



July 6, 2017

As an American, over my last 30 years in this country, I've had one consistent dream - that one day, being *American* will not be defined by having a piece of paper, that my wellbeing will not be defined by the color of my skin. That one-day, systems will be in place to ease the chronic burdens of immigration carried so heavily by my own immigrant family and carried by other immigrant and refugee families alike, including the burden of often feeling like a second-class citizen without equal protections. My own personal dream, over the last 4 years I have lived in WI is that formal systems in place will one day be better equipped to more holistically address the complex inequities for communities of color, in order to better understand the needs of all.

But while this happens, I choose to be proactive and walk along the community we serve at Centro Hispano. Regardless of any barrier, they are resilient, persistently aspiring for their dreams. I learn from them about how they manage to thrive, believing that in the future this state and this country will one day listen and acknowledge the added value they bring to the table. Today in the shape of this coalition, strong members of the faith-based community have said that they too will join us in that journey. As the immigrant and refugee community navigates so many risks and so many challenges, they will not be alone, and this coalition will provide the social capital that supports, nurtures, and cements a belief in the rights of all human beings especially during times of crisis.

A public acknowledgment of sanctuary is essential not only for our safety but it sends a strong message of resistance to those who threaten to impose their biased beliefs and moral values on our community here in Dane County.

And so I'm incredibly grateful to members of this coalition for their tireless work, to the congregations who support sanctuary, for their commitment to the community. I urge you to support this effort as a key safety net that reassures our community at this time. I urge you to support the tireless work of Christine Neumann-Ortiz and Voces de La Frontera and I urge to support Centro, a space that is invaluable to so many across Dane County.

Karen Menendez Coller, Executive Director
Centro Hispano of Dane County