

Immigration As a Feminist Issue

Immigration is a feminist issue. Women and their children comprise approximately three-quarters of people migrating to the United States each year. Seventy percent of immigrant women attain legal status through a family-based visa, but the backlog is so severe that about four million people are currently waiting to be reunited with their families — some have already waited decades. Moreover, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender immigrants are not allowed to sponsor their partners or children for residency despite raising children and owning homes together.

Roughly 60 percent of undocumented women are in the labor force, mostly working in informal and contingent occupations — as child care or elder care providers or in various service industries. The remaining 40 percent work without pay in the home, providing home maintenance and repair, household administration, and caring for children and other family members. Because of their precarious status, coupled with their responsibility for the welfare of children and others in their households, undocumented women are highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation either by their employers or their family sponsor.

We need an immigration process that treats women fairly and humanely, and recognizes the value of their contributions to the U.S. economy and society. Until we create a common-sense immigration process, we cannot justify enforcing the mix of outdated and unworkable laws on our books.

Key Priorities for Immigration Reform that Treats Women Fairly:

- *A clear roadmap to citizenship* without disadvantaging those who cannot provide proof of work because their labor has been contingent, informal or unverifiable
- *Keep families together* by eliminating the decades-long backlog of family-based visas, and respect the loving, committed relationships of LGBT families
- *Recognize the value of the work women do* by including professions where women predominate, and protect women in asserting their labor and civil rights.
- *Protect survivors of violence* by providing adequate services for asylum seekers and expanding the number of U-visas for survivors of trafficking and domestic violence.
- *Promote full integration of immigrant women* in to the economic, social and political life of their new communities by providing assistance for legalization, citizenship, English language acquisition, and other services.

For more information, visit the website of [We Belong Together](#). We Belong Together is an initiative of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and the National Asian Pacific American Women Forum, with the participation of NOW and other women's and civil and human rights organizations.