

# “To Legalize or Not to Legalize?": Tracing the Political History of Refugee and Immigrant Issues

Workshop 3 - Friday, April 1, 4:00pm-5:30pm

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## Objective

This workshop will introduce the various political debates within the refugee and immigration issues in our country, tracing their political history, and seeking out the policy options we have today. Participants will engage in a discussion of “myths and facts” that inform the modern immigrant and refugee debate, brainstorming ways in which they can reverse some of those misrepresentations. Participants will create an “activist i-liner” card to combat some of the most common misconceptions about immigrants and refugees. Finally, participants will work in small groups to assess a particular time period of migration policy in America. Groups will present their “findings” (any prominent policies, influences, or trends in that era) and the session will conclude with a group discussion of policy patterns and possibilities.

This workshop will enable participants to:

1. discuss the personal and public perceptions of refugees and immigrants;
2. analyze the history of relevant refugee and immigrant policy in the US; and
3. identify the opportunities for policy engagement as service providers.

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## Materials

- [Refugee/Immigrant Issues Powerpoint on Slideshare.com](#) (slides 18-24)
- Computer with Internet access
- Projector
- Moveable chairs/adequate space for small group interaction

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## Handouts

(see participant packet for these worksheets)

- Large index cards for each participant
- Myths and Facts Sheet
- [Im]migration Timeline

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## Brief Outline

This workshop will include the following sections:

1. Perceptions & Possibilities | 20 minutes
  2. Myths and Facts | 20 minutes
  3. Timeline Analysis | 30 minutes
  4. Discussion | 20 minutes
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## Facilitator Guidelines

### 1. Perceptions & Possibilities | 20 minutes

Start off with a discussion of the way refugee and immigrant communities are talked about in the news, in homes, and with others such as friends, family, and coworkers.

To help guide the conversation, ask the following questions (found on [Slide 20](#)), encouraging participants to talk about their own opinions and the opinions they may have heard of others:

- Should immigrants/refugees be allowed to come to this country? Under what conditions?
- Should the number of immigrants/refugees entering the country be limited? By what measures?
- Should Americans have concerns about new immigrants/refugees coming to America? What might those be?

Challenge participants to think about opportunities to advocate for refugees and immigrants — especially in terms of reversing some of these negative perceptions and misconceptions.

### 2. Myths and Facts | 20 minutes

In this section, divide participants into nine groups and pass out the Myths v. Facts Sheet, assigning each group with a “myth”.

Then, instruct each group should read their “myths” and create “i-liners” to counteract the myth, drawn up from the facts included on their paper. In other words, the groups will write down the “bottom line” for each fact that they are assigned, presenting it to the group.

As they work on this, pass out one large index card to each participant.

Then, have each group briefly report back. As groups present their “bottom line”, encourage participants to record their takeaways on the card — thinking of the card as “i-liners for advocacy”.

Then, review some key points using the [Slides 21 and 22](#).

### 3. Timeline Analysis | 30 minutes

You may want to start this section off by mentioning the relationship between perceptions and policies. Although just perceptions, they can affect and direct reality. It is important to recognize this while analyzing policy — not merely looking at dates and facts, but also considering the climate in which these decisions were made. Studying the influences and impact of policy over time can inform our advocacy work in the present. Discuss this dynamic with participants as you prepare to analyze policy history and consider how it has shaped the debate today.

Divide the group into small groups and (depending on size) assign them certain time periods (i.e. a decade, or 25 years).

Have participants analyze these time period, thinking about the directives on Slide 23:

- The key policies established in that timeframe
- What the policies were addressing and why
- What other international or national influences (events, belief systems) that could have affected the creation of that policy
- The actual or likely impact of that policy on immigrant or refugee groups

Then, have participants present their findings (briefly) in chronological order, noting any trends or patterns along the way.

### 4. Discussion | 20 minutes

Now that participants have presented the history of immigration and refugee policy, discuss the following questions:

- Which policies stood out to you and why?
- How does policy affect [im]migrant communities?
- Which policies are you most passionate about?
- What are the policy opportunities today?