



WHATCOM IMMIGRATION JUSTICE TIMELINE: COMMUNITY ORGANIZING TOWARD A *BELLINGHAM* *IMMIGRATION ADVISORY BOARD*

C2C Organizing That Made The IAB Possible

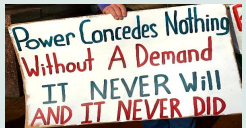
"Community to Community Development and (other community justice organizations) have been, for years, bringing complaints, bringing evidence, talking to the Whatcom County Sheriff and the City Council and other Council Members, telling them that there was continuous, ongoing racial profiling happening. And from this racial profiling, other exploitations grew. And it was ongoing, and it was institutionalized, and we were volunteering and offering our support to change this"

-Rosalinda Guillen, at a Dignity Vigil in front of City Hall after over a year of direct action



"I bring the words of my community that need your protection, that need your representation and your governance for you to do your job responsibly. And we have been in conversations with you and the Bellingham Police Department on racial profiling and how my community is impacted by that. This isn't a process that just happened today, or yesterday, or last month, or the day that Trump was elected. This is a process that has been going on in this community for 13 years since I've been here speaking to you about undocumented immigrants, about farmworkers, about the poor, and about the abused of some of the police officers in the Bellingham police department.... I am a citizen of this country that is coming to you and participating in the best way that I know how with the process that you have developed and that this country has developed. And I am using that process. And I participate every chance I get and every opportunity you gave me. And you gave us this opportunity with this work group. We respected it. We gave you the ordinance that we wanted. The one you have in front of you is not the one my community wants, and they have let me know loud and clear: this is not what we need, this is not what will protect us, go back and work on something that is better"

-Rosalinda Guillen, testifying at the City Council meeting in which they cast aside the "Keep Bellingham Families Working Act" to pass their own ordinance, stripped of protections.





EVOLUTION OF AN ORDINANCE

November 2016 - February 2017

The Blue Group advocates to City Council to make Bellingham a sanctuary city. The city initiates a work group, through which The Blue Group collaborates with C2C and many others in the community to draft a sanctuary ordinance, called The “Keep Bellingham Families Working” Act

February 13, 2017

City Council passes their own immigration ordinance, created without community input, and with negligible protections for immigrants and people of color. Immigrant community members testify on the ongoing fear, racial profiling, and violence they continue to face, and the years long activist organizing City Council continues to ignore

February 2017

In response, community organizers begin holding weekly Dignity Vigils in front of City Hall, demanding a strengthened ordinance to protect undocumented people in the community, and a civilian oversight board to end ICE/BPD collaboration and violence

September 2019

C2C writes an ordinance to create an Immigration Advisory Board and presents it to Bellingham City Council

November 4, 2019

The Immigration Advisory Board is officially established through Ordinance 2019-11-033, after nearly 3 years of direct action in front of city hall and countless other community organizing efforts



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2005, October The Minutemen Come to the U.S./ Canada Border

C2C organizes a local campaign to push for government action against border vigilantes, forms the *Águila del Norte Legal Observer Program* to monitor the Minutemen, leads hunger strikes and marches to the border to resist The Minuteman Project and creates space for community conversation around immigration within events at local churches and the public libraries.



2005, October After Months of Dedicated Community Organizing, Bellingham City Council Passes A Resolution Opposing Border Vigilante Activity, Followed by a Similar, Although More Contradictory Resolution by Whatcom County Council in November

Community forums, direct actions, and Legal Observation trainings were held at the Blaine Peace Arch, 2006

2006, August Community Organizing Following the Raid at NW Healthcare Linen

C2C organizes with the 26 families who are affected to get them much needed physical, emotional, and financial support. C2C fundraises, begins leading weekly vigils outside of Northwest Detention Center, and works to get legal representation to detained workers. C2C transforms a youth music program they ran into *Raíces Culturales*, a culture-steeped and empowering youth development program to support families impacted by the raid. C2C also collaborates with women who lost their jobs in the raid toward building a cooking and catering cooperative to provide for their families.

2008, June The *Whatcom Immigrant Solidarity Committee* is formed to Advocate For A City Ordinance that Would Protect Immigrants

Within and built upon other initiatives for immigrant justice, C2C forms the *Immigrant Solidarity Committee*. After researching ordinances in other cities supporting immigrant communities, including the approval of an office for immigrant and refugee affairs and a center for multicultural gathering in Portland, OR, the committee brainstormed what they would like to see in a local “Immigrant Integration Ordinance.” Key bullet points included: greater transparency by state agencies on immigration enforcement, an end to family separation, and for the human rights, autonomy, and societal contributions of immigrants to be honored.

2009, February Raid at Yamato Engine Specialists

This raid, in which 28 workers were hand-cuffed and brutalized by officials in riot gear, gained national attention. C2C pulls together the *Raids Response Team*, in order to get legal representation to detained community members and support the needs of affected families. C2C also organizes the fundraisers for the children impacted by the raid, and continued vigils at the NWDC.



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2010, May C2C Co-founds *The Dignity Campaign* to Fight for Just Legislation on Immigration

In response to President Obama's proposals on immigration reform that would provide limited paths to citizenship for undocumented people while expanding exploitative guest-worker programs and increasing immigration enforcement and border militarization, leaders from immigrant justice organizations come together to create a legislation proposal that center human, labor, and civil rights for all.

2013, June C2C Files Civil Rights Complaint On Discriminatory Immigration And Law Enforcement Practices

C2C works with Columbia Legal Services to file a complaint against Border Patrol and the cities of Blaine, Lynden, and Sumas for their practice of using Border Patrol as 911 dispatchers and language interpreters, barring community members from calling for emergency services. This comes after an incident in which a birthday party guest called 911 for support with an argument, only to have seven border patrol vehicles arrive at the event.

2015, June Lelo Juarez is Separated From His Family and Detained as a Minor After BPD and CBP Continue to Collaborate

After stopping 15-year-old Lelo Juarez for going the wrong way down a one-way street, Bellingham police illegally asks Lelo if he is a United States citizen, and calls Customs and Border Patrol to "verify his identification." CBP arrests Lelo and holds him overnight without notifying his family, before detaining him at NWDC with adults. After 18 hours, activists were finally able to get Lelo released to his family. Lelo files a formal complaint against the police department and begins court proceedings against the city for racial profiling and detention of him as a minor.



Lelo is reunited with his family after 18 hours, 8 of which his family did not know where he was

2016, November Students from the WWU Blue Group, a Collective of Undocumented Students and Allies, Testify at Bellingham City Council-- Urging Them to Make Bellingham Into A Sanctuary City

Following the election on November 8, undocumented activists organize to urge city council to protect undocumented people from violence, detention, and deportation through making Bellingham a sanctuary city--testifying that the fear in the undocumented community is palpable. Many people also spoke in opposition to making Bellingham a sanctuary city, with racist rhetoric framing undocumented people as violent.

2017, February Members of the Blue Group, Lawyers from the ACLU, and Immigrant Justice Leaders in the Community Collaborate To Draft An Ordinance That Would Make Bellingham A Sanctuary City + Offer Real Protection To Undocumented People

The "Keep Bellingham Families Working Act" would prohibit all city employees from using funds to aid in immigration enforcement or collect any information on documentation status. It would also create a civilian oversight board to ensure compliance of the ordinance.



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2017, February/ March

Instead of Passing An Ordinance To Make Bellingham A Sanctuary City, Bellingham City Council Pass An Alternate Ordinance Stripped of Protections for Undocumented Immigrants Titled, “An Ordinance... Relating To City Policy With Respect To Immigration Enforcement, Equal Protection, And Equal Provision Of City Services Regardless Of Immigration...” this ordinance includes no real protection for undocumented people, beyond saying that immigration enforcement cannot be a “sole” purpose in police activity. Activists in the community push back, demanding accountability and oversight to ensure community protection, and not empty words. C2C, undocumented student activists, and others begin holding vigils every week in front of City Hall, demanding real policy to protect community members and civilian oversight of state immigration enforcement.

2017, August

Honesto Silva Ibarra, A Migrant H-2A Worker In Sumas, Dies Due to Medical Neglect In Heat And Wildfire Conditions; His Coworkers Are Fired For Protesting Ill Treatment

When Silva Ibarra collapses in the field after being denied medical help and rest several times, over 70 of his coworkers at Sarbanand Farms go on strike— protesting the brutal treatment of Silva Ibarra as well as the hazardous living and working conditions they face as guestworkers on the farm. Sarbanand immediately fires them, kicks them out of worker housing, and breaks their contract— making them undocumented, unhoused, and without resources. They form *Camp Zapata* on a local landowners’ field. C2C and Familias Unidas por la Justicia help organize with the workers, ensuring they are fed, and initiating legal action against the farm. Honesto Silva Ibarra dies at Harborview Medical Center.

2018, August

An ICE Raid Targets 16 Granite Precast Workers At Home and On Their Way to Work Despite empty claims from city council that they “welcome and support immigrants and refugees” city council does not address the raid or attempt to support those impacted. C2C holds a meeting with families of those detained in the raid, with the support of the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship. Together they form *Raid Relief to Reunite Families*, led by Ruby Castañeda and Marisol Chapina, family members of detained workers. C2C continues holding *Dignity Vigils*, speaking out about the raid and putting pressure on city and county councils to provide protection for undocumented people. Members of city council continue to claim that the ordinance passed in February made Bellingham a “sanctuary city”, even though the August raid happened after its passage-- proving how little the undocumented community is protected through its enactment.

2019, May

The “Keep Washington Working Act” Becomes Law: Prohibiting All State Police From Questioning Individuals About Immigration Status or Notifying ICE that an Undocumented Person is in Custody Influenced by the Keep Bellingham Working Act and made in collaboration with community organizers like C2C, SB 5497 bans police officers from most collaboration with I.C.E and other immigration enforcement. This bill was originally proposed in 2017 as SB 5689. This legislative win is the result of many, many years of community organizing, legislative pressure, and immigrant community support by activists and organizations like C2C.



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2019, November 4 After nearly 3 years of weekly vigils, Bellingham City Council Passes an Ordinance Creating an Immigration Advisory Board for the City of Bellingham
Ordinance 2019-11-033 establishes a civilian oversight board to review and evaluate city policies and make specific recommendations related to immigration. Following this ordinance by city council, C2C halts their weekly vigils in front of City Hall.

2019, November Munger Bros, the Parent Company Of Sarbanand Farms, Settles With The U.S. Department of Labor for \$3.5 Million, Including \$2.5 Million In Owed Back Wages
Due to serious abuses to the H-2A program, Sarbanand is also banned from hiring guestworkers for 3 years. This comes after workers were granted a class action lawsuit against Sarbanand, on the grounds that Sarbanand was engaging in human trafficking through their threats that workers would be sent back to Mexico if they complained. It also comes after an investigation by Washington L+I following Honesto Silva Ibarra's death, resulting in a fine that was cut in half twice— first for Sarbanand's "cooperation" and later by a Whatcom District Court judge.

2020, January Medardo Cruz Ventura, a Farmworker, is Violently Pulled Out of His Vehicle, Harassed With Racial Slurs, and Detained By ICE In Front of His Children
While on their way to drop their children off at daycare, Medardo is violently detained without access to translation, and without ICE identifying themselves or informing Medardo's wife about where he was being taken. C2C calls supporters to action through calling ICE and CBP facilities to demand his release.

2021, April Governor Inslee Signs HB 1090 Banning Private, For-Profit Detention Centers, Effectively Closing the Northwest Detention Center by 2025
After many years of agitating by La Resistencia/NWDC Resistance, and dignity vigils by Community to Community, the for-profit detention center will finally close in 2025. On May 8, La Resistencia organizes a Car Caravan to NWDC to demand the immediate release of detainees who are still in danger due to COVID and the exploitative conditions at the facility. As of July 28, 2021, there are 114 active cases of COVID-19 at the NWDC.

2021, June 3 Farmworkers are Detained in Lynden
C2C calls on supporters to contact Sumas, Blaine, and Ferndale Border Patrol stations to ask where the community members are being held and demand their release. Officials from these facilities routinely lie and attempt to redirect callers to national complaint lines, in order to dissolve the people power involved in the direct action. C2C organizes protests and vigils in front of the Ferndale BP station.



June 25, 2021— vigil outside of Ferndale Border Patrol facility

2021, July The City of Bellingham settles with Lelo's case
After 5 years, the city reaches a settlement with Lelo Juarez for \$100,000, following his detention as a minor and the illegal collaboration between Customs and Border Patrol and the Bellingham police. However, the city refuses to create policy change that would protect more families from being separated. C2C organizes an action in front of city hall to demand an end to racial profiling and state violence.