



NLIRH's Statement on Immigration Reform

The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) is truly inspired by the activism we have witnessed over the last several weeks. Latinos and Latinas, young and old, have taken to the streets to demand fair immigration reform and, above all, dignity and justice for ourselves, our families and our communities. Undoubtedly, this is a historic moment for all Latinos/as, but especially for the millions of Latino/a immigrants who have been living silently in the shadows for so many years. By uniting together in solidarity, we have showed the nation our strength, our will and our power to affect political and social change. As many marchers proclaimed, “¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!”

Advocates of fair immigration reform are demanding the right to: live in our society without fearing deportation and discrimination; access to our educational, health, and safety-net programs and systems; and to work with basic protections and benefits, including health care coverage. Reproductive justice activists are similarly fighting for a world in which women have an equal opportunity to fully participate in society, the freedom to determine the course of their lives, and the right and ability to access basic reproductive health services free of discrimination, harassment and shame. Both our progressive social agendas have been called “radical” and out of the mainstream. We know, however, that our shared values of self-determination and the freedom to live our lives with dignity are anything but radical.

With few exceptions, immigration and abortion rights are two of the most volatile issues of our time. The anti-immigrant and anti-choice movements have been very successful over the last several years at eroding basic rights at the state and federal level. It is important to recognize that many of the individuals who want to stop immigrants from accessing basic health services, including prenatal care, are the same ones who support restrictions on women's access to abortion and family planning services. In this very hostile political environment, advocates for reproductive rights and immigrant rights must support each other. We must work together to stop efforts to criminalize immigrants AND criminalize abortion. We must speak out together to demand legalization for undocumented immigrants AND to demand access to basic reproductive health care services. We must work together and support each other in our common quest for *salud, dignidad y justicia*.

With immigration reform looming, the time is now for reproductive health organizations dedicated to promoting the basic values of dignity, justice, and self-determination to raise their voices in support of fair and just immigration policies. The fate of Latina immigrants' lives is at stake and we can no longer afford to remain silent. We must advocate for the basic human right to health care, no matter your immigration status. We must continue to highlight how the right and ability to access health care information and services, including reproductive health care, is unjustly linked to one's racial, ethnic, socio-economic, sexuality and immigration status. The reproductive rights community must demand immigration reform that includes a meaningful opportunity to live the American dream—a ‘dream’ that we are all still fighting to achieve. By broadening the reproductive health agenda to include the fight of undocumented immigrants, we move one step closer to achieving reproductive justice.