Breakthrough’s
#Deport the Statue Campaign

Design & Impact Report
Breakthrough is a global human rights organization.

Our mission is to prevent violence and discrimination against women and girls by transforming the norms and cultures that enable it.

We carry out this mission by building a critical mass of change agents worldwide—the Breakthrough Generation—whose bold collective action will deliver irreversible impact on the issue of our time.

Working out of centers in India and the U.S., we create innovative, relevant multimedia tools and programs—from short animations to long-term leadership training—that reach individuals and institutions where they are, inspiring and equipping them to build a world in which all people live with dignity, equality, and justice.
WHAT'S IN THIS CASE STUDY?

Breakthrough's 2013 Deport the Statue campaign—seizing a moment when both the Senate and the public were debating immigration reform—reached more than 20 million people and mobilized new audiences in support of the rights of immigrant women.

Our core strategy was satire. A fictional anti-immigrant campaign to deport the Statue of Liberty—complete with an intricate fictional online universe—successfully drew mainstream media attention to the struggles of immigrant women, making the issue real, relevant, and important to new supporters. The campaign thus helped draw new attention and bring new energy to the movement for immigrant and immigrant women’s rights.

This report describes the strategy, implementation, and impact of Deport the Statue. We hope that by sharing our approach, we will support our allies and partners—long-term and new—in innovating and improving our collective work for human rights, to reach our shared vision of a world in which all people live with dignity, justice, and equality.
1. Summary

Breakthrough’s Deport the Statue campaign, which ran from June through October 2013, reached more than 20 million people and mobilized new audiences to call for immigration reform that treats immigrant women fairly. Launched at a critical moment when Congress was debating the issue, the Deport the Statue campaign used an innovative approach to increase the energy and volume of support for immigrant women’s rights.

Leveraging outside-the-box creative partnerships and experimenting with digital storytelling, the campaign— with a centerpiece short film and intricate multimedia architecture—engaged digitally active men and women and encouraged conversation and action for immigration reform.

Concept

The campaign used a stunt-style strategy to draw attention to the specific disadvantages and abuses that immigrant women experience in a flawed immigration system. To house its campaign, Breakthrough created a fictional anti-immigrant organization called Legals for the Preservation of American Culture (LPAC), who launched a campaign to deport the Statue of Liberty. LPAC’s case: Liberty is an undocumented immigrant who—despite years of hard work and contribution to American society—lacks papers and proof of employment, and therefore does not qualify for potential citizenship.

The premise behind our "joke" was to demonstrate that if deporting the Statue of Liberty was an absurd idea, so too was deporting millions of people who live and work in the United States. Breakthrough’s intent was that the Statue of Liberty represent the "invisible" status of many undocumented women—the lack of recognition and respect for their work and rights—and how it might exclude them from the path to citizenship even as they contribute consistently and significantly to American society today.

Audience

Deport the Statue was aimed at people aged 16 to 35 who are active online, progressive, and prone to sharing digital content and taking action through social networks. The campaign was designed to engage people already interested in immigrant and women’s rights, as well as people who were open to such issues but had not yet considered taking action to support them. The campaign used humor and satire to reach these new constituents and inspire fresh thinking, sharing, and action among them.

Through the use of satire, Deport the Statue drew a parallel between the absurd suggestion that the Statue of Liberty should be deported and the absurd reality of deporting millions of people who live, work, and contribute to the economy and society of the United States. It successfully drew mainstream attention to the distinct struggles faced by immigrant women, taking the issue out of the realm of politics to make it real, relevant, and important to new supporters.

1.1 Campaign Reach

- 114,000 YouTube views of the Deport the Statue short film
- 6.6 million people reached via 103 articles and television segments about the campaign
- 75 news channels rebroadcast the original CNN International segment about the campaign
- 12.5 million people reached on Twitter
- 7 million reached on Twitter within 5 days of launch, demonstrating the virality of the message

The launch of the Deport the Statue campaign just as the Senate was drafting its immigration bill tapped into already-growing momentum. This momentum helped the campaign video go viral, highlighting the human rights of immigrant women as a key priority in the debate, and introducing the issue to new demographics of Americans.

As a result of strong popular opinion and pressure from the Obama administration, immigration reform bills were introduced in the Senate and then in the House of Representatives in mid-2013. Although these bills did not pass, there was a clear shift in the conversation around undocumented immigrants and support for commonsense, humane reform based on shared American values and an accessible path to citizenship. Since then, Breakthrough has continued to push the campaign online and through events with partners, including participation in the Bushwick Film Festival (Brooklyn, New York) and an event with The Illuminator (www.theilluminator.org) on the National Day for Immigrant Dignity and Respect.
1.2 Key Results

- Drew mainstream media attention to the need for immigration reform
- Spotlighted the struggles faced by immigrant women
- Increased the conversation around immigration reform, particularly regarding women
- Engendered a conversation between supporters and opponents of immigration reform
- Engaged new audiences in the ongoing work for humane immigration reform during a critical political moment
- Expanded brand recognition for Breakthrough as an organization that uses innovative strategy to create edgy products that disrupt cultural norms and reach new audiences

2. Concept

2.1 Issue Background

The face of immigration in the U.S. is increasingly female. Women now make up 51% of all immigrants, up from 38% in 2000. Immigrant women, lawfully present or otherwise, are job creators and community leaders. They enrich America’s economy and culture.

Yet the voices and unique struggles of immigrant women remain hidden from public narrative and absent from most policy discussion. More to the point, while the U.S. benefits from the women who move here, we deny them their human rights. While the human rights of all immigrants to the U.S. have declined over the past several years, cruel anti-immigrant laws, policies, and practices have had especially dramatic impact on immigrant women and their families. These measures force immigrant women to choose between the threat of an abusive husband and the threat of deportation if they call the police. They send pregnant mothers to give birth in shackles with federal agents by their side. They trap women and LGBTQ individuals in immigrant detention centers under the constant threat of physical and sexual abuse.

For years, advocates have called for the overhaul of our broken immigration system, which denies human rights and due process to millions of people who live and work in the United States. This issue exploded with new force onto the national agenda during the 2012 presidential election, driven in part by a larger and more-vocal-than-ever immigrant population and the millions of other Americans who support equal justice and opportunity for all.

In 2013, public opinion strongly favored fair, commonsense immigration reform. And by mid-2013, the Obama administration and Congress finally seemed committed to making it happen.

At the end of June, the Senate passed an immigration reform bill that could help millions of immigrants—more than half of them women—live up to their full potential and help our country do the same. In October, members of the House introduced a new immigration reform bill that included a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

This bill’s provision for a path to citizenship came at a huge cost: increased enforcement efforts with potentially devastating effects for many. Though advocates took a variety of positions on this deeply flawed bill—for, against, and in-between—the time remained ripe to push for immigration reform that protects human rights and due process for all.

2.2 Breakthrough and immigrant women’s rights

As immigration reform came up for Congressional debate in 2013, Breakthrough wanted to build on the momentum from its earlier #ImHere campaign and

4 For more detail visit http://www.breakthrough.tv/ImHere
help new audiences understand the basic shared values and freedoms at risk if current immigration practices continue unchecked.

Anti-immigrant laws, policies, and practices have had an especially dramatic impact on immigrant women and their families. With the #ImHere campaign and its centerpiece short film, The Call, Breakthrough aimed to encourage empathy, compassion, and action for immigrant women like its central character, Sonia, change the frame on immigrant rights, and inspire people across America and beyond to stand with immigrant women during the election season.

Specifically, Breakthrough sought to build support for a path to citizenship that treated families fairly and addressed the needs, circumstances, and rights of immigrant women. On the one hand, the political moment was ripe. On the other, issue fatigue was palpable. Breakthrough saw the need for a fresh approach to the issue that reached people where they were, calling on them to stand up and help build broader and more vocal support for commonsense immigration reform. Thus Breakthrough saw the opportunity for an audacious project.

2.3 Campaign strategy

Vision

As the nation was poised for immigration reform, Breakthrough conceived the Deport the Statue campaign as an innovative way to reach new audiences and create a groundswell of people who understood the particular ways in which immigrant women were affected by a broken immigration system—and to inspire these people to call for change. The campaign intended to use satirical storytelling to engage people with the issue and create a critical mass of Americans demanding commonsense immigration reform that ensured human rights for all.

Goal

Breakthrough’s goal was to create an eye-catching campaign that would draw media attention to the human rights issues that plagued our immigration system. The purpose was to generate nation-wide coverage that would bring these issues to a large audience.

The premise behind our "joke" was to highlight that if deporting the Statue of Liberty was an absurd idea, so was deporting millions of people who live and work in the United States. We hoped that people who saw the campaign would respond with some version of, “Wow, I almost believed this was real. That means the forces against fairness are pretty strong. Now I've got new energy and insight around this issue. I should take action myself, today.”

The campaign would serve as an easily accessed and appealing on-ramp to the issues of immigrant women with regard to immigration reform. Once supporters were engaged, Breakthrough—along with allies such as the We Belong Together coalition—could continue to educate and inspire demand for immigration reform that carried provisions for women and families, including:

- A roadmap to citizenship that included all immigrant women, even those in informal work roles
- Family reunification
- Access to healthcare for women and children as they wait for citizenship
- Protections for survivors of violence and trafficking
- Due process and protections for families

Crafting the narrative

With the goal set, Breakthrough partnered with the Yes Men—known for their attention-grabbing satire to drive social change—becoming one of four non-profit organizations selected for participation in the 2012–13 Yes Lab at New York University’s Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics. Leading a team of creative activists, artists, and college students, two members of the Breakthrough U.S. program team took the lead in devising a new campaign that would use humor to court media attention, inspiring new audiences to put pressure on Congress and stand with immigrant women.

After a series of creative activism workshops and brainstorming sessions with the Yes Men and students from NYU and the New School, the team honed in on the idea. Noting the (understandable) lack of humor around the issue of immigration, Breakthrough set out to build a simple, satirical premise for the campaign based on the realities and ironies of the immigration debate. Discussion led from the idea of deporting everything made by immigrants to deporting an American monument made by immigrants to deporting the Statue herself.

Breakthrough ultimately hit upon the idea of launching a spoof campaign to deport the Statue of Liberty. The campaign would draw a clear and pointed parallel between the absurdity of deporting an iconic American symbol and deporting millions of men, women, and
children who live and work here every day. The Statue of Liberty—built by the French and symbolic of the embrace of immigrants that has been essential to American culture and history—represents the millions of women whose human rights and daily realities are left out of the debate around immigration reform.

The fictional universe

As a springboard for the campaign, Breakthrough created Legals for the Preservation of American Culture (LegalsPAC or LPAC), a fictional group dedicated to deporting the Statue of Liberty due to her immigration status. Led by fictional CEO Harvey Knowles-Brier, LegalsPAC—complete with its own website, Twitter accounts, and Facebook pages—would launch its campaign, Deport the Statue, on June 12, 2013, and call for the statue to be sent back to France by the following July 4. The team determined that the centerpiece of the campaign would be a video starring Lady Liberty at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, being denied citizenship due to the fact that she has lived in the United States without papers for well over 100 years.

The idea for the film arose from the concern that even while Congress was considering and delineating a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, thousands of people, especially women, could be excluded due to a lack of papers, proof of work, or higher education degree.

As Breakthrough developed the idea, it became increasingly clear—and important to make clear—that the intention was not to fool anyone into believing LPAC’s campaign was real. The project intentionally used satire to grab attention—to engage rather than trick—and to hide its true agenda in fairly plain sight. Breakthrough did not set out to prove or expose the biases of our opponents, but rather to inspire our constituents to take action.

2.4 Strategic partnerships

The campaign’s trajectory and focus were sharpened by Breakthrough’s active membership on the advisory boards of the We Belong Together campaign, the Rights Working Group Steering Committee, the Opportunity Agenda, and the National Coalition for Immigrant Women’s Rights. Direct input from these groups through regular calls about the status of women within the immigration landscape helped shape the campaign. Due to the relatively unusual nature of the campaign, Breakthrough was especially careful to ensure that allies and leaders in the movement for immigrant women’s rights were consulted in the development of the campaign and its materials. Leaders in the field, such as Pramila Jayapal, Sarah Curry, Lisa Moore, Wida Amir, Vivien Labaton, Margaret Huang, and Al-jen Poo were consulted on the Deport the Statue video script before production.

The most important facet of the organizational partnerships was the close collaboration on action elements of the Deport the Statue campaign. We Belong Together—a coalition of women and immigrants rights organizations working to mobilize support for commonsense immigration reform that will keep families together and empower women—was an instrumental partner. Action pieces created by We Belong Together were strategically incorporated into Deport the Statue, asking audiences to act immediately by signing petitions, tweeting or sharing, writing to or calling members of Congress, and taking photos in support of immigration reform.

3. Course

3.1 Timeline

Due to the nature of the campaign, the launch ran over two days. Most of the groundwork to generate buzz about the campaign was laid months prior to the actual launch.

- 4 months before launch
  Breakthrough and its partners from the Yes Lab started piecing together the fictional universe for Deport the Statue and LPAC. Social media accounts and websites were set up to generate public engagement and create a web presence for Harvey Knowles-Brier and his (fictional) colleagues. As we hoped, many Twitter and Facebook users engaged with the social media posts published by Harvey.

- 1 week before launch
  A week in advance of launch, Breakthrough staff covertly publicized the campaign through LPAC and Harvey Knowles-Brier’s social media networks, as if this organization were really launching a new campaign.

- First day of launch
  Breakthrough launched Deport the Statue as an LPAC campaign with a series of fictional press releases sent to various journalists, activists, partner organizations, and Breakthrough constituents. Using a humorous tone, the emails were designed to pique the readers’ interest and draw their attention to Deport the Statue’s website (www.deportthestatue.us).

Loosely framed as immigration news, the press releases were clearly outrageous and mostly implausible. They were meant to prompt people to click on the links embedded in the release and find their way to the campaign website, thus beginning their journey through the Deport the Statue universe.

In addition, Breakthrough and some partner organizations who were aware of the satirical campaign posted social media messages pointing at the Deport the Statue website and engaged with LPAC on Twitter. Some of the suggested tweets for partners included:

- Wouldn’t put it past those guys! What will they think of next? http://www.deportthestatue.us #TakeLibertyBack #DeportTheStatue
This reminds me of the golden days of Freedom Fries! http://www.deportthestatue.us by @LegalsPAC #DeportTheStatue #TakeLibertyBack

Breakthrough staff members also handed out Deport the Statue postcards to people in midtown Manhattan. The postcards simply featured satirical taglines calling for the deportation of Lady Liberty and directed people to the website. The postcards featured taglines such as:

- Unskilled. An American statue would do this job better. Deport her now.
- Deport her. If she were in Arizona, she'd be gone by now.

Breakthrough revealed itself as creator of the fictional campaign and its real intent through messages such as, "Our spoof campaign, #DeportTheStatue of Liberty draws attention to challenges facing immigrant women: deportthestatue.us." We also performed traditional outreach, sending a straightforward press release, social media messages, and emails to Breakthrough’s constituents.

3.2 Key elements

As we developed the campaign, we recognized it was important to ensure that each element of the campaign from the Deport the Statue universe and messaging supported Breakthrough’s strategic goal and purpose.

The journey through Deport the Statue’s universe The humorous and fictional universe created around LPAC included:

- spoof Twitter accounts
- fake websites
- misleading phone numbers, and
- spoof email threads

All were intricately designed by Breakthrough to take people on a digital journey to solidarity and action.

A typical path to action:

- Watch the video.
- Click through to the spoof campaign website, embedded with links to Breakthrough’s reveal page.
- Arrive at Breakthrough’s reveal page. On Breakthrough’s website, this page reveals the spoof, explains the rationale behind the mock campaign, and urges readers to join a movement for fair immigration reform by taking concrete actions for justice.
- From the reveal page, take action toward fair immigration reform that includes women. Action items are highlighted, as are links to Congressional members, and links to join

• Second day of launch:
Breakthrough’s immigration campaigns, both on the web and on the ground.
• Share the video with friends and family.

3.3 Digital elements

The video

Breakthrough used humor and creative storytelling in the Deport the Statue short film. This two-minute spoof drew attention to the ways in which immigrant women are left out of immigration reform, and highlighted the absurdity of deporting millions of men, women, and children. The film brought together a unique group of filmmakers, professional actors, human rights professionals, and activists who were willing to donate their time. To ensure that the film was simultaneously an appealing pop-cultural product and representative of key issues regarding immigrant women, Breakthrough staff wrote the script in careful consultation with partner organizations, including the We Belong Together coalition.

The film features the Statue of Liberty in a U.S. citizenship application interview. The series of questions asked by the immigration officer reflect the reality faced by many undocumented people, especially women in unofficial jobs, such as domestic work. The video underscores the struggles that immigrant women face, highlighting the various barriers that keep immigrant women from becoming citizens.

The video opens with the Statue of Liberty—an actor in a Statue of Liberty costume with green body paint and a French accent—entering the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office in New York City. She sits down with an immigration officer who will determine whether or not she qualifies for citizenship. He asks her for documents such as her entry papers, proof of employment, and proof of education. He then asks if she has family in the United States, and if she can prove that she can do her job better than an “educated American statue.” For obvious reasons, she does not have papers. “I came here in crates, by boat!” she says. “They didn’t give me any papers when I arrived.” Finally, he denies her citizenship.

After Liberty’s citizenship is denied, an omniscient narrative voice turns the video into a public service announcement (PSA). The video opens with the Statue of Liberty costume with green body paint and a French accent—entering the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office in New York City. She sits down with an immigration officer who will determine whether or not she qualifies for citizenship. He asks her for documents such as her entry papers, proof of employment, and proof of education. He then asks if she has family in the United States, and if she can prove that she can do her job better than an “educated American statue.” For obvious reasons, she does not have papers. “I came here in crates, by boat!” she says. “They didn’t give me any papers when I arrived.” Finally, he denies her citizenship.

After Liberty’s citizenship is denied, an omniscient narrative voice turns the video into a public service announcement (PSA) for LPAC’s campaign. Using a common anti-immigrant argument, the voice urges people to “Deport the Statue,” thereby reserving the job for an “American statue that can do the job better” and “preserving American culture.” At the end of the PSA, the video sends people to the website to vote on whether or not the Statue of Liberty should be deported (www.deportthestatue.us).
Websites

In order for Legals for the Preservation of American Culture (LPAC) to appear genuine, it needed a realistic and multi-faceted existence on the Internet. Breakthrough created two new websites early in the campaign process in order to give the organization Internet “history” and a search path that a user could follow and find to be legitimate. These websites, created using WordPress accounts under the fictional CEO’s name, were:

- An organizational website for LPAC (www.legalspac.org)
  The organizational website outlines LPAC’s history, goals, staff, and projects. It was created to give the mock organization a presence on the Internet, for people to visit after they heard about the campaign, and to provide more information and “goodies.” Multiple links, however, led directly to Breakthrough’s reveal page, so that users did not actually get lost in the satire.

- LPAC’s campaign website (www.deportthestatue.us)
  The campaign website was created two months after the LPAC website, and focuses on LPAC’s campaign to deport the Statue of Liberty. It incorporates video, text, interactive features, social media sharing tools, and downloadable materials to promote LPAC’s goal of encouraging people to vote for deporting the statue. The site is complete with many “fun” elements, such as a “kids only” section (with coloring-book pages and word-finds) designed to suggest that LPAC is a family-friendly organization. There is a link to LPAC’s phone number, leading to Harvey’s voice mail, which was monitored by a Breakthrough staffer during the campaign launch.

The Deport the Statue website, at the time this report was written, has had 20,000 distinct views and 417 comments. The comments indicate that those who watched the video held diverse perspectives. For instance:

- “I swear, what’s next... people need to grow up! This is one of the dumbest things I’ve ever heard.”
- “They’re making their point through the use of sarcasm and illustrating just how silly our immigration procedures are.”
- “I’m so glad I’m Canadian.”

Most commenters perceived the satire and started conversations with fellow viewers. The comments are illustrative of the fact that U.S. immigration policy has been so unreasonable that some viewers actually were tricked by the video, thinking that LPAC and its campaign were legitimate. The video hit the satirical sweet spot between outrageous and plausible. In other words—outrageously enough—it was just barely plausible.

The Breakthrough reveal page, hosted on www.breakthrough.tv, consistently receives more than 700 views per month, mostly coming from www.deportthestatue.us and press about the video.
Moreover, time spent on breakthrough.tv when directed from the Deport the Statue website has been record-breaking for the organization. Compared to an average of one minute spent on breakthrough.tv, when directed from deportthestatue.us, users stayed an average of over three minutes. Viewers spent time understanding the landscape of the immigration debate and learned about taking action for the human rights of immigrant women. This result is significant because it demonstrates that new audiences seeing the video were intrigued enough to click through the links and information to broaden their knowledge on the issue. It suggests that Breakthrough’s Deport the Statue helped equip and expand the critical mass of people taking a stand for immigrant women’s rights during this historic social and political moment.

Social media

Breakthrough constructed an elaborate digital presence for LPAC using Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WordPress. While tweeting from the fictitious accounts, Breakthrough was very careful not to put hateful messages, anti-immigrant propaganda, or messages promoting violence against women and girls into the digital space; instead, Breakthrough posted messages that were technically neutral but appeared biased given their source. For example, @LegalsPAC tweeted: “You come to USA & who welcomes you? Some French lady! Preserve American Culture! #DeportTheStatue! http://ow.ly/lIFnWc #TakeLibertyBack”

In the weeks leading up to the launch, Breakthrough carefully drafted social media messages that worked as breadcrumbs that directed people to the Deport the Statue video and website. The idea was to make the satire very obvious and to expose the ridiculousness of some anti-immigrant arguments while keeping our messages free of hate.

• Twitter

In addition to the LPAC and Deport the Statue websites, “Harvey” ran an LPAC Twitter account (@LegalsPac) and a personal Facebook account, where he courted “friends” and posted about his organization and campaign goals. LegalsPAC had their own Facebook fan page where they updated their “fans” about the upcoming campaign.
Since Breakthrough’s goal was to create digital buzz to garner media attention on the campaign during launch, Breakthrough publicized the campaign through all of Harvey’s accounts, as well as through three additional fictitious Twitter accounts, @StephDonner, @DanaMtRush, and @BeckyLPAC. Breakthrough’s own Twitter account was also used to interact with the fictitious characters’ accounts as a way to insert positive messaging in conversations generated by LPAC.

Having a number of accounts allowed us to play out various sides of the argument, for and against “deporting the statue,” and gave Breakthrough a way to engage with the issue on Twitter in a productive way. Four Breakthrough team members implemented this complex Twitter strategy and interacted with the “other side” of the debate, i.e. the opposition to immigration reform. Though this was not a central goal of the campaign, this back-and-forth attracted attention for the video and campaign, and generated interesting debates on social media.

- **Facebook**
  On Facebook, Breakthrough’s strategy was more straightforward. The Breakthrough fan page published:
  - Memes about the Statue of Liberty
  - Shareable posters asking questions like, “What if July 4 came and she wasn’t there?”
  - Early access to the video for our loyal constituents a day before it was sent to the press and published on other sources
  - Behind-the-scenes photos from the video shoot

  The Facebook strategy was focused, therefore, not only on gaining new fans, but also on giving our existing audience advanced peaks into the upcoming campaign. This strategy successfully kept Breakthrough’s voice grounded as pro-immigration reform, hinting to our constituents that we were behind the mock video, and letting them into our “huddle” and in on the real story.

- **Instagram**
  Breakthrough launched its Instagram account (@breakthroughtv) during the Deport The Statue campaign in an effort to drive video views. Breakthrough staff took statuette replicas of the Statue of Liberty around the city and took photos of her “experiencing” New York before potentially being deported on July 4, 2013. We cross-posted these photos through our Twitter and Facebook accounts, and used them as new (and fun) content to drive views to the video.
**3.4 On-the-ground elements**

Once the initial launch and reveal was complete, Breakthrough took the campaign to physical events, working with partners in the field to leverage campaign assets in the service of immigration reform that supported the human rights of immigrant women.

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**Netroots Nation Conference 2013**

In July, Breakthrough attended Netroots Nation, a political convention for progressive artists, bloggers, and activists, and showcased the Deport the Statue campaign at a booth at the conference. At the booth, Breakthrough projected the Deport the Statue video and offered people Deport the Statue postcards and stickers. Attendees were invited to watch the video and click through the websites and take action. In keeping with the playfulness of the digital campaign, we asked people to take a photo dressed as the Statue of Liberty, holding a sign saying “Don’t deport me.” More than 300 people were exposed to the video, signed up for alerts, took photos, and shared them on their social networks with the hashtag #DeporttheStatue. Showing support for fair and inclusive immigration reform.

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**Civic engagement with New Yorkers for Real Immigration Reform**

In July, Breakthrough was invited by its longtime partners the New York Immigration Coalition and the Min Kwon Center for Community Action to help kick off a blitz of civic-engagement activities aimed at pushing Congress toward comprehensive immigration reform.

The event took place in downtown Manhattan near the entrance to the Staten Island Ferry. In this case, the Deport the Statue campaign was used as a way to engage and interact with ferry commuters. A volunteer dressed as the Statue of Liberty with chains around her body (as if she were in detention) grabbed the attention of ferry commuters while volunteers engaged them further. Result: More than 200 passersby and participants took action for immigration reform by signing the NY Immigration Coalition petition, receiving Deport the Statue postcards, calling in, and taking photos holding signs saying “I ♥ Immigration Reform.” Breakthrough and partner organizations amplified the event online by sharing photos on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, resulting in further action online.
National Day of Action for Immigration Reform

As the final part of the Deport the Statue campaign, Breakthrough partnered with The Illuminator and the Bushwick Film Festival to carry out an event in New York City on October 5, 2013, the National Day of Action for Immigration Reform. The Illuminator projected posters from the Deport the Statue campaign onto a wall in a vacant lot in Bushwick, Brooklyn, a few blocks from the Bushwick Film Festival, where Breakthrough’s work was featured as part of their New Media Interactive Day. In the same vein as the Deport the Statue video, the projections made the case for deporting the Statue of Liberty, an immigrant with no papers and a job better filled by a “qualified American statue.”

The event created a visual spectacle for pedestrians and media, leading to online attention to the Deport the Statue campaign. This increased young Americans’ awareness of the challenges faced by undocumented immigrant women and the need to uphold their rights. The event gave Breakthrough the opportunity to interact with partners, constituents, and people—especially new audiences—on the ground in New York City.

There were some logistical issues that affected the event. The main subway station serving that area was closed on that weekend. If we had chosen a more strategic and central location, where foot traffic was not dependent on public transit, the campaign would have been even more visible.

Actions coordinated with partner organizations

Once audiences took the digital journey and landed on the Deport the Statue page on Breakthrough’s website, they were asked to raise their voices in support of immigrant women by taking concrete action. These actions—some designed to bring new audiences on board and some designed to forward legislative change—were updated regularly based on external events in the immigration landscape, especially with regard to the progress of immigration reform in Congress. The legislative actions included directing people to Breakthrough’s partners, the We Belong Together (WBT) campaign, who were working on that aspect of the push for reform.

In this context, Breakthrough asked viewers to:
- Tweet in support of reform that includes immigrant women’s rights by using the hashtags #TakeLibertyBack and #DeporttheStatue
- Share the Deport the Statue video and assets
- Write letters to legislators
- Call Congressional representatives and ask for reform

The event was documented through photo and video. Breakthrough and partner organizations leveraged and disseminated the media to put continued pressure on the House and the Obama administration to take action for immigration reform that protects women’s rights.

Creating a visual spectacle that was relayed through social media, the event drew attention to the absurdity of the deportation system, especially as it affects and violates the rights of immigrant women.

- Sign a petition demanding commonsense immigration reform
- Sign up for daily action alerts through partner organization WeBelongTogether.org

The Deport the Statue materials and assets were included in the We Belong Together online toolkit to build momentum in key House districts. This toolkit contained:
- Policy documents, including WBT policy goals, Senate bills, and amendment analyses
- Media documents, including sample press releases and sample press-conference outlines
- Organizing tools such as a script for a women-calling-women phone bank
- Social media tools like infographics and a toolkit for Fedoras for Fairness, We Belong Together’s photo-sharing campaign
- Alliance-building tools, such as workshop outlines to engage new partners in a discussion of the issues
- Sample articles and op-eds as examples of how to articulate immigration as a women’s issue to diverse constituencies

Deport the Statute materials were crucial in raising awareness of the ways in which women are extremely vulnerable and at risk of being left out of immigration reform.
3.5 Press strategy

Press outreach and placement of Deport the Statue successfully reached broad new audiences through coverage in mainstream outlets. These outlets, many of which would not normally cover immigration reform directly, covered the campaign—thus enlarging its reach—specifically because of its satirical take on the issue.

During the month of June 2013, Breakthrough and Camino PR (Breakthrough’s PR partners for U.S. and global reach) conducted targeted outreach to keep the rights of immigrant women in the United States at the forefront of the immigration reform debate.

Press goals included:
- Increasing conversation around immigration and immigration reform, particularly regarding immigrant women
- Engaging new audiences in the ongoing work for humane immigration reform
- Educating viewers about the hardships immigrant women currently face during the immigration process
- Generating attention among New York media to elevate the discussion about immigration reform

While we directly contacted some reporters, many found out about the campaign organically. CNN reporter Jeanne Moos told Breakthrough that she came across the campaign on the weekend after the launch when a producer at CNN emailed her the link. Moos, who hosts the comedy segment “Moost Unusual” during CNN’s “The Situation Room,” told us that she immediately knew she had to feature the Deport the Statue campaign and video because in all her years doing political comedy, it was the first time that she had seen a genuinely funny take on the immigration issue.

The CNN segment was replayed by news stations in more than 40 cities around the country, and also broadcast on CNN International. That sparked a rush of international coverage on television, in print and online, including pieces by The Huffington Post, BBC Mundo, Univision, Telemundo, MSN News, AOL News, Latino USA, Nightcap TV, and Global Times. Most significant was the quality of coverage and commentary, with numerous outlets that would normally cover immigration addressing it because of the campaign’s humorous nature.

“...The campaign to deport the statue is nothing more than a sincere attempt to start a conversation, led by women’s immigration rights non-profit Breakthrough.”—MSN NEWS

Breakthrough staff members Lynn Harris and John Mulvey were interviewed in Spanish on Telemundo and Univision, broadening the campaign’s reach even further.

In total, outreach on behalf of Deport the Statue generated a potential audience of more than 6.6 million through 103 articles, blog posts, and television segments. Potential unique viewers included 1.9 million broadcast views and 4.7 million views online and in print.
4. Results

The *Deport the Statue* short film generated more than 114,000 views (and counting) on YouTube and received thousands of shares and likes on Twitter and Facebook. The popularity of the video manifested in many reposts of the video on YouTube, a humorous commentary from Nightcap TV, and featured spots on Upworthy and Funny or Die.

Figures on reach:

- 6.6 million people through 103 articles and TV segments, including Breakthrough staff member interviews on Telemundo and Univision
- 12.5 million people reached on Twitter; first 7 million reached within 5 days of launch—demonstrating the virality of the message
- 114,000 views (and counting) on YouTube, Funny or Die, Upworthy, and other websites,
- 75 news channels rebroadcast the original CNN International segment about the campaign
- 300 people exposed to the campaign at Netroots Nation 2013
- 200 people interacted with various elements of the campaign during New Yorkers for Real Immigration Reform activities

The *Deport the Statue* campaign launch—coming just as the Senate was drafting its immigration bill—fanned into growing momentum in support of immigration reform. Propelled by this momentum, the campaign video went viral, highlighting the human rights of immigrant women as a key priority in the debate, and introducing the issue to new demographics of Americans. Garnering thousands of views and generating multiple reposts, the *Deport the Statue* video proved a powerful tool for changing the frame on immigrant women’s rights. Its humorous appeal helped new audiences see past “politics” to a human rights framework calling for basic equality, dignity, and justice for all.

Impact

A quantitative analysis of the press and comments that the video generated shows that the video met its goal of reaching and educating new audiences about the need to address women’s rights in immigration reform.

Within days of launching, the *Deport the Statue* video started achieving its goal of garnering attention from mainstream media outlets, both in print and on television. Moreover, inclusion on segments such as Jeanine Moos’s “Moost Unusual,” seen at the end of Wolf Blitzer’s “Situation Room” on CNN International, delivered the campaign to audiences that might not normally have thought about immigrant women’s rights. These outlets, many of which would not normally cover immigration reform directly, covered the campaign—thus enlarging its reach—specifically because of its satirical take on the issue.

Through a humorous analogy using an iconic American symbol, the video and the universe that was created around it enabled a space for people to become acquainted with the issue of immigrant rights by entering it from a depoliticized space. Once people responded favorably to the creativity and playfulness of the video, they were more inclined to read about the issue and take action in support of immigrant women’s rights.

While some online comments about the campaign expressed anti-immigrant sentiment, these comments were organically moderated by other viewers who countered the negativity with relevant information, context, and often, a human rights–based argument. Given that the video was set up as a spoof, it was interesting to see the ways in which viewers interpreted it.

A majority of people saw through the satire. The video garnered online comments such as:

“...Even if the Statue of Liberty were brought here illegally, at this point it is an American symbol. Part of America. Same thing applies to immigrants, they are already part of this country, they help America be what it is today. The video is trying to open people’s eyes and let them know that without immigrants (legal/illegal) this country wouldn’t be this country, wouldn’t be what it stands for. Liberty and justice for all!”

As a result of strong popular opinion and pressure from the Obama administration, immigration-reform bills were introduced in the Senate and then the House in mid-2013. Although these bills did not pass, 2013 saw a clear shift in the conversation around undocumented women and increased support for humane immigration reform based on shared American values and an accessible path to citizenship.
5. Conclusion

5.1 Lessons learned and looking forward

While Breakthrough has often made use of humor and creativity to approach social justice issues, Deport the Statue was the first time we created a spoof video set in a fictional universe. Some of the greatest challenges in conceiving and producing this campaign came from the need to deliver intelligent satire rather than undermine a serious issue with farce, and to ensure that every piece of the fictional universe served the larger purpose of drawing attention to immigrant women’s rights. Following are the key lessons learned during this campaign.

Keep the message simple and timely. Deport the Statue seized the moment when both the Senate and the public were debating immigration reform, mobilizing new audiences for reform that protects the rights of immigrant women.

Use humor to shine a light on critical social justice issues. When used intelligently, tastefully, and with care, humor can be a great force for engaging new audiences in new ways of thinking, feeling, and speaking about deeply contentious social issues to drive change. When taking a creative, humorous, or satirical approach to critically thinking about issues that impact our communities, it is important to be mindful of the risk of trivializing the issues.

Meet your audience where they are. To ensure that Breakthrough connected with our target audience, we used social media and placed Deport the Statue in physical spaces where our audiences were already engaged. However, given that the campaign was spread over a number of platforms, we had to be careful in managing staff time and of not diluting our message.

Campaign actions should maintain the innovative and fun spirit of the satire. Breakthrough drove its audiences to campaign actions that were organized by our partners. These actions, such as calling a senator, writing to legislators, and signing petitions were framed in the traditional campaigning strategy used by the partner organization. In order for Deport the Statute to be even more successful that it was, Breakthrough should have provided strong actions that were in tune with the rest of the campaign but were just as likely to drive serious change.

Stay nimble. Due to the attention-grabbing, stunt-like nature of the campaign, we planned our tactics to be flexible. On the first day of the launch, we intended to send out five different press releases to hundreds of email addresses, but technical issues stalled our plans. However, the adaptive nature of our campaign meant we were able to quickly move to other tactics to spread word about the launch, such as handing out Deport the Statue postcards in Manhattan and relying on our existing social-media buzz to generate more interest.

Plan ahead. Four months before the launch, Breakthrough proactively created a comprehensive web presence for LPAC, Harvey Knowles-Brier, and his “colleagues.” This made the organization appear somewhat real while giving us the opportunity to test social-media messages on a smaller scale before the actual launch. Breakthrough also worked with partners to gather feedback and coordinate campaign actions. This work not only enhanced Breakthrough’s reputation with allies, it also created a pre-launch base of supporters.

Through this innovative campaign, Breakthrough made its mark by occupying a strategic and edgy space where we successfully inserted a serious issue into popular culture. By capturing the process of planning and executing this campaign, along with the analysis of our impact, we want to share what we have learned with other individuals and organizations, with the intention of advancing change together as a community.
Appendix

Deport the Statue video credits:

Co-producers: Dana Variano and Ishita Srivastava
Assistant producer: Nadia Rasul
Script: Dana Variano
Direction and cinematography: Emilie Jackson
Set and lighting design: Michael Hauer
Shoot assistant: Alex Bacha
Editor: Ishita Srivastava
Graphics: Garret Walter
Makeup: Madeline Sery

Special thanks
Xuan Zhou
Nick Benacerraf

Students and volunteers from New York University and the New School

Actors
Statue of Liberty: Davina Cohen
Immigration officer: William Cook
Voiceover: Sam Dingman

Creative strategy support
The Yes Lab members
Andy Bichlbaum
Mary Notari
Meghan Hanley
Deport the Statue—original script

INT. IMMIGRATION OFFICE. DAY

The STATUE OF LIBERTY sits across an ordinary desk from

WILLIAM, a middle-aged immigration officer. The office is crowded, lit with fluorescent lighting, in a normal, depressing government building.

STATUE OF LIBERTY
(walking in)
Bonjour. How are you today?

WILLIAM
(putting down word-search game in which he was engrossed)
No habla español.
(Slowly, insulting)
Do. You. Speak. English?

STATUE OF LIBERTY
(taking a seat)
Of course. I was just saying--

WILLIAM
(looking at STATUE)
What do you do for work? Do you have any proof of employment?

STATUE pulls out a Statue of Liberty gift bag and dumps the contents on WILLIAM's desk. A Statue of Liberty bobble-head, pencils, postcards, foam crown, and a hat now cover the desk.

STATUE OF LIBERTY
(holding up a postcard of herself)
Well, for over a century I've welcomed and inspired new Americans to this country. I'm an icon of American freedom.

STATUE looks at her torch hand, then back at WILLIAM, pleased.

WILLIAM (rolls eyes, pushes contents off his desk onto the floor. The bobble-head remains.)
Proof. Of. Employment?

STATUE OF LIBERTY
No.

WILLIAM
(writing)
No proof of work.
(looking at STATUE)
Do you have any family in the United States?

WILLIAM picks up his word-search
again, and finds and circles the word "freedom." He puts it down at the end of STATUE's speech.

STATUE OF LIBERTY
(with reborn hope)
The whole of the country is my family. Each person who has come to visit me, or seen me from afar, becomes part of --

WILLIAM
(interrupts)
But do you have any relatives in the United States?

STATUE OF LIBERTY
No, I do not.

WILLIAM
Really? You haven't had any children since coming to the United States?

WILLIAM taps the head on the bobble-head doll.

STATUE OF LIBERTY
No, I don't have any children.

WILLIAM writes "possible anchor babies" on his form.

WILLIAM
Do you have any education?

STATUE OF LIBERTY
Yes, I have over one hundred and twenty years of experience in my field. Among my colleagues I'm known --

WILLIAM
(inter interrupting)
Do you have a degree?

STATUE OF LIBERTY
I -- no, I don't have a degree.

WILLIAM
(writing)
Unskilled.

(Looking at STATUE)
Can you prove you're not taking a job away from an educated American statue?

STATUE OF LIBERTY
(unsure if this is a question)
Um, I --

STATUE, nervous, gets interrupted by her phone. The ringtone is a midi version of "Empire State of Mind." While trying to shut it off, she accidentally lights a paper on WILLIAM's desk on fire with her torch. She quickly snuffs it out. She looks at him apologetically.

STATUE OF LIBERTY
(smiling)
Sorry.

WILLIAM
So, not educated, no skills, no family ties to the United States, and no papers?

ECU of folder being stamped by WILLIAM: "DENIED."

SCREEN OVER BLACK: Deport the statue. Send her back. www.deportthestatue.us