FIGHT FOR ALL PANEL DISCUSSION

Afternoon Panel

**Introduction:** Cathleen Otero, delighted to be a partner and funder for OCOI. Inspired by number of people. Never imagined having a room of 200 people passionate about supporting immigrants.

*Sandy Chiang* - The California Endowment focus on SDOH- 10 years working on BHC, So LA, Coachella Valley, Long Beach, Boyle Heights, City Heights, Santa Ana. TCE created a separate fund put aside to respond to physical and rhetorical attacks on immigrant communities, Fight for All Fund to fight against federal policy, move at the state level. Oppty to be more innovative and protect vulnerable communities. Change narrative around immigrant communities. Protect vulnerable communities, mobilize a few flexible funds (ending next year). Give to local partners to support and protect communities under attack. Panelists up here are a cohort of grantees, tasked with protecting vulnerable communities. Oppty for learning. So much has happened. How will we leverage what is happening in City Heights for a bigger movement, in more places?

- Jennifer Lee Koh, Orange County Justice Fund (Orange County)
- Erick Lemus, Coachella Valley Immigrant Dignity Coalition and California Partnership (Coachella Valley)
- Leyla Aziz, Pillars of the Community (San Diego)
- Gaby Hernandez, Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition (Long Beach)
- Javier Hernandez, Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice (Inland Valley)
- Yvonne Maraijimenez, Neighborhood Legal Services (LA)
- Robert Hoo, Southern CA Education Fund (LA)

**Jennifer Koh** - OC Justice Fund, started a couple years ago by law professors, attorneys, and advocates. Immigrant Bond Fund with support from grant. Immigration Detention built up over 2 decades. Our country’s most intense human rights violations. As result of federal law and policy with a strong local impact. One of the many issues that arose was people who went before immigration judge who were granted ability to post a bond of $1,500 at minimum but average $8,000 bond to get release. We provide money so people can be released from detention while they fight their case.

In terms of goals: 1) Get people free. Founded on belief, no reason a person should remain incarcerated simply because they cannot pay. Since launching, we’ve been a part of 20 people’s releases from detention. Price of $70,000. Impact on dozens more, families, communities, orgs supporting the cases of...
these people. 2) Support and empower community orgs who are organizing, providing direct legal rep, providing humanitarian support. Bond support is a result of referral. 3) Stand alongside a broader movement. Questioning the practice of detaining people, with knowledge of local players and politics.

Challenges- sustainability. Operate a revolving bond fund. Expect that when bonds are released, will come back to the fund. Hoping for more PRIs, creative investments with other bond funds to alleviate the pressure for constant fundraising. Questions over limited resources have challenged questions for criteria, define connections to OC, and how to prioritize a high level of need.

Hope- We see many more orgs approaching Justice Fund. More orgs directly engaged in the hard work of engaging with those in detention. Member of National Bail Fund Network. Seen other bond funds step up- Muslims for Migrants, Believers Bailout, Free our Neighbors. Level of local support- large numbers of donations from immigrants. There’s been a shift.

**Erick Lemus**- Raised in Coachella Valley. I’m here to speak about unique Coalition, but not unique, everyone here is unique. Coalition formed through historic context happening in Coachella Valley. We have Sheriff, Border Patrol, and ICE in same jurisdiction. Lots of turmoil in combatting this. Cesar Chavez’s movement building and other leaders reside in Coachella Valley. Method of organizing has been through rapid response network, systems policy change, proactive messaging. Intake of asylum seekers, and shelters with victims of DV, those who see housing as a right. Trump Admin rhetoric united us, but missing infrastructure for a common thread. Movement for anyone to participate in. Not just an agenda, but encouraging residents and public officials that reside in Coachella Valley. No one person, agenda, more visible, have conversations with ICE and border patrol. Priorities for health and education. Highlight the local leaders and those who stand up for immigrant dignity. Highlight and bring forth leaders to be more visible, people feel courage. Organized with California Partnership, created space in model, to encourage residents and orgs to be the leads themselves of this work. Can’t have health without safety. Have a more assertive, visual presence. Purpose is to work together to build an infrastructure for socio-economic decision-making. Through that, seek to lift each organization, respecting the specialty that is happening in the Coachella Valley. Not led for one person to interpret that. No one entity owns the framework for immigrant justice. Who is uplifting dignity in the spaces when bringing coalitions together? Example, child is left in court to fight for themselves, how do we bring dignity to this child? Overnight, having to teach people about public safety, violence against Latino communities. Recently had an event. As Coalition we have a network and a resource to bring people together for vigil. People came together, putting residents in the forefront to lead conversations about dignity.
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Leyla Aziz, Pillars of the Community- Police, Court, and Policy Accountability. Focus on state systems, court systems. Saw intersect of the immigration issues in San Diego. Look at what is going around at the border. War going on at the state courts. Always going on, more amplified. Removing people who are “criminals” but who are “criminals”? People given felony charges. Using a participatory defense model to keep people in the country. Intersects between immigrants and criminal justice system. People who are being over-criminalized. Participatory defense, buy-ins and bail out. Safety and ability to show up in court. Start trying to get the bail. ICE isn’t having bail. Somebody talked about earlier. Another issue we are trying to figure out together is gangs- gangs is awful, cartel to young men and boys. Using same tactics on immigrants to lock up people. Govt is in Central America trying to police gangs in Honduras, El Salvador…Having to fight this, gang allegation. Trans woman is part of a gang, trying to get other countries to use tactics. Police Accountability, show black people to change frame of mind. Hearing a lot of pro-immigration talk. Pitting Black people against Latino people, saying that’s why you can’t get a job.

Gaby Hernandez- Who is involved or heard of a Rapid Response Network. LB IRC does a Community Defense Network. Collaborative effort, community-run network composed of different orgs. If someone is confronted by ICE at door/work place, local number to call and report incident. Someone goes to the scene to document what is going on. ICE knows we are documenting. If detained, connect them with legal defense fund for universal representation. Regardless of criminal history, background, represented by an attorney. Calls answered by community members. Everything runs by community members with help of community orgs. Goals 1) Empower community members to KYR, 2) Empower to get organized/involved, 3) Connect to Legal Resources. A lot of emergencies happened, bombarded by different calls. Challenges with technology, capacity, supporting community members getting involved in this work. What we started is a great idea, but there are a lot of challenges. Being ran in different parts of CA. In connection to track ICE activity. It’s important to have networks run by community members. How can we better the system to help undocumented communities?

Javier Hernandez -We do policy advocacy, legal service clinics, coordinate regional rapid response network. What makes our coalition unique, many orgs joined coalition after 2016 because people started asking about what happens if ICE comes to my door. These orgs needed more information to answer these questions. Had LGBT orgs, churches joining. Biggest program is the RRN. Have a hotline for people to call. Huge region. Reaching a small number of miles- Riverside, High Desert, Go into HTR communities and train people. We are within 100 miles of the border. Not just dealing with ICE, but also Border Patrol. Everyday getting calls from families filing missing person’s report, don’t know where they are, but they are being detained by Border Patrol. Important to have these networks to respond to issues and there’s probably going to be a crisis every week going into the election year. When people started dropping people off in IE, say call Diocese. Here are 60 people who need support. We went from having no shelter, to 4 hours later, have a shelter in San Bernardino. Only possible because of RRN.
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Someone arrived within 5 minutes. Staff arrived in 30 minutes with water. Diocese provided a church. You might need to respond to a big crisis. Get involved in your communities in that work.

Robert Hoo- One LA Organizer do broad based Community Organizing. High level of political disfunction. Rhetoric divides us. Reclaim our democracy, reclaim politics based on shared values and interests. People from diverse backgrounds come together, build relationships, tell common stories facing families around immigration, healthcare. Build power to engage with public officials, how do we improve things? How do we define what it means to be a citizen—legally, you have the right set of papers, you were born in the right place, historically, you have the right skin color. Historically, “do the work of the city” identify our interests and how to create a world where we can all thrive. Immigrants (undocumented or documented) willing to do the work of the citizen, identify issues, engage with neighbors, talk to public officials. Reclaim politics. One example, created fund to increase access to healthcare services...

Yvonne Mariajimenez- represents residents in civil matters that impact the poor. Sister org to Community Legal Aid of SoCal. Prohibited from organizing, do not do organizing. Members of One LA. Why would Legal Aid want to partner with an organizing org? Some of most powerful work done in this partnership. We train, KYR, this is power, teach someone to be involved in an effort. When ACA came about in CA, One LA wanted to ensure that as many people in LA County were enrolled in a health plan. Our attorneys came in and trained over two weekends. People devoted their time to enroll into a health plan. Created a workforce of health enrollers. 7,000 people enrolled in a 2-year period. The attorneys taught, supervised the clinics, made sure work done properly. Today, we’ve used that foundation of a strong organized people to do policy work. Provide access to other programs. Working with LA County decisionmakers to expand My Health LA to include mental health services. The board did the study on this and the depts now implementing this. People’s leadership skills were developed. Their belief they could make a difference mattered to them. Leadership development transforms people — people are able to deal with the next issue that comes into their community. Involved in access to healthcare, know your rights, and many clinics have taught their rights as citizens without status. In Boyle Heights there was a small community theater that people go to, these leaders wrote a play for the community and acted it out. The play was about a party, there’s a knock from ICE, someone says its ICE, let’s see your court order, it’s not signed, this is invalid, you aren’t allowed to come on to our property, you haven’t identified the person you are seeking. At the party, someone talks about being sick, someone tells them about My Health LA. Growing leadership, teaching and training people, you have transformed people so they become leaders.

Sandy- invite you to touch base with the panelists. Don’t stop here.