

Mia-lia Kiernan
1Love Movement
Testimony
March 12, 2014
City Council Hearing on Police and ICE Collaboration

Good morning Councilmembers, my name is Mia-lia. I am the National Organizer of 1Love Movement. 1Love was born out of a detention and deportation crisis in the Cambodian-American community in Philly in 2010 that targeted those with past criminal convictions. We are now a national network that focuses on breaking down the harmful intersection of our local criminal justice and federal deportation systems.

Our work is centered on the belief that families belong together, and that removing people from our communities through deportation threatens our survival as people. We also work under the belief that mandatory and institutionalized punishment is not our route, as a society, to addressing the root causes of violence in our communities. It is not our route to community-led and victim-centered healing. It is not our route to individual accountability and transformation. And it is not our route to re-building our traumatized communities.

We view mandatory deportation as destructive, as it denies us of our individual capacity as human beings to grow, change, and heal.

The context and reality we are living in is this: roughly 1 out of every 100 adults in the US is behind bars. The United States represents only 5 percent of the world's population, but incarcerates a quarter of the world's prisoners. People of color represent 30 percent of our country's population, but account for 60 percent of those who are imprisoned. 65 million people in the United States have criminal records, and 1 in 5 people in Philadelphia are formerly incarcerated.

This reality has led leaders in our City to push reform, legislation and programs that consider the complexity and specific context of individuals and communities in relation to our criminal justice system. Our City Administration, Law Enforcement agencies, and City Council, have enacted policies that established a Mayor's Office of Re-Integration Services, the Ban the Box Bill, the DA's SAM Program, alternative sentencing, job creation for formerly incarcerated people, a Veteran's Court to consider the links between PTSD and criminal activity, and many others. These initiatives are our City's stance against mandatory and blanket judgments of our communities, and the life-time and collateral consequences of criminal convictions.

Mayor Nutter stated when signing the Ban the Box Bill, *"Jobs are crucial to a comprehensive public safety plan and providing job opportunities for ex-offenders will go a long way to achieving a sustainable decrease in crime...This legislation will make it easier for ex-offenders to be judged by their abilities as opposed to their past. Making*

available employment options for those with criminal histories contributes to the overall safety and quality of life in Philadelphia. Everyone deserves a second chance."

Bill Hart, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Re-integration services (RISE) states: *"The fact is that when people with criminal convictions succeed, we all succeed. Our families, our neighborhoods and Philadelphia's economy all benefit when formerly incarcerated individuals achieve their independence by leading healthy, responsible, crime free lives. With more than 200,000 Philadelphians facing the collateral consequences of their convictions, we must all do a better job at recognizing this special challenge."*

Deportation is one of those collateral consequences for a large portion of our Philadelphia community.

The work we've done in our City to steer our criminal justice system towards our grounded values and beliefs, and the work that has been done across many cities in the US in the same way, has forced leaders at the national level to take a stand for our communities:

US Attorney General Holder spoke, on behalf of President Obama, about shifts being implemented across the Justice Department to better promote public safety, deterrence, and rehabilitation.

"These reforms – which are currently being implemented across the United States – will help to bring our criminal justice system in line with our most treasured values: of equality, opportunity, and justice under law... This vicious cycle – of poverty, criminality, and incarceration – traps too many Americans and weakens too many communities. And many aspects of our criminal justice system may actually exacerbate these problems, rather than alleviate them... By examining cases individually, identifying effective alternatives to incarceration under certain circumstances, and providing the resources necessary for those currently in the criminal justice system – and those who are released from prison – to become productive, law-abiding members of society, we can break this cycle. And we can improve public safety, forge safer neighborhoods, begin to address the root causes of criminality – and make smarter decisions on how to prevent it."

1Love Movement, the Philadelphia Family Unity Network, and families and communities affected by incarceration and deportation in Philadelphia ask that we take this next step to address ICE and police collaboration with our values front and center, and not engage in harmful divisions based on criminal history. We ask that our City's deeply rooted values of redemption, rehabilitation, second chances and reintegration be applied and fought for, for ALL residents of Philadelphia - instead of allowing a mandatory, indiscriminate and institutionalized federal deportation system to directly DISintegrate certain populations of our Philadelphia community by breaking families apart.