. How many CA members of Congress signed the letter of support, endorsing SB54? Zero. Letter never made public. Sheriffs told CA Representatives not to. Not one cent of CA resources will be used in federal enforcement of immigration. In years past, all of the CA delegation supported the TRUTH Act, TRUST Act got 2 letters. But the exclusion ecosystem is functioning. One year ago, when Jeff Sessions files lawsuit against SB54, throw out an offensive “hate circus” went to Orange, Aliso Viejo, HB, Lake Forest, Santa Ana, Fountain Valley, Los Alamitos. They rolled out to Orange County to fight at a local level. Manufactured a campaign to get a couple cities to build a narrative that there is a revolt in CA because of policies. Bussing people in from Fresno, IE, Arizona. Making threats to residents and city council members. Whispered in ear, “Build the Wall, Kill them All” Hatred and violence with which the FAIR group is working. This is important to be aware of the context we are working in. There was a lawsuit. Things have changed in OC. Pushed back with community groups that 15 years ago didn’t exist.

Inclusion has ecosystem of unions, grassroots groups, churches and faith partners, foundations, schools, Ecosystem isn’t always as smooth and quick on feet. Need to get better at responding. Not everyone needs to do everything. But we need to know that we are part of an ecosystem pushing in this direction. Not one group here can go at this alone and outweigh the other side. All hands on deck. Not territories. SEIU-Justice for Janitors started organizing in the hospitals in Orange County. Last Spring, we were able to neutralize what FAIR and the exclusion groups were trying to do. The folks were exhausted from the toxicity. Absorbing mean spirited stuff. Our ecosystem is very important. There isn’t funding necessary
to do this work. A lot of this stuff is volunteer with the guidance and support of organized civil society. Need to know how to engage with volunteers.

What are the local policies that push for inclusion: (from the session participants)

- Sanctuary Law in Santa Ana
- Diversity Task Force - stepping away from enforcement
- Rapid Response Networks
- Friends of Orange County Detainees
- Dream Resource Centers at Cal States and UCs
- Dual Language Immersion and Bilingual Education at SAUSD, Anaheim Unified, Orange Unified

War of the trenches, we can’t be in all of the trenches, but we move our trenches each inch by inch. I might not be in the trench over there, but I need to know that that trench over there is on my side. If I stay behind and I let all the other trenches do the work. Social change is like that. We need to know that this trench is moving forward. Having effective bilingual education. School districts stated policies to support immigrants and schools are safe places - SAUSD, Anaheim Unified District.

Access to housing- tenants rights so folks aren’t discriminated against because of language or nationality. Fair housing. Make sure that they can access apartments because they don’t have papers.

Safe places policies- after El Paso, Dayton, and Gilroy. Policies, actors, fear of violence and terror. When folks in the community can be terrorized when someone can open carry. Issues of access to weapons of war, this is pushing in this direction. Shootings is pushing in a direction of exclusion. Moms Demand Action is a great group working on this.

The right to organize- fear they will lose their jobs. NDLO is right now getting a huge number of cases of wage theft. So many more we are not effectively responding. Employers know that immigrant workers are afraid to speak out, are taken advantage of. The protection of workers at the workplace.

When working around sanctuary and stay, fighting for right to afford housing.

UC is working on immigrant integration. Establish Public Safety Advisory Committee. UCI incident-holding a resident at gunpoint- UC police getting into trouble. Now we have office of inclusive. Now people can demonstrate on campus.

Policing policies, especially at education/schools/campuses, the overlap between the vehicles for exclusion and the over-policing, huge overlap. Get better at understanding and articulating that. We do a terrible job at articulating this. There should never be an issue of funding, don’t fund the police dept for working with immigrant communities. City of LA with LA Justice Fund- funding immigrants facing removal. LA is supposed to be a flagship, they say there is no funding. But not prioritizing.
Call out the importance of the Census for these fights, how people are counted, effects the redistricting which influences all future policies. Who gets to vote and who represents us?

AB291 protects tenants, specifically undocumented tenants, from threats of deportation by landlords.

We can’t all do everything, but know we are part of this ecosystem. It is important to have people who specialize in these things. Legal services and removal defense. NDLON won prosecutorial discretion without an attorney. This was before now, individual cases are increasingly complicated. Legal capacities needing to build are different. Need specialized cluster of groups. They need to be part of this ecosystem for inclusion. Need to identify emblematic cases to make strategic litigation and public campaigns around them. Build narrative with broader ecosystem.

Have OC Justice Fund- promoting 2nd annual fundraiser at a back table. Help attorneys help those who are going through removal.

There are some things we can move the ball forward to build capacity at county level, and response capacity. No single group is going to win the day.

Integrative Voter Engagement- low propensity voters. Invested a lot in local elections, from at-large to by-district

Getting Rohrabacher out- took years to build a narrative around this man. Racism, misogyny, gun control, Russia ties. Required specific specialization, electoral capacity, voter reg. Scandalizing the things he has done. A lot of the things Trump has done, but not a lot of local folks who have been enabling him, need to scandalize and lift up those who are enabling this. Lots of folks have been enablers in OC, haven’t been accountable

Advocacy Couple things on our radar, should all be supporting:

1. OC Justice Fund- this is super important, using funding to get people out
2. Electoral/organizing ecosystem- elections work, moving from at-large to by-district.
3. Santa Ana Immigrant Defense Fund- no restrictions on helping, as long as SA resident
4. Beacon Policies- Sanctuary Ordinances in other cities besides Santa Ana. A lot of local officials across the state are wondering if they should speak out about this stuff. Ripple “Send out ripples of hope.”- Robert Kennedy. Changes conversation in Fresno, when you can point to Orange County.

Orange County has changed- zero Congressional representatives supporting Trump
However, 2 CA counties joined lawsuit against CA Sanctuary- Orange County was one of them, openly sides with Trump administration against its own residents and CA law.

Understanding that the county ended contract with ICE in July. The county is jailing people in other ways- we are finding out more and more that the county has been jailing people under Streamline. March dozen or two Give everyone misdemeanors or felonies by the dozen. Blatant disregard for due process. Orange County is helping federal govt jail these people. Doing this in San Diego and AZ.

Need people to be specialized doing rapid response, education policies, legal services, housing advocacy. We are all on the same side and we are all moving forward with a vision of what is CA, what is Orange County. Going to defeat the policies of hate. No single policy is going to win the movement. If we only think about policy, need to think of a broader vision.