



JEWISH COALITION *for*
IMMIGRANT JUSTICE NW

Newsletter

November 25, 2022 • Kislev 1, 5783

A DROP OF HONEY

Despite Thanksgiving's violent, racist roots, the idea of setting aside time to give thanks, to recognize the good resonates with me and our Jewish tradition. We are asked to notice the world's brokenness and use this awareness to fuel the work of creating a world of justice and kindness, openness and plenty for all. I am grateful for this community of people dedicated to supporting those who come to our country, a community of people who continue to organize and work and give in the face of many obstacles. *-Beth Fine*

One way to contribute to our community would be to write your own thoughts in a Jewishly- themed opening for the newsletter. See this [link](#) with information on how to do so.

TAKE ACTION

Take Action with T'ruah: Support Afghan Refugees in the US

Now that midterm elections are over, we need to continue to push to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act through Congress. [Please take a moment to tell your Members of Congress that Afghan refugees deserve a pathway to lawful permanent status.](#)

EVENTS

Save the Date: WAISN Lobby Day - February 16th in Olympia

The Jewish Coalition Advocacy Committee will be organizing a group of people to go down to Olympia for WAISN's Lobby Day. To learn more and attend, email andrea.soroko@gmail.com.

SAVE THE DATE


**WAISN'S
IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE
ADVOCACY DAY
FEBRUARY 16TH, 2023**

Immigrant communities of all statuses continue to be denied equal access to essential social safety nets. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the barriers and inequalities that undocumented Washingtonians have faced for decades.

On Feb 16, 2023, WAISN invites all members of our communities to unite our voices as we speak to Washington legislators about the importance of securing **unemployment insurance** for undocumented immigrants and extending **health care access** to all immigrants in the state of Washington.

Save the date and join us for this step in our movement towards equitable access to life saving resources for our communities.

Please keep an eye out on our website for updates regarding volunteer opportunities and registration for this event!



WASHINGTON IMMIGRANT
**SOLIDARITY
NETWORK**

Save the Date - Faith Action Network Events



[Faith Action Network](#)'s Network of Advocating Faith Communities (NAFC) comprises a growing network of over 150 communities across Washington State, committed to partnering with FAN and each other to build a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world. Join FAN for two upcoming legislative advocacy events:

FAN's Eastern WA Legislative Conference - Saturday, January 21 in Spokane (Hybrid Event)

FAN's Interfaith Advocacy Day - Thursday, February 9th in Olympia

NEWS

BREAKING NEWS: Title 42 Struck Down in Court, yet Timeline Challenged



Venezuelan migrants, some expelled from the United States to Mexico under Title 42, stand on the banks of the Rio Bravo river, in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, on Oct. 30. (Jose Luis Gonzalez/Reuters)

The Biden administration prepares for the end of Title 42 after a federal judge declared the pandemic border restrictions unlawful. Read more about the ruling [here](#). This is BIG win for federal immigration fight to reinstate asylum - a right protected by international law. U.S. border officials used the COVID pandemic as an excuse to quickly expel migrants, saying the ban had little proven benefit to public health even as it shunted migrants to dangerous places.

The end of Title 42 effectively restores asylum seekers' access to the borders for the first time since the Trump administration issued it during the earliest days of the pandemic. In a [statement](#) released by T'ruah, the rabbinic call for human rights entitled, [Rabbinic Human Rights Group Applauds Title 42 Ruling which Stops Inhumane Migrant Expulsions](#), CEO Rabbi Jill Jacobs reflects, "As Jews, we know that immigration policy can be a matter of life or death. Many of our own families fled danger to find refuge in the United States, and many of our family members died after this country's borders were closed to them."

According to [The Washington Post](#), "In his ruling, U.S. District Judge Emmet G. Sullivan sided with migrants who sued the government last year arguing that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Title 42 order was 'arbitrary and capricious' in violation of federal law.

However, [15 states filed a motion](#) to intervene and delay the court order that would lift Title 42 on December 21st of this year. In the [New York Times](#) article, "Lee Gelernt, the A.C.L.U. lawyer who filed the lawsuit before Judge Sullivan on behalf of migrants who are seeking asylum, said it was

'hypocritical' for the intervening states to demand Covid-19 restrictions for asylum seekers when they had opposed such restrictions in their own states in the past."

We will continue to track changes to the timeline of when Title 42 will be lifted and the right to asylum will be restored.

Challenges for Asylum: Backlog & Fast Tracked Recent Cases

The National Immigration Forum reports that there are nearly 2 million unresolved cases in the immigration court system, including 750,000 asylum applications, per government [data compiled by TRAC at Syracuse University](#). Handling those cases: only about 600 [judges](#).

This, combined with the recently accelerated timeline to process cases, is posing an impossible set of constraints on immigration attorneys as well as judges. In the meantime, the work permits expire for immigrants with pending cases, adding an additional layer of extreme financial stress to their legal limbo.

Border Agents Continue to Mislead Immigrants

Border Patrol agents continue to mislead immigrants and threaten their legal claims by assigning them random addresses for reporting purposes. The [National Immigration Forum](#) (NIF) reports on 13 people whom Border Patrol agents recently misled, sending each to a place where no one was expecting them. The migrants showed AP reporters Claudia Torrens and Vanessa Alvarez the documents they received after being released from U.S. custody. The addresses, used without permission and with no bearing on each immigrant's case, included addresses for Catholic Charities in New York and San Antonio, a church in El Paso, Texas, a private home in West Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and an operator of homeless shelters in Salt Lake City.

According to NIF, Catholic Charities of New York has received more than 300 notices to appear in immigration court for people the organization doesn't know, and deportation orders for migrants who missed court appearances because notices were sent to a Catholic Charities address.

This illegal practice effectively complicates or destroys the claims of immigrants who have been diligently following the steps to obtain legal relief of their immigration claims. When people don't receive official notices of court hearings and miss those dates, their claims may be summarily denied. They may be deported without review of the merits of their cases.

COMMITTEES

Accompaniment

We are implementing the recommendations of our strategic planning process and beginning to reach out to potential partners to identify volunteer opportunities to amplify the presence of our Jewish community and broader network in the immigrant accompaniment space. We continue to accompany community members to immigration court hearings and help with administrative support while learning about other possibilities to be in solidarity with individuals and families. We are looking forward to a year of action as we develop our goals for 2022-2023. We have indeed benefited from last year's learning and exploration.

Please let us know of your interest [here](#) and join us. We hold virtual meetings, monthly at 7pm, 3rd Wednesdays. All are welcome.

Advocacy

We continue to define our legislative priorities, connecting with coalition partners and planning for the legislative session. JCIJ signed on to a letter from Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP), OneAmerica and Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) to Governor Inslee in support of one of our legislative priorities - an Immigrant and Naturalization Assistance budget ask, including legal assistance to the Washington New Americans program and the DSHS Naturalization program as well as for individuals who are not lawful permanent residents but can obtain permanent immigration status in the U.S.

Want to help plan an educational event about key legislation that impacts immigrants? Want to practice telling your Jewish story to legislators? If so, join us! We will be doing training to tell our stories from a Jewish lens and organizing a group to head down to Olympia for WAISN's Advocacy Day on February 16th (see Event above).

JCIJ's Advocacy Committee meets the second Sunday of the month. The next meeting is Sunday, December 11th from 4-5:30pm. Sign up [here](#) for the Zoom link.

Community Outreach

We have changed our name to reflect our desire to organize projects and create programming that will inspire individuals as well as congregations around the Pacific NW to become activists for immigrant justice. All are welcome to [join us!](#)

SYNAGOGUE SPOTLIGHT

Temple Beth Am Sponsorship of Ukrainian Family: How a Community Came Together with a Single Purpose

By: Debbie Bermet bermet@comcast.net, co-leader of Temple Beth Am's Welcome Circle, along with Mona Rowe mbrowe22@gmail.com.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a) says: "Whoever saves a single life is considered by scripture to have saved the whole world."

April 2022: I hear a [National Public Radio story](#) on [Sponsor Circles](#)—a program created by the US State Department to supplement overburdened refugee resettlement agencies. Individuals and small groups are invited to form Sponsor (or Welcome) Circles to provide initial resettlement assistance to Ukrainian families as they arrive and build new lives across the U.S. It sounds daunting. How can I possibly do this? I reach out to [Temple Beth Am's \(TBA's\) Immigrant Justice Action Team](#), originally formed by Diane Baer, Nicole Faghin and Susan Schulkin to further strengthen our Temple's historic commitment to supporting immigrants and refugees. They invite me to meet to explore the idea.

Summer 2022: After much research, many planning meetings, notices in TBA's e-newsletters, calls and letters, our Immigrant Justice Action Team (IJAT) secures over \$30,000 in pledges from congregants and recruits nine volunteers from the congregation to serve with me in our Welcome Circle. With invaluable guidance from [HIAS](#), one of nine refugee resettlement agencies in the U.S., we apply to be matched with a family fleeing the war in Ukraine.

September 2022 (ongoing): Our Welcome Circle meets weekly on Zoom. Mona is my co-lead who organizes our meetings and keeps everyone on track. We divvy up the long list of tasks and create our own "Action Teams." The [JFS resource guide](#) has local contacts and helpful information. Megan and Rebecca are our housing and supplies divas. They create an Amazon wish list and scope out apartments. Mindy is our legal expert, who explains signing up for public benefits such as SNAP (food stamps) and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). She and Mona develop a budget for the family and begin brainstorming ways to find jobs for the parents. Paulina speaks Russian, so she interprets our Zoom calls and shares insights on supporting immigrant families from

Eastern Europe. Leisa plans how we will welcome and orient the family to their new home and community. Paul researches cell phone plans, while Carol focuses on health care. Patrick helps me navigate the education system.

October 2022: The day after Yom Kippur we are matched with Pavel, Hanna and their two children. They fled in August to Poland. They understand English but require an interpreter to communicate with us. We Zoom and email to get to know each other, and to discuss filling out the I-134 forms (documents to financially sponsor foreign refugees coming to the US), to get travel documents, vaccination records, and to understand dietary needs, housing options and more. Every conversation ends with their expressing gratitude. At the Sukkot Fall Festival at TBA, congregants learn more and make welcome cards for the family.



TBA congregants make welcome cards for family at Sukkoth Fall Festival

Late October 2022: My garage is full of boxes. Susan's is full of furniture. TBA members have donated everything needed to furnish an apartment. Members of the IJAT have received a grant from Jewish Family Service (JFS) in Seattle to help defray rental expenses. (These funds were raised through the Jewish Community Campaign for Ukraine earlier in the year and are managed by JFS.) Our Knitzvah Knitters group makes colorful afghans. A group of quilters, long-time supporters of TBA's Homeless to Renter program, handcrafts comforters. Mona's family donates the airline miles needed to get the family to Seattle. The family has never flown before, so the flights have to be easy to navigate with minimal border hassles. The family will arrive at SeaTac Airport on December 10. All of a sudden everything seems real and imminent!

November 2022: The Welcome Circle gathers for our first potluck meeting. Three months ago we were strangers. Tonight, we feel like we're gathering with old friends. I ask what's important to tell others about our journey, thus far. Mindy talks about the miracle that happens when strangers come together, sharing their skills, interests, and commitment to make the world a better place. Carol says that beyond physical shelter we are providing the family with emotional support. Mona reiterates the importance of keeping the focus on the family rather than on ourselves. For instance, although it would be easier for us to choose a place for the family to live that is near the Temple, we found a wonderful community with a much larger Ukrainian population that is an hour away. This will make the family's transition easier, especially for the children. Rebecca talks about flexibility and being okay with uncertainty. But Paul sums it up best as he relates what we are doing to the story about a child throwing sea stars into the water:

A young girl was walking along a beach upon which thousands of sea stars had been washed up during a terrible storm. When she came to each sea star, she would pick it up, and throw it back into the ocean. People watched her with amusement.

She had been doing this for some time when a man approached her and said, "Little girl, why are you doing this? Look at this beach! You can't save all these sea stars. You can't begin to make a difference!"

The girl seemed crushed, suddenly deflated. But after a few moments, she bent down, picked up another sea star, and hurled it as far as she could into the ocean. Then she looked up at the man and replied,

"Well, I made a difference for that one!"

*The old man looked at the girl inquisitively and thought about what she had done. Inspired, he joined the little girl in throwing sea stars back into the sea. Soon others joined, and all the sea stars were saved.
(Adapted from "The Star Thrower" by Loren C. Eiseley)*

So it's true – we've gotten this far in the process, we don't know what will happen next, but we find great joy in making a difference – if not for one sea star at a time, then for one family at a time. We also hope, like in the story, we can inspire you and others to join us! We are happy to answer your questions and share the lessons we've learned along the way.

Temple Beth Am's amazing Welcome Circle members are [Debbie Bernmet](#), [Mona Rowe](#), Mindy Iwen, Paulina Kisselev, Carol Maurer, Megan Aukema, Patrick Gray, Rebecca Grossman, Leisa Goldberg and Paul Goldberg.

SONGS IN THE KEY OF JCIJ

[Lokua Kanza: Famille](#)

A shout out to the many migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo who live in Washington State. Many are refugees, asylum applicants or asylees, and winners of the diversity immigrant visa lottery.

Lokua Kanza, a Congolese singer-songwriter sings in Lingala and French. My amazing Congolese daughter, who suggested this song, translates it this way: "When they are young and full of life, tell people you appreciate them. Don't wait until people are suffering. Show your love right now."

["This Joy" by the Resistance Revival Chorus](#)

I love to share music in this column that gives us hope. This song falls into that category.

Resistance Revival Chorus are a collective of more than 60 women and non-binary singers. They sing, "This joy that I have, the world didn't give it to me, and the world can't take it away."

[Circle Chant](#) Linda Hirschhorn

Here is another song to lift the spirits. It is easy to learn and sing. I'm pretty sure you could sing this while waiting for the light rail, on a long car ride, at an immigrant rights demonstration, or to conclude the Kol Nidre service (as Kadima did this year). Linda Hirschhorn is a cantor and singer-songwriter. She was voted best cantor in Northern California, according to her website.

**Be in touch with the Jewish Coalition for Immigrant Justice NW
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