

Every action counts!

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I have had the privilege of being a volunteer with the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity (IMHI) in the San Francisco Bay Area for the past 10 years. Its purpose is “to protect, nourish, and uphold the human dignity of all people [and to] build beloved community centered in spiritual values and in the leadership of people impacted by immigration, incarceration, and militarization.” The community formed in this organization has provided me the impetus to do my small part in bringing about justice for immigrants. Through advocacy, accompaniment, presence, and prayer, we can do so much more together, and each small action can count for more than we will ever know.

Recently, I volunteered to be what is called a “paper sponsor” with IMHI. A paper sponsor is matched with a person in detention to assist them in being released. The paper sponsor works with a lawyer to write a letter attesting their belief that the detained person will thrive and contribute positively to society upon being released from detention. Thanks to the IMHI, we can also indicate confidently that the person will have resources to support them once they are released. When a judge sees there is a community of support waiting for the person, the judge is more inclined to rule favorably.

I had just such a favorable experience recently when I wrote a letter on behalf of Fernando, who was in the process of pursuing adjustment of status and asylum. Fernando's family members with legal status did not feel comfortable submitting letters or other documents with their names attached. With that supporting documentation, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) attorney argued that Fernando was a flight risk. However, using my letter as a paper sponsor, Fernando's lawyer was able to push back and use the support of IMHI to secure a favorable ruling from the judge. Fernando is now in the process of securing a bond for his release. One more step forward.

I wanted to share that as one simple way to participate in the liberation of our immigrant siblings. I believe the Sisters of Mercy are recognized for our commitment to support those who are suffering greatly in our society. A small act like writing a letter, especially when leveraging the credence afforded to members of faith communities like ours, can make a big difference.