Champaign Community Coalition
Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, April 11, 2018
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
Champaign Public Library
Robeson Pavilion, Rooms A & B
200 W. Green Street, Champaign

Tracy Parsons introduced panel who was present to speak about the mutual advocacy priority of the Community Coalition. There were four scheduled panelists for the day and the audience was introduced to those who would be speaking in turn throughout the upcoming program.

Don Owen, Superintendent, Urbana School District #116

Mr. Owen began by speaking about the racial equity that is present in his profession. Many of the superintendents around Illinois are white males and therefore do not have the ingrained experience of racial equity that the students in their care experience every day. Being aware of this reality and its meaning is important if we want to create a better future for the students. Mr. Owen went on to share some of the struggles Urbana and other area schools deal with regularly:

- There is a large disparity in the rates of suspensions when you look across races. Students of color make up 99% of the suspensions in schools which is much higher than the proportion of the student body that they represent.
- Students of color are also more likely to struggle with issues of homelessness, gender identity, language, and immigration status.

Christopher Di Franco, YMCA’s New American Welcome Center.

Mr. Di Franco was present to share some of the results from an upcoming report on Champaign County immigrant population. Some of the data, which was compiled using the American Community Survey, that he previewed included:

- Immigrants in the county hail from 76 different countries, with Central America and East/ Central Africa being the fastest growing segments. Of note is that these do not include the temporary resident students at the U of I rather they are folks who live and work among the rest of our citizens.
- 80% of these immigrants reside within the boundaries of Champaign and Urbana.
• These immigrants have a higher rate of education than the general population with many of the degrees being in STEM.
• 1/3 of the residents in the study are already US citizens. 1/4 may be eligible to become citizens and 1/3 may be undocumented including DACA recipients.

Brian Dolinar, Program Director, Independent Media Center

Mr. Dolinar, lived in Los Angeles for a time and upon his return to the Midwest, was interested in supporting the multiracial vision that he had while on the west coast. He has been tracking the presence of ICE raids in the CU area in an effort to shed light on what is going on as well as to support the individuals most affected by these experiences.

• ICE has conducted over 100 raids in the CU area since the mid 2015’s.
• In 2017, ICE was in CU on 28 different days.
• They go to work places, hotels, and apartments in an effort to round up their targets for deportation.
• The pattern is that after an individual is convicted of a crime, sometimes minor, that individual lands in the eye of ICE who will proceed to apprehend them. One of the major effects of these types of efforts is the discouragement of reporting legitimate crimes against immigrants for fear of deportation.

Gio Guerra Perez, Director of La Casa Cultural Latina

Ms. Perez spoke about the population she serves at the University of Illinois. They comprise of 4,500 Latino students, some of which are DACA recipients, at all levels of higher education. She came to share some of the efforts La Casa has been implementing to help their students achieve greatness.

• La Casa has helped students in the past who feared the potential for deportation by communicating on their behalf to the administration and professors. Students who fear for their safety have a very difficult time reaching success in school, so La Casa works to alleviate those fears.
• They also encourage everyone to become more knowledgeable about immigrants of all kinds. Once you get past the prevalent misinformation out there, the public is more likely to support positive reform.

Lucia Maldonado, Latino Parent Liaison, Urbana School District #116

In addition to her role as Latino Parent Liaison, Ms. Maldonado is a board member and volunteers for many other immigrant support organizations. She shared a real-world experience of an undocumented father and his daughter who had been abused. Due to their fear of deportation, it was very difficult for the family to justify reporting the abuse. Ms. Maldonado shared this and another story as way to illustrate why leaving these individuals in the immigration limbo can be so detrimental to their success. By giving the legitimate status, crime and abuse could decrease and those affected could have an increased chance at the American Dream.