Restoring Fairness

A review of Breakthrough’s Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program (2001-2013)
This review of Breakthrough’s immigrant rights and racial justice program was conducted by external evaluator Laura Roper.

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Acronyms // Page xi

Preface // Page xiii

Executive Summary // Page xiv

Introduction // Page 1

Methodology // Page 2

Policy context 2001-2006 // Page 4

Breakthrough’s mission and theory of change // Page 6

Evolution of Breakthrough’s strategy // Page 8

5.1 Phase 1: Start-Up and Using Culture to Make the Case for Connecteness (2001–2006)
5.2 Phase 2: Harnessing the Power of Digital Media to Influence the Debate on Immigration (2006–2011)
  5.2.1 Fostering Human Rights Communication Capacity
  5.2.2 Using Video-Gaming to Reach Youth and the Public
  5.2.3 Restore Fairness
5.3 Phase 3: The Final Push and Transitioning to a New Strategic Plan (2011-2013)
Breakthrough’s contributions to the current landscape of immigration reform  // Page 29

6.1 Shift in Public Attitudes and Media Discourse Related to Immigrant Rights
6.2 Contributions to Strengthening the Immigrant Rights Movement

The challenge of successful policy change  // Page 40

Lessons learned  // Page 43

Appendix 1. Evaluation Frameworks  // Page 45

Appendix 2. Breakthrough Products  // Page 46

Appendix 3. Interviewees  // Page 48

Appendix 4. Bibliography  // Page 49
Table 1.

Table 2.
Speak Up! Act Up! for a New America Partners // Page 9

Table 3.
Phase 1 Program Outcomes // Page 9

Table 4.

Table 5.
ICED Partners // Page 13

Table 6.
User Statistics: ICED and Homeland Guantanamo // Page 17

Table 7.
Phase 2 Program Outcomes // Page 24

Table 8.
#ImHere Institutional Partners // Page 26

Table 9.
Phase 3 Program Outcomes // Page 28

Table 10.
Crawl, Walk, Run, Fly Assessment // Page 44

Graphic 1.
Timeline of Shifts on Opinion on Immigration // Page 30

Graphic 2.
Support for Decreased/Increased Levels of Immigration // Page 30

Graphic 3.
Outcomes: Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program // Page 32
Acronyms
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACLU</td>
<td>AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIR</td>
<td>COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBP</td>
<td>CUSTOM AND BORDER PATROL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>DEFERRED ACTION FOR DREAMERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWN</td>
<td>DETENTION WATCH NETWORK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICE</td>
<td>IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSC</td>
<td>INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF SITES OF CONSCIENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIRRA</td>
<td>ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION REFORM AND RESPONSIBILITY ACT (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBGT</td>
<td>LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, GAY, TRANSSEXUAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOU</td>
<td>MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>PERFORMANCE AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA ARTS</td>
</tr>
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<td>RWG</td>
<td>RIGHTS WORKING GROUP</td>
</tr>
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Preface

On September 11, 2001, I was heading home to the U.S. from the World Conference Against Racism in Durban. As I awaited my flight to New York from Lagos, the world around us collapsed. Everyone at the airport crowded around bars and restaurants watching the planes go into one tower after another. We all knew at that moment that nothing would ever be the same.

Until that point, my vision for Breakthrough was for a global, transnational organization with women’s human rights at the heart of its agenda. But less than 24 hours back on U.S. soil, I was deluged with calls from friends and fellow human rights advocates about the attacks that had begun against people who looked Arab or South Asian. Soon after we began responding to these emergencies, I realized that Breakthrough would need to address the impact of 9/11 on human rights in the United States.

And so, in the early years of Breakthrough, it felt important to build bridges over the shock, the pain, and the violence that had so traumatized our nation. Breakthrough initially endeavored to build them with music and theater. We launched collaborations with Pakistani Sufi rock band Junoon and playwright and actor Sarah Jones that drew diverse communities across the country into conversations about race, pluralism, and human rights in America.

But not long after 9/11, the government also began its own violence through laws and policies that made all immigrants criminals in their own country. Since then, Breakthrough has worked to challenge the human rights violations in the United States that 9/11 appeared to legitimize. Growing anti-immigrant sentiment had dovetailed with the changing demographics of this country, leaving Caucasian communities feeling unjustifiably threatened, and transforming the very definition of being American.

Breakthrough chose to shine a light on some of the most difficult, complex, and ugly issues facing the nation — those that few wanted to see in the first place. The detention and deportation of marginalized communities who did not have political or collective voice. The abuse and often killings of individuals with longstanding ties and lives in this land. The wholesale incarceration of hundreds of thousands of Americans in courts with no due process and no constitutional rights.

Our hope was to build the understanding that when we deny the rights of the few, we undermine the rights of all. We did this through bringing unlikely partners into dialogue about what kind of country we want to live in — and how to build it together.

The journey has been full of great tragedy and many triumphs. The tragedy is that despite overwhelming American public opinion, our government continues to divide families and communities through immigrant enforcement policies that are antithetical to our values. The triumph is that despite the divisions that 9/11 created not so long ago, the American people have re-coalesced around our fundamental values of freedom, dignity, and the recognition that each and every one of us is entitled to human rights and should support much-needed immigration reform.

Breakthrough is privileged to have shared the work of promoting the human rights of immigrant communities and communities of color with thousands of allies. My deep gratitude to all the artists, organizers, leaders, families, designers, gamers, journalists, lawyers, students, organizations, networks, and so many others who have partnered with Breakthrough along the way.


While our collective efforts have built strong movements, fairness and justice for immigrant communities and people of color remain elusive. This evaluation, conducted by Laura Roper, is an effort to provide a comprehensive and external look at Breakthrough’s strategy and programs with the hope that our journey can offer lessons and insights in strengthening efforts to build a culture of human rights in the United States.

Mallika Dutt
President & CEO
Breakthrough
Evaluation of Breakthrough’s Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program

Executive Summary

Introduction. Shortly after Breakthrough was established in the U.S., the September 11 attacks occurred. Latent and not so latent anti-immigrant sentiment bubbled up and spread, leading to physical attacks on individuals and triggering a series of legal measures and enforcement actions that are still a live issue today. In response to the precarious position of immigrants in the aftermath of 9/11, Breakthrough developed a program on immigrant rights and racial justice, focusing primarily on the denial of due process rights created by the increasingly aggressive detention and deportation actions by federal, state, and local authorities. Breakthrough took an intersectional approach, framing the abuse of immigrants’ rights in a broader context of human rights abuses based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and class. By leveraging popular culture and digital media to reach and mobilize young people in particular, Breakthrough sought to reframe the debate on immigration in both public opinion and media coverage while encouraging activism around immigrant rights.

This report provides a retrospective review of the program, based on multiple sources:

• Documents and digital media analytics provided by Breakthrough
• Exploration of Breakthrough’s multiple websites
• Examination of the websites of key organizations, coalitions, and campaigns with which Breakthrough was involved
• In-depth interviews with Breakthrough staff
• Key informant interviews with 19 stakeholders from immigrant rights, women’s rights, and human rights organizations and funders

It documents the program’s evolution, accomplishments, and lessons learned over more than a decade and illustrates how Breakthrough largely achieved its goals.

Framing Breakthrough’s Model of Change. In its Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program, Breakthrough committed itself to “creating public support for fair immigration policy in the United States,” by “lessen[ing] the fear and hostility toward immigrants and build[ing] bridges across religious and ethnic communities” and “rais[ing] awareness about the importance of civic engagement…and fair immigration policies that protect human rights.” Breakthrough’s theory of change can be summarized as follows:

• Fair immigration policies can only be achieved with a broad-based, culture-wide shift in support of the full range of immigrants’ rights.
• That shift can only happen by reaching new audiences and getting them to recognize that the denial of the rights of immigrants is a denial of all our rights.
• To achieve that recognition, we must break down issue silos in a way that shows how different forms and systems of oppression intersect, so that a wide range of organizations and individuals understand that the struggle for immigrant rights is part of a larger shared struggle for rights, one that includes their own struggle.
• Arts and culture provide a powerful way to break down those silos by engaging new audiences intellectually and emotionally, fostering public dialogue, and creating immersive experiences that cultivate a human rights culture.

Two frameworks inform this evaluation. First, the James S. and John L. Knight Foundation (2011) provides a framework for assessing public information projects along the dimensions of news, awareness, capacity, voice, and action to determine their influence on news coverage, the broader information ecosystem, and activism.

Second is the concept of “networked nonprofits,” organizations that capitalize on the digital media revolution to amplify voice, build a diversity of strategic relationships, and constantly innovate. Breakthrough’s commitment to using cutting-edge communication technologies and popular culture to bring about transformational change allowed it to have an outsized influence given its small size and program budget in the U.S. (averaging just over $530,000/year between 2001-2011).
While there were many actors the same level or more immigration, according to a 2002; and a full 63 percent of the public supported considered it a bad thing, down from 42 percent in 2002; 29 percent of the public stated that immigration was a favorable attitudes about immigrants. In 2011, 66 significant shifts in public opinion toward more the end of Breakthrough engagement.

Changes in the immigration reform landscape by the end of Breakthrough engagement. There were significant shifts in public opinion toward more favorable attitudes about immigrants. In 2011, 66 percent of the public stated that immigration was a good thing, up from 52 percent in 2002; 29 percent considered it a bad thing, down from 42 percent in 2002; and a full 63 percent of the public supported the same level or more immigration, according to a Gallup poll (Jones, 2012).

- The tenor of media coverage shifted significantly between 2002 and 2013, with a marked increase in critical coverage of immigration enforcement and sympathetic coverage of immigrants’ stories, much greater coverage of spokespersons in support of immigration—including the voices of immigrant women—and by 2012–2013 “voices opposing immigration reform altogether were outnumbered and marginalized” (Opportunity Agenda, 2013: 5).

- The diversity of progressive organizations involved in immigration reform expanded, and their strategic, communication, and advocacy capacities increased; rights framing and more effective use of digital and social media was more evident; and youth involvement also increased, largely because of the emergence of the DREAMers in 2008.

- As a result, the Senate bill that passed in 2013 had provisions that strengthened due process and provided more protections for particularly vulnerable detainees, including women; however, like other comprehensive immigration-reform efforts, this bill died due to Congressional stalemate.

Breakthrough’s contributions to stronger immigration reform efforts. While there were many actors and factors that influenced these shifts, this review makes the case that Breakthrough was an important contributor (directly and indirectly) to many of these changes.

Breaking down silos. From the first “Concert for Peace” in October 2001 to the “Why Can’t America Have Human Rights?” event at Riverside Church in 2006 to Restore Fairness and I Am This Land campaigns in the period from 2009 to 2012, Breakthrough has collaborated with nearly 400 organizations
Breakthrough was an unusual member of RWG in that it was a human rights organization. The vast majority of members were domestic organizations working on domestic issues, so they were unfamiliar with the human rights frame. Breakthrough was critical in helping the coalition understand why human rights were relevant in the immigration debate. They helped us make sure we were lifting that up in our materials and doing so in an understandable way. — Margaret Huang, Executive Director of Rights Working Group

and coalitions on an array of events and campaign efforts. It has organized or participated in trainings, workshops, and conferences on human rights communication, and in the period from 2009 to 2012, Breakthrough has collaborated with nearly 400 organizations and coalitions on an array of events and campaign efforts. It has organized or participated in trainings, workshops, and conferences on human rights communication and games for change. Respondents recognized Breakthrough’s capacity to bridge different issues and organizations and find strategic commonalities. The types of groups it brought together in 2001 and 2002 anticipated the broad immigrant rights coalition that mobilized in 2013.

Exploiting the information ecosystem to amplify rights messaging and shift cultural norms. In 2006, Breakthrough reached an inflection point, realizing it had to greatly expand its reach to offset the cascade of anti-immigrant enforcement actions and legislation unleashed by 9/11. It developed a communications strategy that not only illustrated incredible savvy about new technologies and platforms, but also demonstrated a deep understanding about how to influence the highly dynamic media ecosystem, mindful of the potential of both new and old media to change attitudes about immigrants and immigrant rights. It developed an integrated communications strategy that spoke to both the head and heart, making the issue of detention and deportation accessible, understandable, and relatable to hundreds of thousands—and potentially millions—of people.

Over the course of the program, Breakthrough:

• Produced over 30 videos that told the personal stories of a diversity of immigrants who suffered, were humiliated (like Juana Villegas, a detainee who had to gave birth shackled to a hospital bed), and even died (as Sandra Kenly and Boubacar Bah did) due to enforcement measures. These videos refreshed the debate with new materials, often closely linked to Breakthrough’s coalition partners’ campaigns.

• Fully embraced the potential of digital and social media and set out to meet young people where they were highly active—through video games. It launched three games — ICED (2008), Homeland Guantanamo (2008), and America 2049 (2011)—with accompanying media strategies, attracting over 200,000 players.

• Both created and exploited media interest to keep its messages in front of the public. ICED in particular garnered coverage even before its formal release, ultimately generating pieces from hundreds of bloggers, journalists, and newscasters about the dark side of enforcement, a topic that had largely been ignored by the media until then, getting coverage across the political spectrum.

• Reinforced its messaging by incorporating media stories about individuals in detention into Homeland Guantanamo and America 2049, and highlighted the same cases in its set of video resources by cultivating relationships with journalists and bloggers and cross-promoting positive media articles on its website and in press releases, as well as contributing opinion pieces itself.

Breakthrough’s messaging was echoed by shifts in media coverage and changing attitudes about immigrants (documented by the Opportunity Agenda, which closely tracked key communication interventions).

Strengthening the movement (the activist ecosystem) through strategic collaboration. Stakeholders viewed Breakthrough as an important and unique contributor to immigrant rights efforts both because of its strategic understanding of human rights and its technical capabilities. It often “handled” media and documentary aspects of joint projects, such

In 2005 and 2006, we became more interested in the Web 2.0 phenomenon; lots of potential, but there was very little existing guidance on how to take advantage of it. Breakthrough had a much better grip on it than we did… They played a very prominent role in providing advice, direction, and consultation on developing communication strategies… Breakthrough is continually out in front of that conversation. — Stephen Foster, CEO, Overbrook Foundation
as undertaking the video documentation of We Belong Together’s delegations to Alabama and the Mexico-Arizona border in 2011. Mallika Dutt served on the steering or advisory committees of three coalitions—Rights Working Group, Detention Watch Network, and We Belong Together—and is recognized for her strategic insight. Several key videos—“Restore Fairness,” “The Call,” “Check-point Nation,” and “Face the Truth: Racial Profiling in America”—along with supporting materials were developed in close collaboration with key partners as Breakthrough aligned its communications strategies with the needs of the broader movement. Combined with its capacity-building activities, its ability to draw in and work with a great diversity of organizations, and its credibility as a human rights and women’s rights organization, stakeholders felt Breakthrough made significant contributions to a broader, more diverse, more strategic movement.

Lessons learned. Breakthrough hesitated to place its primary focus on immigration reform legislation, fearing that too much would be traded off on the enforcement side to get visa reform and/or legalization of undocumented immigrants. Instead, it sought to build its immigrant rights advocacy on the foundation of the need for a culture of human rights. The repeated failures to pass comprehensive immigration reform have confirmed this wisdom of this view and validated Breakthrough’s theory of change. Breakthrough believes that its focus on building a human rights culture had a more far-reaching impact, one that was not stymied or undercut by the failure to pass a particular piece of legislation.

Over time, Breakthrough and its partners have helped to make the movement more diverse by attracting more young people and a broader group of allies, including women’s organizations. In addition, the use of digital media and cultural expression to support immigrant rights has become more mainstream.

Throughout the Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program, Breakthrough was continually learning and adapting its strategy and tactics as experience validated some elements of its approach and required others to be rethought or adjusted.

Key learnings included:

• Taking an intersectional human rights approach enhances immigrant rights advocacy by breaking down issue silos.

• Arts and popular culture play a key positive role in conveying information, creating human connections, and building bridges between diverse individuals and activist organizations.

• Digital media is a versatile tool for engaging audiences and building community, and it offers enormous power to scale up even a relatively young and small organization’s influence.

• Individual stories and video documentation are powerful tools for building support and understanding regarding the range of challenges and injustices immigrants confront.

• Working with others and investing in relationships has a huge multiplier effect, especially when organizations have strong complementarities in distinctive competencies.

• Taking a long-term perspective, engaging youth, and making sustained investments to bring about a cultural shift is more effective than tying advocacy to specific pieces of legislation.

• Messaging must be carefully tailored based on research into public attitudes and opinions.

• There are alternatives to celebrity endorsement for occupying pop-cultural space and raising a controversial issue’s profile; only when an issue gets “safe” enough will celebrities engage.

• Strategy must drive technology adoption, rather than the other way around—yet taking risks and experimenting is at the core of being an innovative organization, building resilience, and delivering unexpected big wins.

Breakthrough has come to realize that the broadcast model of awareness-raising and education limits its ability to assess the effectiveness of its work, and has potentially limited the work’s impact. Consequently, it has decided to focus on developing and cultivating its own constituency, using focused campaigns with clear targets and specific asks to drive its constituency toward deeper levels of engagement.

Public discourse is less toxic than it was in 2007. There is frequent coverage of the abuses of federal enforcement efforts, and the more frequent inclusion of the voices of immigrants expressing their commitment to this country and its values. — Opportunity Agenda, 2009
Introduction

Americans have always had an ambivalent attitude toward immigrants. On one hand, integral to the national mythology is the idea of the U.S. as a country of immigrants who have come to the land of opportunity, worked hard, thrived, and contributed to the ideal of America. On the other, different immigrant groups have been stigmatized and reviled throughout our history, with regular outbreaks of anti-immigrant hysteria. Prior to the 9/11 attacks, the most wanton abuse of due process rights in modern history occurred during World War II, when more than 100,000 Americans of Japanese heritage were rounded up and placed in internment camps. In the aftermath of 9/11, fear drove anti-immigrant sentiment to spike once more, leading to physical attacks on individuals and triggering a series of legal measures and enforcement actions that continue to make immigrant rights a live issue today.

Founded in India in 1999, Breakthrough was just beginning to establish itself in the U.S. in 2001 with a core mission of “creating a human rights culture in the world’s two largest democracies.” The 9/11 attacks highlighted the precarious position of immigrants to the U.S., and not just those of Middle Eastern origins. Breakthrough responded by developing a program focusing on immigrant rights and racial justice—in particular, on how authorities at the federal, state, and local level were increasingly aggressive in pursuing detention and deportation, and in so doing, denying due process rights. The program leveraged popular culture and outreach to young people in particular to draw attention to the rights of detainees, who were often referred to as “illegal immigrants” even though many of them were in fact legal residents of the U.S., and to reframe the debate around immigration policies as a human rights issue.

Breakthrough maintained an intense focus on immigration rights and immigration reform from late 2001 through 2011, with diminished but continuing involvement in the issue well into 2013. For a newly established organization with an average annual program budget during that decade of just over $530,000, Breakthrough was remarkably successful in taking on and raising the visibility of a highly controversial issue.\(^1\) Despite its limited resources, it was able to use evolving digital technologies and engagement with hundreds of organizations to broaden the coalition of organizations willing to speak out on and engage in advocacy on deportation and detention.

This retrospective review documents the evolution of Breakthrough’s Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program, its accomplishments, and the lessons learned. After discussing the methodology for this review (Section II) and establishing the policy context under which the program operated in its first years (Section III), the paper introduces Breakthrough as an organization (Section IV) and then takes a detailed look at the evolution of the program (Section V). Section VI focuses on the outcomes and impact of Breakthrough’s work, while Section VII considers why policy change protecting immigrants’ rights has not been possible. The final section highlights lessons learned that Breakthrough is applying to its current work.

\(^1\)The median program budget was just under $300,000; Breakthrough’s program budget only topped $1 million for the first time in 2010 with an allocation of $1.2 million.
The scope of work for the evaluation was as follows:

1. Reconstruct the evolution of the Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program.

2. Articulate the theory of action underlying that work and how that theory was refined through experience.

3. Identify and collect evidence on the range of outcomes and contributions Breakthrough made through its own efforts and as part of broad coalitions looking at both end goals and intermediate outcomes.

4. Assess the degree to which the theory of action delivered expected outcomes, and analyze why or why not and consider implications for future work.

Two evaluation frameworks inform this analysis:

The first is the James S. and John L. Knight Foundation’s guide for evaluating community-information projects, which looks at the outcomes of such projects along dimensions of:

- **News**: People are more informed.
- **Awareness**: People are more educated on the issues.
- **Capacity**: Organizations or individuals acquire new skills to use information.
- **Voice**: Individuals and organizations are more empowered to contribute their perspectives.
- **Action**: Individuals and organizations take action in support of their agenda.

These dimensions are embodied in an outcome framework that posits project level outputs and outcomes, which lead to community-level outcomes, and eventually to community impacts. Particularly relevant to Breakthrough’s work is the Knight Foundation’s attention to reshaping the “information ecosystem” by effectively drawing attention to an issue, enhancing collaboration among organizations, and strengthening their communication or media capacity. This, in turn, reinforces individual and organizational capacity to act (civic engagement) to bring about desired changes. As will be discussed below in more detail, Breakthrough considers influencing the information (and activist) ecosystem a means to a much broader goal of cultural transformation.

The second framework is Beth Kanter’s and Katie Paine’s “Crawl, Walk, Run, Fly Assessment Tool” in their book *The Networked Non-Profit*. This framework captures the characteristics of effective organizations that have fully integrated the use of social and digital media into organizational strategy. While some characteristics pertain to any effective non-profit (e.g., “identifies goals and measurable objectives”), others, such as “networked mindset,” “strategic
cross-promotion and integration among social channels,” and “crowdsource ideas and strategies” are particularly relevant for Breakthrough as they reflect characteristics of organizations taking full advantage of the technology and communication revolution. Because technology changes so fast, these organizations have an innovative mindset at the core of their organizational culture. This is particularly true of organizations engaged in policy advocacy, given that successful organizations need to quickly adjust to a changing policy context.

In terms of outcomes and impact, we are interested in:

1. The ways and the extent to which Breakthrough’s use of culture, the arts, and communications technologies influenced the debate, discourse, and public opinion on immigrant rights, and whether that led to a more profound cultural shift toward a “culture of human rights”;

2. The ways in which it broadened and strengthened the movement for immigrant rights and racial justice; and

3. The extent to which the previous two items helped achieve “fair immigration policies that protect human rights.”

The sources of information for this review are:

- Analysis of Breakthrough documentation, plus publicly available documentation referenced to verify or challenge findings from other sources

- Exploration of all Breakthrough websites and the websites of key organizations, coalitions, or campaigns with which Breakthrough was involved

- In-depth interviews with staff

- Stakeholder interviews with 19 former staffers, consultants, and other immigration and human rights actors

- Use of digital media analytics provided by Breakthrough

Finally, Breakthrough was continually innovating and launching new initiatives, making steady growth or progress not necessarily the most appropriate metric. While this evaluation includes the quantitative information that was available, this is largely a qualitative evaluation, based on stakeholder assessments of Breakthrough’s contributions.

**Limits of the review.** This was a retrospective review covering a 12-year period. For a new organization, Breakthrough’s own documentation was reasonably good, with basic digital media analytics throughout the program and evaluations of a number of the main campaigns or initiatives. Resource and time constraints determined the choice of interviewees, with a focus on those likely to have the deepest insights about Breakthrough’s work, collaborative relationships, and evolution. Although the evaluation would have benefited from interviews with a wider array of people, such as youth who helped develop the first video game product or immigrants and others who were featured in Breakthrough’s videos, it was not possible for this exercise. Finally, we were asking interviewees to recall events that occurred over a 12-year period. As with any retrospective review, some interviewees had quite sharp and detailed recall and could provide several good examples to illustrate their points, while others had more limited recall. To the extent possible, the consultant supplemented and confirmed interview content with materials from organizational websites. Despite these limitations, the evaluator is confident that the information gathered makes a strong case for the findings.

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4 See Appendix 3 for bibliography.
5 See Appendix 2 for list of interviewees.
III

Policy context
2001–2006

The economic boom of the early 1990s brought a huge influx of immigrants to the U.S., not just to the traditional destination states of Texas, California, Washington, and Florida, but to northern urban centers and southern agricultural states as well. This expansion triggered growing anti-immigrant alarm, resulting in passage of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act (IIRRA). Some key provisions of this law:

- Mandated strengthened border patrols
- Allowed state and local authorities to enforce immigration law under section 287(g)
- Redefined aggravated felony (which triggered immediate deportation) to include crimes such as shoplifting, drug possession, and traffic violations
- Allowed detention for up to two years without a hearing
- Made immigrants responsible for their own legal expenses
- Eliminated the discretion of immigration judges to make case-by-case judgments
- Required employers to verify their employees’ immigration status

As businesses in particular began to feel repercussions from the law, additional legislation was passed “…granting certain groups relief from some of the most restrictive provisions of the IIRRA and permitting unauthorized immigrants to legalize their status” (Rosenblum, 2011: 2). Ironically, probably the most favorable context for comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) occurred during the first year of the George W. Bush administration (Rosenblum, 2011: 3).


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<th>Law</th>
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<tr>
<td>The U.S. PATRIOT Act (2001)</td>
<td>Allowed for indefinite detention and further limits to due process on national security and terrorism grounds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act (2002)</td>
<td>Required special registration of visitors and immigrants from “high-risk” countries (mostly Middle Eastern).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Justice Department’s National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (2002)</td>
<td>Required special registration of visitors and immigrants from “high-risk” countries (mostly Middle Eastern).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Homeland Security Act of 2002: Eliminated the Immigration and Naturalization Service and split it into three units within DHS: Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Custom and Border Patrol (CBP), and the U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Service (USICS).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Real ID Act (2005):</td>
<td>Set requirements for state driver’s licenses and IDs to be accepted by the federal government, and included a number of other anti-immigrant provisions.</td>
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This all changed with the 9/11 attacks. The immediate aftermath saw physical attacks against individuals who “looked Muslim,” much more coverage of overt anti-immigrant sentiment, and alarmist media programming such as the hit TV series “24,” which debuted in November 2001 with anti-immigrant sentiment at the heart of its storyline about fighting terrorism. What 9/11 triggered and made permissible was the expression of a nativist fear of “the other,” in this case “the other” being foreigners, immigrants, and even U.S. citizens of foreign descent. Both political parties, which had been backing away from the harshest provisions of the IIRRA, reversed course to embrace this emotional response and redeploy the IIRRA to greatly expand enforcement against immigrants.

This was followed by the rapid passage of a raft of post-9/11 legislation that impacted immigrants—both documented and undocumented—and led to a huge increase in detention and deportation as well as a significant undermining of due process rights. Between 2002 and 2003, the number of deportations jumped from 165,000 to 210,000. By 2005, they reached 245,000. After the re-election of George W. Bush in 2004, the Minuteman Project, an organization of private anti-immigration activists emerged to monitor the US-Mexico border, appropriating a historically resonant name familiar to any U.S. schoolchild. In 2005, CNN began promoting immigrant fearmongering with Lou Dobbs’ “Broken Border” series. After comprehensive immigration reform failed in 2005, the House of Representatives passed the highly punitive Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act (HR4437), which in turn spurred immigrants across the country to mobilize in May 2006 in favor of immigration reform. That year’s attempt at CIR failed as well, but additional enforcement legislation was passed in 2006, as it had in 2005. In FY 2006, nearly 281,000 immigrants were deported, a 70 percent increase over 2002.
Breakthrough’s mission and theory of change

Breakthrough made a strategic decision to focus on detention and deportation and border issues, and more recently, on women and immigration. I think it’s important to note that those are important areas of convergence, where human rights violations are most severe, and it makes sense, since Breakthrough approaches things with a human rights lens. Also, these are often instances where the affected constituents face severe obstacles to raising their voices. — Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition

In Breakthrough’s first annual report, it articulated its core mission of creating a culture of human rights in the world’s two largest democracies—India and the U.S. Breakthrough’s approach to human rights emerged from the frustration of Mallika Dutt, Breakthrough’s founder, at the lack of progress in promoting human rights. She says, “I kept seeing the same people, at the same conferences, having the same conversations. We were just talking to ourselves and using language that excluded people, rather than bringing them in. That’s how I became interested in the role of culture, particularly pop culture, to create new kinds of conversations.”

Two other cornerstones of Breakthrough’s approach were 1) its “innovative use of media, culture, and communication [that] enables [it] to reach new and younger audiences, and builds stronger participation in human rights work that leads to creative partnership,” and 2) the commitment that the work “draws from the voices of individuals and communities most affected by the issues we raise. The popular appeal of our strategies helps mainstream these voices into public spaces that otherwise ignore them” (2003:1). Responding to the anti-immigrant backlash in the wake of 9/11, Breakthrough for more than a decade focused its U.S. efforts on a program formally designated around an Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice program. The purpose of the program was to:

...create public support for fair immigration policies in the United States. Through our innovative use of media and education, Breakthrough aims to lessen fear and hostility towards immigrants and build bridges across religious and ethnic communities. The program raises awareness about the importance of civic engagement, voter registration, and fair immigration policies that protect human rights (Breakthrough, 2005:14).
The program was based on a theory of change that can be summarized as:

- The achievement of fair immigration policies can occur only with a broad-based, culture-wide shift in support of the full range of immigrant rights.
- To trigger that shift, there is a need to reach new audiences and get them to recognize that the denial of the rights of immigrants is a denial of everyone’s rights.
- To achieve that recognition, we must break down issue silos so that a wide range of organizations and individuals make the struggle for immigrant rights their own struggle, through the recognition of the intersectionality of different forms and systems of oppression that must be overcome through the shared struggles for rights.
- Arts and culture are a powerful way to engage new audiences both intellectually and emotionally, foster public dialogue, and create immersive experiences to cultivate a human rights culture.

The form of Breakthrough’s programming has changed over the years, but this core theory has been its touchstone throughout. Probably the most important implication of its rights-focused theory of change was that Breakthrough made an early decision that it could not support immigration reform that failed to restore the right to due process. “That’s why we chose, of all the things we could have focused on, the need to hold the line on enforcement, to tackle the most unpopular part of the issue,” says Dutt. Consequently, while Breakthrough could educate and advocate for the rights of immigrants, it saw no mileage in advocating for fundamentally flawed bills emerging from the legislative process. So, in contrast to the vast majority of immigrant rights organizations, Breakthrough was neither a service organization nor a legislative advocacy organization, but one that worked in the field of culture. It was both a new entrant into the policy and information “ecosystem” and also one pursuing a distinctive theory of change, one using arts and communications tools to bring about cultural transformation.
Evolution of Breakthrough’s strategy

5.1 Phase 1: Start-up and using culture to make the case for connectedness (2001–2006)

The focus of Breakthrough’s work in this first stage was to build bridges across constituencies and issues to offset the splintering among and within communities in the U.S., which was being exploited for political purposes to advance an anti-immigrant agenda. This phase of the work was about reaching out as broadly as possible to create spaces for constructive dialogue across boundaries of all kinds, with a special focus on youth. Breakthrough sought to make connections among social justice organizations that may not have considered or understood immigrant rights as a social justice issue, much less their issue.

One of Breakthrough’s first actions was to organize “A Concert for Peace” featuring the Sufi rock band Junoon, whose “soulful and deeply spiritual music infused with a message of peace provided a comfortable space for New Yorkers to heal and reconcile...[by countering] ill-informed and destructive stereotypes [about Islam]” (Breakthrough, 2003: 13). This was followed by a five-performance series (2002-2003) called “Waking the American Dream: Promoting Immigrant Rights,” held in New York City, Washington D.C., Charlotte, North Carolina, and San Francisco, California. Each performance consisted of a screening of the documentary Bringing Durban Home: Combatting Racism Together, followed by a one-woman show by Sarah Jones, playing “the role of twelve immigrants at a poetry reading [with] each character recount[ing] his/her battle with discrimination” (Breakthrough, 2013: 17). Breakthrough used the performance and the film to spark audience dialogue around different aspects of race, ethnicity, and human rights. Mallika Dutt says of this experience:

A time that I was most proud of our work was when we went on the road with Sarah Jones and the Bringing Durban Home video. We had town hall discussions about the intersection of 9/11 and human rights. We did it in coalition with other groups, and we built dialogue along intersections that hadn’t existed to that point. In D.C., we collaborated with the AFL-CIO, and we were discussing labor and immigrant rights before anyone else. In North Carolina, we catalyzed a really important conversation between Anglos, blacks, and Hispanics; in San Francisco, the conversation was about gender and immigration, which we did with the Family Violence Prevention Fund. We did it in 2002, when the climate in the country was at its worst, it was really bad. [It was] a moment that really important connections were made.

One hope in this early stage was to replicate the success in India of “Mann ke Manjeeré,” a music video produced by Breakthrough that brought the issue of domestic violence—usually considered a private issue—into mainstream view. This video topped the charts in India and won and was nominated for multiple awards. Breakthrough hoped to find similar success with a music video on the topic of race and immigration, but despite many efforts to identify high-profile musicians and music producers to support the project, “No one would touch it with a ten-
foot pole.” Instead, in this phase, Breakthrough used theatrical performance, video, film (launching the South Asia Human Rights Film Festival), and stand-up comedy to engage people, especially young people, in dialogue. Although a small organization with only one center in the U.S., it sought to have a national reach, holding events on both coasts, in the Midwest, and Texas. Whenever possible, Breakthrough accepted conference invitations from universities and schools. It published *Combating Racism Together: A Human Rights Education Resource*, a 95-page handbook, and conducted more than 50 interactive human rights workshops. It also participated in an intensive, collaborative push at the time of the 2004 election when many progressive organizations sought to mobilize the youth vote (*Speak Up! Act Up! for a New America*).

**Partnership.** From the outset, Breakthrough was committed to undertaking work with an extremely diverse array of social justice, human rights, and arts organizations, as well as with a range of schools and universities. The analysis of intersectionality, influenced by Kimberlé Crenshaw⁷, made working with a diverse range of organizations not just desirable—it made it essential. The partnerships for its *Speak Up! Act Up! for a New America* initiative, an effort to get young people to vote in the 2004 election, are indicative of the diverse relationships Breakthrough established.

Within its first four years of its existence, Breakthrough was already establishing itself as a networked organization, partnering with hundreds of U.S.–based organizations to advance immigrant rights.

Breakthrough metrics for this period include:

- **Total U.S. budget 2001–2005**: $1,102,000
- **Reach**:
  - More than 320 high school and college students through trainings
  - Nearly 20,000 people through conferences, workshops, public events, and film festivals
  - 34,000 downloads of educational materials
  - 3.6 million unique visitors to website
- **Partnerships with 380 NGOs both nationally and globally to promote a culture of human rights**
- **A range of media coverage**, including *The New York Times*, *NPR*, *USA Today.com*, *CNN*, *Oxygen*, and *PBS*

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The policy context: shaping Phase 2

Immigration reform was repeatedly on the Congressional agenda, but failed to pass in both 2006 and 2007, despite efforts to achieve a “grand bargain” before the Bush administration ended. With each failure, enforcement actions intensified; the executive branch launched and heavily promoted E-Verify and the Secure Communities Program in 2008 and launched a series of high-profile raids on businesses.8 The election of Barack Obama and Democratic majorities in both the House and Senate renewed hope for immigration reform. At this time, United We Dream (UWD) emerged, made up of the DREAMers, young people who had come to the U.S. as children and wanted to see the DREAM Act passed as part of comprehensive immigration reform.9 There was broad-based mobilization for Comprehensive Immigration Reform yet again, and again bills were introduced in the House and Senate, but they were derailed in the legislative process. Instead, the DREAM Act was passed in the House in 2010, but defeated in the Senate on a procedural vote, falling five votes short of the 60-vote majority needed to proceed from committee to floor debate.

At the same time, Obama’s election fueled alarm on the right, in part because votes by people of Hispanic and Asian descent had played an important role in key battleground states. Many on the right actively or tacitly challenged Obama’s legitimacy on the basis of his Kenyan heritage, questioning his U.S. citizenship. His election also sparked the Tea Party movement, with the slogan of “Take America Back.” The close vote on the DREAM Act and the visibility and appeal of the DREAMers were also threatening to anti-immigrant forces. Thus began the wave of state-level anti-immigrant legislation that started with Arizona SB 1070 in April 2010 (see Table 4). Deportations continued apace, and by 2011 Secure Communities had expanded to over 1,200 jurisdictions. The 2010 CIR defeat and continued harsh enforcement policy under President Obama in turn galvanized more intensive organizing among pro-immigration and progressive groups, including the launch in 2010 by the National Domestic Workers Alliance and the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum of the We Belong Together campaign. Breakthrough later became a partner of the We Belong Together campaign.

Table 4

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration policy change 2007–2011</th>
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<tr>
<td>• E-Verify scaled up from pilot to nationwide, and made mandatory for all federal contractors and vendors (2007).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Secure Communities piloted to build domestic deportation capacity by linking criminal databases at local, state, and federal levels to ICE database (2008).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Restrictive state laws passed:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Arizona SB 1070 (2010)</td>
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<td>- Florida HB 1C (2010)</td>
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<td>- Alabama HB 56 (2011)</td>
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<td>- Utah HB 497 (2011)</td>
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<td>- Georgia HB 87 (2011)</td>
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<td>- Indiana SB 590 (2011)</td>
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<td>- South Carolina SB 20 (2011)</td>
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8 E-Verify was a database where employers could verify the immigration status of job-seekers; the Secure Communities Program gave ICE access to fingerprints taken at the time of criminal bookings.

9 The Dream Act was first introduced in 2001 and provided for conditional permanent residency for young people brought to the U.S. as minors if they met a series of requirements.
5.2 Phase 2: Breakthrough 2.0: Harnessing the power of digital media to influence the immigration debate 2006–2011

Breakthrough regards 2006 as a key inflection point in its development and strategy. It realized it had to scale up its efforts to offset the increasing intensity and number of assaults on immigrants’ due process rights. This coincided with the availability of new communication technologies that offered ripe opportunities for Breakthrough to expand its reach. It was during this period that Breakthrough pioneered many of the characteristics, later identified by Kanter and Paine, of a “networked nonprofit,” including allocating adequate resources to social and digital media, strategic cross-promotion and integration among media channels, fostering an online community with linkages to other organizations, involving all staff in social media, and measuring, monitoring, and evaluating its media efforts.

Breakthrough’s desire to scale up dovetailed with a growing concern among progressive human rights and immigration rights funders and organizations that the right was winning the communications wars, especially given the backlash after the massive May Day 2006 demonstrations by immigrant communities. During this phase, Breakthrough remained focused on its core mission to promote immigrant rights as human rights and to keep enforcement issues front and center. It continued to deepen and expand its relationship with partners through a number of initiatives and campaigns. In particular, it worked closely with two coalitions, Detention Watch Network (DWN—currently with 90 national and state-based members) and Rights Working Group (RWG—currently with 340 members). At this juncture, given its decision to fully capitalize on the potential of the Internet to get its message out, Breakthrough left much of the face-to-face public engagement and events-organizing to its partners, instead supporting them around its distinctive competencies—media outreach and human rights. Breakthrough’s strategy during this phase included four components:

1. Fostering human rights communication, and communication capacity
2. Using video gaming to reach the public, especially youth
3. A more traditional awareness-raising campaign
4. A media strategy that included traditional media, digital media, and the use of video storytelling that cut across the other three components

They were the only organization [we were funding] in the Games for Change space. More broadly speaking, they have a good track record using social media and are well positioned. Organizations either tend to rely almost exclusively on social media or ignore it, but social media should really supplement what’s happening on the ground. You can attract a lot of attention online, but can you sustain the interest and does it amount to progress toward your goals? — Maurine Knighton, Senior VP Operations, Nathan Cummings Foundation
5.2.1 Fostering human rights communication capacity

Breakthrough fostered human rights communication in three ways: by creating products—videos, animations, toolkits—to disseminate and for others to use; by joining with like-minded organizations and funders to strategize; and by offering trainings to other human rights and immigrant rights organizations. Specifically, Breakthrough:

- Significantly expanded the use of video as a means to tell individual stories of denial of due process, beginning with a set of videos that were on YouTube and also included as part of the Right to Due Process Toolkit. The videos cut across race and class and represented men, women, and children from every region of the world (see Appendix 4 for complete list of videos).
- In June 2006, it convened a meeting of human rights and social justice activists, funders, and communications specialists to prioritize communicating human rights in the U.S. and to share techniques for effective communication.10
- In September 2006, Breakthrough organized a forum at Riverside Church in New York City, “Why Can’t America Have Human Rights?” that was co-sponsored by 70 organizations and attracted an audience of 600.
- In September 2007, Breakthrough co-organized a two-day meeting with the Opportunity Agenda, WITNESS, and the SPIN Project on “Communication Strategies to Ensure Human Rights in the United States” to advance discussions from the previous year, and conducted four regional digital-media trainings on the theme “Bringing Human Rights Home.”
- With Rights Working Group and Detention Watch Network, Breakthrough developed a multimedia Right to Due Process Toolkit that included nine videos, two animations, a music video, and a discussion guide. The toolkit was distributed to nearly 500 discussion groups during The Night of 1,000 Conversations, organized by Rights Working Group in April 2007.

Breakthrough’s digital media leadership

In 2005 and 2006 we became more interested in the Web 2.0 phenomenon; lots of potential, but there was very little existing guidance on how to take advantage of it. Breakthrough had a much better grip on it than we did…They played a very prominent role in providing advice, direction, and consultation on developing communication strategies…Breakthrough is continually out in front of that conversation. They’ve organized themselves around a model where social media is completely central to what they do; they’re not slapping it on after the fact or as an add-on. — Stephen Foster, CEO

Overbrook Foundation

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10 One organization that supported and participated in the 2006 convening was Opportunity Agenda, formed that year “…with the mission of building the national will to expand opportunity in America. Focused on moving hearts, minds, and policy over time, the organization works with social justice groups, leaders, and movements to advance solutions that expand opportunity for everyone… [It also] works to expand communications that build positive support for immigration policies.” In 2009, it held a four-day social justice retreat on creative change, in which Mallika Dutt participated and produced the publication *Immigration: Arts, Culture and the Media 2010*, which featured Breakthrough prominently.
5.2.2 Using video games to reach youth and the public

ICED (2008)
The main innovation for Breakthrough during this period was the idea of using video games to reach a younger demographic, taking the argument to the space where youth were engaged culturally. At the time, Breakthrough was involved in its Value Families campaign, focusing on how immigration enforcement was breaking up families. Breakthrough was approached by the Performance and Interactive Media Arts Program (PIMA) of Brooklyn College CUNY, and together they launched a highly collaborative process (see Table 5) that resulted in the first ever 3-D, interactive social-justice game called ICED.

ICED I Can End Deportation, launched in 2008, is an online 3D role-playing game aimed at voting-age youth (high school and college-age students). The game enables the player to inhabit the precarious day-to-day experiences of an immigrant circumscribed by the constant threat of detention, and more than likely, deportation. It was determined [among the participating organizations] that the game would be created to serve as a public education tool about detention and deportation, helping to demonstrate the unjust nature of immigration policy as well as sparking dialogue and presenting an enabling environment towards involvement, action, and possible transformation in policy (Breakthrough, [2007]: 1-3).

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICED partners</th>
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<tr>
<td>UAM: The Urban Assembly Media High School</td>
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<td>The Renaissance Charter School</td>
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<td>The Door: Center for Youth Alternatives</td>
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<td>Global Action Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newcomers High School</td>
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<td>Pan American International High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elisabeth Irwin High School</td>
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<td>CARES High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families for Freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jenny Polak, interactive artist</td>
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<td>CAIR Coalition</td>
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<td>Games for Change</td>
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<td>Global Kids</td>
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<td>DWN</td>
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<td>NYU Law School Immigrant Rights Clinic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rights Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York Immigration Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luisana Santibanez, daughter of detained mother</td>
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</table>
The Asian American Justice Center worked a lot on the post-9/11 fallout for Muslims and South Asian communities at the time enforcement got totally out of hand. The games were reaching an audience that we otherwise wouldn’t reach, explaining how the system worked in an accessible way. With ICED, there was a lot of earned media from the mainstream media that just wasn’t covering that aspect of the immigration debate, or if it was covered, it was covered on the enforcement side, not on the due-process side. — Karen Narasaki, former Executive Director of the Asian American Justice Center

Breakthrough was intrigued by an immersive video game because, the argument went,

Simulation as a medium offers players the ability to analyze and question ideological assumptions, such as racism, sexism, and other forms of social inequality, which then serve as a platform for inspiring awareness and debate. In the political micro-world of the video game, which models complex, universal systems, youth can engage in real-life discussions, and try out a number of solutions to a given problem (3).

Game development. Breakthrough and game designers Heidi Boisvert and Natalia Rodriguez essentially crowdsourced the game’s design by involving students, mostly immigrants and youth affected by detention and deportation. Drawing from several high schools at different stages in the process, Breakthrough made game development a learning experience along several dimensions. There was a research phase, during which PIMA students mapped existing games for social change and also analyzed the dynamic terrain of policy and immigrant rights activism. Mirroring the purpose of an immersive game, the game development process encouraged students to “walk in the shoes” of the game characters they were creating. The report continues:

[The] focus-group process […] played a predominant role in the creation of ICED. Students participated in skill-building, design, and conceptualization workshops that allowed them to not only creatively explore and learn about issues of racial justice—detention and deportation, in particular—but also gave them an opportunity to be agents in the active production of alternative media… Students talked about and evaluated characters’ actions/reactions, encounters with authorities, as well as other obstacles that immigrants faced. Each workshop was structured to provoke discussion… and also engaged them in role-playing to determine how they would cope with a new environment if they were detained or deported (Malik, [2008]: 5).

Breakthrough made a point of working with a diversity of young people because “a brain trust of immigrant and affected youth would provide the nuances and narratives, while video-game-obsessed youth would keep a check on game design” (Malik, [2008]: 5). One challenge was that students “consistent reminders to not have too much text kept us focused on paring down the mass information we wanted to convey in a very small space” (14). Breakthrough also relied on more than a dozen non-youth, pro bono consultants, including longtime collaborative partners such as DWN, RWG, New York Immigration Coalition, and new collaborators like Games for Change, as well as adults who had been caught up in the detention system. Developing the game took more than two years, and was an emergent process as Breakthrough learned the ropes, identified technical collaborators, and adjusted the game as the immigrants’ rights context shifted through numerous beta-testings and adjustments.

The roll-out to the media. In contrast to the learning-by-doing process of developing the game, the dissemination and media strategy for the game’s launch was carried out with near-military precision. In June 2007, when Breakthrough presented a preliminary version at the Games for Change conference, ICED got a burst of coverage after a long and largely favorable article appeared in The Los Angeles Times (July 9, 2007). Breakthrough got calls from and appeared on Fox News, Univision, and had a number of radio stations, as well as conducted a number of interviews with print media, gaining a mainstream forum for Breakthrough’s message even before the game was released.

Taking the plunge
[We had] a truly global team: some Australian web geeks [from Silhouette Studios], a few people with a legal background, the high school students, some musicians… we were trying to accomplish this in a very, very low-budget way, but with high people-involvement. Mallika gave us a lot of room. She really trusted in the youth perspective… Organizationally, we didn’t really have the capacity for the video game, no one really understood what it involved when we started, so it took a long time to complete.

— Farah Malik, former Breakthrough staffer
It helped me see things from an immigrant’s point of view. Also, I found the facts embedded in the game quite informative. I had always just assumed that immigrants would have a lawyer and objective judge and never considered that they wouldn’t. I’d also never thought about minor crimes haunting immigrants indefinitely. That is certainly not the way I would like to be treated if I ever went to another country and became an immigrant there.

— ICED, post-game survey response

In November 2007, Breakthrough hired the consulting firm Belden, Russonello & Stewart to create a message guide for the ICED campaign and hired another communications firm to train key spokespersons for the campaign, including Mallika Dutt, Heidi Boisvert (game designer and multimedia manager), and Suzanne Seggerman (president of Games for Change). Breakthrough also hired a public relations manager for ICED, who worked with Breakthrough to identify its primary and secondary target audiences and alerted print, radio, and television outlets. Breakthrough deployed its knowledge of digital media to generate interest in the game not as a secondary or second-best option, but as integral to overall strategy, developing outreach targeted at 350 bloggers, customized to each blogger’s interests (e.g., human rights, immigration, gaming, etc.) and communications style, providing content that made it easy for bloggers to post. Breakthrough also did outreach through MySpace and Facebook, and provided the ICED trailer and video clips to such sites as BlipTV, Daily Motion, and MTV.

When Breakthrough released ICED in February 2008, the response from the right was almost immediate, with articles such as “ICED: An Illegal Immigration Training Video Game” (InfoWars) and on a Minutemen site, “Illegal Alien Video Game:Teaches Kids Contempt for U.S. Immigration Law.” There were also positive blogs and news coverage, but given how highly charged the issue was at the time, comments ran the gamut from supportive to harshly critical. Breakthrough set up a response team consisting of one Breakthrough staff and two communication specialists to respond to negative blogs and thank positive comments based on a pre-prepared message guide. In addition, Dutt and other Breakthrough staff did more than 200 interviews, including going into the lion’s den of conservative talk radio.

Other outreach. The hope was that ICED would provide tens of thousands of youth across the country with an immersive experience that would allow them to “walk in the shoes” of young immigrants and create greater empathy and understanding. To “meet them where they lived,” Breakthrough reached out through social networking and video upload sites, developed web badges and an ICED ringtone, and made an arrangement with MTV to post immigration-related events in which Breakthrough was involved (such as RWG’s Night of 1,000 Conversations). It also developed a 114-page curriculum and discussion guide, reached out to more than 100 education organizations, and asked ally organizations to alert their supporters through email and web links.

One of the game developers, Heidi Boisvert, explained how the pieces of outreach worked together:

The promontory was the game; then we had a curriculum component and an action component. We also combined traditional and non-traditional approaches to the media with a PR person who was targeting the traditional media, but we also had a digital media architecture plan.

All this came together to generate unprecedented attention to the issue of deportation and detention, presented in a rights framework, as evidenced by user statistics in Table 6. If we think in terms of the information ecosystem, Breakthrough created a unique digital media product that generated interest across the system—from traditional to “new” media, publications across the political spectrum, progressive to right-wing to apolitical technology and gaming publications. It offered a counter-narrative to the media’s and politicians’ largely unchallenged endorsement of stronger enforcement—seeding new ideas that subsequent work would reinforce, gradually leading to a change in media discourse and more concern about due process abuses and immigrant rights, as will be highlighted in Section VI.

Amnesty International USA was doing a lot on detention from 2008–2011. The game came out with a great toolkit. We shared it with our members who were interested in detention, especially our student groups… The game received a lot of media attention and that was an important contribution. It was a virtual entry point on the experience of detention.

— Sarnata Reynolds, Senior Advisor on Human Rights, Refugees International
Homeland Guantanamo (2008)

While it was in the process of developing ICED, Breakthrough also began development of Homeland Guantanamo (www.homelandgitmo.com). This game was meant to “spotlight the inhumane conditions faced by nearly 300,000 people in immigrant detention as a result of unfair Department of Homeland Security policies” (press release, September 25, 2008). In it, the player is a journalist trying to collect clues to unravel the death of the real-life case of Boubacar Bah, who died in DHS custody in 2007. The game combines a 3-D walkthrough of a detention facility, where the player also encounters video testimonials based on true cases, about which s/he must answer questions to be rewarded with more clues. In Breakthrough’s continuing effort to show the many profiles of immigrants and the intersectional nature of human rights abuses, the cases included those of a woman who had to give birth shackled to her bed with guards present, a permanent legal resident who was HIV-positive and held for 14 months without proper medication, a teenager separated from her family due to deportation proceedings, and a U.S. war veteran placed in solitary confinement. The launch of Homeland Guantanamo was linked to the Rights Working Group’s campaign Hold the Department of Homeland Security Accountable, and was the centerpiece of that year’s Night of 1,000 Conversations, which launched a National Week of Action. These supported legislation to create enforceable standards to address medical care in immigration detention, ensure detainees access to phones, provide notice of transfer between facilities to lawyers and families, install safeguards for vulnerable populations (e.g., minors and persons with disabilities), and meet other longstanding due-process demands.

Homeland Guantanamo did not get the level of media attention that ICED did, though coverage was substantial (see Table 6), but what one sees is Breakthrough deepening and advancing the conversation using emblematic cases based on video testimonials, both through the game itself and through its interactions with the media. In doing so, Breakthrough gave stories a much longer life than the typical news cycle.

- The case of Boubacar Bah came to national attention in a May 5, 2008 article by Nina Bernstein in The New York Times (“Few Details on Immigrant Who Died in Custody”), followed the next day by a harsh editorial in The Times entitled “Death by Detention.” Breakthrough made Mr. Bah’s case the centerpiece of its game, and in a press release on the launch of its End Homeland Guantanamo campaign in September, it linked to Bernstein’s article. On October 4, Bernstein wrote another article, “Death of Detained Immigrant Inspires Online Game with Goal of Educating Players,” quoting Mallika Dutt at length and highlighting legislation pending at the time that would have improved detainees’ conditions.11

- Earlier, in June 2007, The New York Times’s Bernstein had written a story about the case of Sandra Kenly, a 52-year-old woman who was denied medication and died in detention (“New Scrutiny as Immigrant Dies in Custody”). In June 2008, Breakthrough released a film about Sandra Kenly, as related by her sister, and called it “Death by Detention.” The video also was incorporated into Homeland Guantanamo, keeping the issue alive.

- The case of Juana Villegas came to national attention in another New York Times article on July 20, 2008. It spotlighted provision 287(g) from the 1996 immigration reform that allowed state and local authorities, under formal agreement with the federal government, to enforce immigration law. Villegas was jailed in Nashville, Tennessee after an alleged minor traffic violation, forced to give birth while shackled to her bed, and then separated from her baby (and denied use of a breast pump) until she was released to her family nearly a week

11 To illustrate just how intractable the detainee issue is, one of the bills discussed in The Times article—The Death in Custody Reporting Act—which requires state and federal facilities to report inmate deaths, was expected to pass because it simply reauthorized legislation by that name passed in 2000. It still hasn’t been reauthorized, although the Bureau of Justice Statistics continues to collect what data are available.

12 The film would go on to win the DoGooderTV Best NonProfit Award in 2009, an award sponsored by major organizations such as CISCO, the National Alliance for Media and Culture, and See3Communications.
The story was incorporated into *Homeland Guantanamo*, and the stand-alone video, “Shackled and Detained, A Pregnant Women’s Story,” became a centerpiece of the Restore Fairness campaign (beginning in 2009, discussed below) and has had over 40,000 views since it was posted on YouTube in January 2009. The story and issue had legs, with several peaks in media coverage in 2009, 2011, and continuing to the present. After a five-year legal battle, Nashville officials agreed to a $490,000 settlement with Villegas in 2013. This case received significant national attention and continues to stand as a landmark victory for immigrant women.

This interplay of digital and mainstream media occurred at a time when many were heralding the demise of “old” media, as newspapers in particular were struggling in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. Breakthrough was astute in establishing a symbiotic relationship between the old and new, understanding that each had its purposes and strengths.

### Table 6

**User statistics (as of mid-2010)**

**ICED**
- 132,000 visits to www.icedgame.com; 83 percent new visitors
- 1,775 unique sources (blogs, mainstream media, social networking sites) referred visitors to the site
- 28 million impressions in mainstream coverage
- Top 5 states accessing site: CA, NY, TX, AZ, and FL
- Top 5 of 166 countries accessing site: U.S., Brazil, Mexico, Canada, and Russia

**Homeland Guantanamo**
- Nearly 65,000 visitors to www.homeland-gitmo.com; 66 percent new visitors
- 550 unique sources referred visitors to site
- Top 5 states accessing site: NY, CA, TX, WA, and VA
- Top 5 of 134 countries accessing site: the Philippines, U.S., Canada, Brazil, and the United Kingdom
I Am This Land video contest
In contrast to the dystopia of America 2049, in March 2011, Breakthrough announced the winner of the I Am This Land video contest. The winner was “Roll Call,” a stop-motion film that celebrated the diversity of Flushing International High School through the sartorial transformation of one young man into over two dozen personalities of different races, genders, ethnicities, and religions. It was a lighthearted film that’s still used as a teaching tool at Flushing and is frequently requested for other diversity trainings. — Dillon Paul, interview

America 2049 (2011)
Breakthrough continued to explore ways that it could bring the immigrant experience and issue of human rights to a broader audience with an emotional immediacy that could lead to profound shifts in attitudes about immigrants and immigrant rights. Working with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience13, Breakthrough wanted to create a game that used “narrative storytelling and social media networking to reframe the immigration debate within the human rights context, to engage participants in a quest to rediscover our shared experiences, encourage bridge-building among diverse communities, and promote critical public dialogue” (Breakthrough, Ford Foundation Report 2009–2010). Breakthrough spent several years thinking through the design, conceptualizing it in a variety of ways, starting out as the I'MMigrant Project in 2009, morphing into FreedomQuest in 2010, and finally settling on a futuristic, dystopian America in the year 2049.

In terms of sophistication, complexity, and quality, America 2049 was a great leap beyond the earlier Breakthrough games (Boisvert, n.d.: 38):

1. Breakthrough chose Facebook as the gaming platform for America 2049 in hopes of getting beyond tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of players. Breakthrough also brokered an agreement with Facebook to promote the game.

2. The game itself was presented in 12 narrative installments, released weekly, reflecting the 12 levels of the game with the intent of making gameplay a communal experience. Players were encouraged to compare notes and strategize together to address challenges and solve clues.

3. The game created a much more fully formed virtual experience. For example, players were briefed through a series of videos; there was an American 2049 wiki; numerous websites were part of the game, including one for CAH, one for a mock talk show, and one for a fake pharmaceutical company (see Appendix 2 for the list of websites). There were also opportunities for players to meet face-to-face at the collaborating Sites of Conscience.

In the context of a fictional universe where diversity is seen as a threat and human rights are largely ignored.

13 ICSC is a global network of historic sites dedicated to remembering the legacy of past struggles for social justice. The specific sites involved were: Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation in San Francisco; Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Birmingham, Alabama; Bosque Redondo Memorial, Fort Sumner, New Mexico; Ellis Island, NewYork; Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, Chicago; Levine Museum of the New South, Charlotte, North Carolina; Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles; and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, NewYork.
Breakthrough also worked with an evaluator at the game-design stage to embed “tests” to allow players to move forward in the game that, along with a follow-up survey, also assessed the effectiveness of the game in terms of educating and influencing players.

As in previous experiences, the launch of the game garnered substantial media attention, although significantly less than either ICED or Homeland Guantanamo. This is not surprising, since serious gaming was much more prevalent than when Breakthrough launched ICED. The coverage was largely favorable, much of it substantive and appearing in a wide range of outlets. This included coverage in The Atlantic (“America 2049: The Struggle for Human Rights Hits Facebook”); Salon (“America 2049: Social Change via Facebook Games”), Time.com (“‘America 2049’ Brings Political Drama to Facebook Games”), the Alternative Reality Gaming Network (ARGNet—“A Little Taste of SerennAide from America 2049,” which also appeared in Wired), and Fast Company (“America 2049: A Star-Studded Facebook Game that’s Ambitiously All Over the Place”).

The biggest disappointment was that the game attracted only 20,000 players. One issue was that Facebook got cold feet about featuring the game. Even with promotion, evaluator James Diamond notes that America 2049 “required a pretty significant investment of time,” over 12 weeks, with the challenge (or frustration) of getting through a variety of hurdles.

“ICED was a quick game to play, and an awful lot of players like a quick experience,” he says. “With a serious game, you’re asking gamers to indulge you; they know there’s a message and that’s not why they’re playing.”

An additional issue was marketing. In a paper that Heidi Boisvert wrote about her experience developing serious games, she notes:

In [the Games for Change] space there are no publishers... so, on top of everything else [...] let’s say the product you made is fantastic, now you have to figure out how to get it into the hands of the audience and evaluate it; you have to invest in all those things a publisher would do in a commercial industry... [I]f those games that are successful and well known in our community still are not getting into people’s hands, then we have a big issue (Boisvert, 2013: 19).

Consider, for example, the investment it took to attract a million players to another Facebook-platformed game, Half the Sky. Based on the best-selling book (by New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof) and subsequent PBS television series, it launched in March 2013. A report on the launch says, “With a line-up of blue-chip funders and the active support of Zynga.org and Facebook, Games for Change set out to orchestrate what has been arguably the most visible... game launch in the space of games for good” (Facebook, 2013: 1). This benefited seven well-known non-profits, including
World Vision and the United Nations Foundation, operating with a far larger budget than Breakthrough and with a “commercial-grade developer” Multiple partner organizations also promoted the game, through a celebrity Twitter campaign, paid advertising, and incentives built into the game to encourage sharing (and making donations). This allowed *Half the Sky* to reach a million players in a six-month period (Facebook, 2013; *The New York Times*, February 17). So while a disappointment at the time, in retrospect 20,000 players was a reasonably respectable number, given the investment Breakthrough was able to make in development and promotion. Nonetheless, Breakthrough's experience fed into the broader discussion in the evolving Games for Change community about what it takes for a serious game to make a real difference. That said, after this final gaming experience, Breakthrough decided it was in a situation of diminishing returns in terms of using games to expose or attract new audiences to its issues, either directly through the game itself or through media coverage, at the level of investment it was prepared to make.

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[It] was absolutely great. No clues on Asaba, but after what I saw… not really sure I want to catch him anymore. These displays of cultural diversity are not a bad thing, especially on the personal level. Yes, we need a common unified goal for our world, but not at the expense of the very thing that makes us unique. Out of game: Thank you very much Breakthrough, for a game like this for any who have access to these places throughout the game I highly recommend visiting. My wife and I will be regulars to the CRI (Civil Rights Institute) and many other places like it from now on. — Post from *America 2049* forum

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*It’s also interesting to note that 80% of the players of Half the Sky were women, the average player being identified as a 39-year-old-woman. In contrast, America 2049’s post-game survey indicated that 56% of respondents were women, 60% of the respondents were under 30, and 36% were between 30 and 49.*
5.2.3 Restore Fairness (2009-2011)

It’s not every day that someone comes and offers to do a video on something we are working on. The goal for us [the ACLU] was to influence legislators. Our target really wasn’t the general public. When it was in development, I reviewed the content with our lawyers and our lobbying staff in D.C. I’m sure it was difficult to organize it and work with so many people and organizations. Our D.C. staff worked to get screenings on the Hill. I know they showed it to legislators and their staff … Breakthrough also helped push it out. Having them coordinate the distribution was another big help … In a very crowded field, they managed to coordinate a huge number of organizations and make it look easy, at least from the outside. — Maria Archuleta, Communications Officer, U.S. Programs, Open Society Foundations

Breakthrough’s campaigning model was evolving during its gaming experience. *Restore Fairness* became Breakthrough’s longest campaign, the one most focused on influencing policy discussions around immigration reform (rather than more generally educating and engaging the public), and one based on a close and sustained collaboration with more than 20 partner organizations. On September 9, 2009, Breakthrough launched the Restore Fairness website with the tagline, “Denying fairness and human rights to some puts all our freedoms at risk,” and a “Restore Fairness” video that called on “Congress and the administration to bring back fairness and due process to our immigration system.” In keeping with the sharper advocacy focus, the video was the first of Breakthrough’s films to include commentary from government leaders—two immigration judges and Congresswomen Zoe Lofgren (D-CA 19th) and Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA 40th). The campaign was launched at a time when progressives were still hopeful that President Obama’s new administration would be willing to act on immigration reform. The first blog posting spoke of the 1,200 organizations that had sent an open letter to President Obama, urging him to reform the immigration system, and the first “ask” of the campaign was encouraging readers to write Congress so participants could “stop the erosion of our fundamental human rights.”

The website housed extensive Breakthrough resources and was a means of sharing information not only through its own postings, but also by guest-posting blogs from its partner organizations that highlighted their initiatives and campaign asks. The second function was to engage the general public, informing them with substantive postings, such as links to in-depth policy papers and video clips on immigration issues, including more humorous postings (i.e., from “The Daily Show” and “The Colbert Report”) that might connect with a younger audience. Throughout the Restore Fairness campaign, Breakthrough reinforced blog posts by providing various “take action” tools, such as writing letters to Congressmembers, writing letters to the editor, and hosting video screenings. In short, returning to the Knight Foundation frame, through this campaign Breakthrough provided news, raised awareness, gave a platform (voice) for
I also want to say, in general, that I really value the pro-migrant work that Breakthrough does because the organization brings a global human rights view to the U.S. migration debate. In fact, this might be a good time to unveil a new word I made up -- “globitizen” or a mash-up of the words global citizen. We need more of a globitizen view in the U.S. migration debate. — Blogger from Citizen Orange

A broad and deep pool of relationships
With Restore Fairness, we partnered with a broad and deep pool of organizations. We established a working group; we had MOUs with our partners on how they would both contribute to and distribute the videos; we made sure they all got to review the video before the final cut. The partners spanned many kinds of constituencies—community groups, human rights groups, legal groups. We got judges and people from Congress engaged in the video. It was used for the UN review of the U.S. human rights record; there was a screening for Congress.

— Madhuri Mohindar, Multimedia Manager, Breakthrough
A wide array of immigrant-rights organizations, and increased the capacity of individuals and organizations to act. In addition, Breakthrough was clearly maturing as a networked organization, particularly along the dimensions of strategic cross-promotion and integration among social channels, fostering community and forging relationships with an ever-broader set of stakeholders (Kanter and Paine, 2012: 251-253).

A review of the blog reveals it to be a substantial record of developments, both positive and negative, from late 2009 through the end of 2011. It also successfully conveys the growth of the movement for immigrant rights that has carried out a multi-pronged approach to immigration reform—from pushing for reforms in ICE to getting Lou Dobbs off the air (achieved in 2009) to supporting the DREAMers to dealing more broadly with issues of hate speech and racial profiling. The vast majority of blog postings reference or highlight the work of Breakthrough partners and/or other immigrant-rights activists and organizations. It also conveys a sense of a shifting media landscape, highlighting programming as diverse as *PBS* Frontline’s “Guatemala: A Tale of Two Villages” and an episode of “The Good Wife” that offered a sympathetic and nuanced portrait of an immigrant character. At the same time, there was considerable coverage of draconian state-level laws, their impacts, and the response to them on the part of immigrant-rights organizations.

In keeping with its collaborative model, Breakthrough aligned significant elements of its Restore Fairness work with the Rights Working Group’s priorities. For example:

- In September 2010, RWG’s Week of Action launched a report *Face the Truth of Racial Profiling: A Report from Communities Across the Nation*, and Breakthrough produced a video by the same name (one of Breakthrough’s most popular, with 40,000 views).

- In 2011, Breakthrough also produced one of its most ambitious films, “Checkpoint Nation,” on immigrant death and detention along the Arizona border and ways to address this by building diverse coalitions. It, too, was timed to complement an RWG Week of Action on the 10th anniversary of 9/11 and launch of RWG’s publication *Reclaiming Our Rights: Reflections on Racial Profiling in a Post-9/11 America*.

Aside from adding to its trove of personal stories with a video on a transgender asylum-seeker (“Esmeralda”) and a lesbian couple with adopted children fighting to stay together, Breakthrough held a contest to highlight the value of diversity called

“Restore Fairness: Bring Back Due Process to the Immigration System”
I Am This Land. The winning video was “Roll Call,” produced by students at the Flushing International High School. During this phase of its work, Breakthrough’s multiple contributions as a cultural actor in support of immigrants’ rights were recognized in the Opportunity Agenda’s 2010 publication, *Immigration: Arts, Culture and Media 2010—A Creative Change Report.*

Conclusions. During Phase 2, Breakthrough moved from making connections between groups and issues to greatly expanding its reach and the scope of activities. It deepened its practice both in terms of engagement with its target youth population and with its partner organizations, acting as a collaborator, a trainer, and a co-strategist. Finally, it was an early adopter and exploiter of digital media, able to take advantage of openings in the shifting media landscape that much larger, better-resourced organizations struggled to respond to at the time. It was also consistently targeting both the head and heart, highlighting the dignity and agency of all its video and video-game subjects. As an organization, it was hitting on all five cylinders.

**Phase 2: Program outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWS:</th>
<th>AWARENESS:</th>
<th>CAPACITY:</th>
<th>VOICE:</th>
<th>ACTION:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tremendous success at getting coverage for its issues and getting its message broadly disseminated; skilled exploitation of openings in a dynamic media environment.</td>
<td>Breakthrough itself and with its partners raised broad awareness about rights abuses related to enforcement, illustrating the intersectionality of rights abuses by using emblematic cases of immigrants of different races, genders, classes, religions, and circumstances.</td>
<td>Shared its expertise about human rights communication and the use of digital media through trainings, conferences, and guides; “loaned” its expertise to allies through production of digital products for their use.</td>
<td>Through its videos and video games, raised the voice and shared the perspectives of immigrants and their supporters; provided an outlet for immigrant-rights activists through Restore Fairness; used its own voice through public speaking and editorials; supported partners in their advocacy efforts.</td>
<td>Offered individuals multiple opportunities to act; supported the mobilizations of partners and allies.</td>
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5.3 Phase 3: The final push and transitioning to a new strategic plan

#ImHere (2012)
America 2049 was created with a goal of reaching a million people, but not with an eye toward leveraging the game players after they played the game. With #ImHere, we used much more conventional campaigner language in the strategy. We want the rights of immigrant women to be in the mouths of the candidates, we want it to come up in the debates. We saw it as a very specific, opportunistic moment to push a fundamental shift that would create better opportunities for policy change. It had much more of a political-campaign structure, much clearer goals that drove their strategy, and also put them in a better position to make claims about their influence. — Bridgit Evans, Founder and President of Fuel | We Power Change

From the start, Breakthrough’s work on immigrant rights and racial justice always had a strong gender focus and was informed by the intersectionality of different forms of oppression on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, and immigrant status. At the same time, Breakthrough’s work on violence against women in India was achieving significant successes and global recognition because of its Bell Bajao (Ring the Bell) campaign. In early 2012, Breakthrough went through a strategic planning process to strengthen that alignment and refine how it could best continue to contribute to immigration rights. From this planning process emerged the decision to highlight the situation of women immigrants, taking advantage of the “War on Women” concept that was emerging in the context of the presidential primary and election process.

Officially launched in August 2012, #ImHere was an intensive campaign focused on influencing the discourse around immigration within the context of the 2012 presidential elections. As with Restore Fairness, Breakthrough worked with a core set of partners to disseminate the film “The Call,” about an undocumented woman whose daughter is sexually assaulted and who struggles with the risk of detention if she reports the assault to the police. This was the centerpiece of the campaign and was used to motivate viewers to act. Whereas Restore Fairness partners were largely human rights, civil liberties, and immigrant rights organizations, #ImHere campaign organizations were more diverse (see Table 8).

The campaign, like that for America 2049, was multi-platform and included:

- A website that included informational resources; sample tweets asking influencers to address immigrant rights; a voter registration widget created with Voto Latino; and links to partner organizations
- A Tumblr page featuring supporters’ #ImHere photos that could be uploaded on Tumblr, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
Using “The Call” for advocacy
I’m using “The Call” as a powerful tool to convince folks in Montana we must vote down the anti-immigration ballot initiative LR 121. There’s nothing like a compelling story like this to convince people we must continue to protect the victims of a crime no matter what their legal status is. — a comment on Breakthrough’s Facebook page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#ImHere Institutional partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Services Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACLU Arizona &amp; Georgia*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Association for Women’s Rights in Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Reproductive Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Define American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ella Baker Center for Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>fBomb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hollaback!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immigration Equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>MomsRising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mujeres Unidas y Activas</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Domestic Workers Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Immigrant Justice Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>One Billion Rising</td>
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• A dynamic Twitter strategy with hashtags evolving with the campaign (#ImHere; #ImHereIVote; #ImHereIVoted), as well as using Twitter to link the campaign to broader immigration discussions, encourage people to share immigration-related content, and mobilize users to tweet to public figures.

• Facebook postings from its own website, as well as postings on partner websites, particularly around the film “The Call.”

The media strategy was built around the release of “The Call,” a featured video on YouTube for November 2012 and which got nearly 60,000 views during the campaign (over 76,000 to date). Breakthrough did outreach about “The Call” to 90 reporters, resulting in 19 articles, primarily on online outlets such as The Huffington Post, Upworthy, and Feministing. “The Call” for #ImHere, as “Shackled and Detained” for Restore Fairness, showed the power of video stories to convey complex information with an emotional punch.

Deport the Statue (2013)

Breakthrough’s final campaign focused on immigration reform was a tongue-in-cheek initiative called Deport the Statue. Breakthrough responded to a call for proposals put out by Yes Lab to come up with creative campaigning ideas. In a weekend workshop that brought together a group of creative people and peer organizations, “they came up with the idea of an ultra-rightwing campaign to deport the Statue of Liberty as the ultimate symbol of the hysteria around illegal immigration, highlighting the specific challenges women face” (Mary Notari, interview). The video itself was released in June 2013 in the run-up to the next legislative round on immigration reform, hosted on a spoof website sponsored by Legals for the Preservation of American Culture (a spoof group for whom Breakthrough created a second website, www.legalspac.com). “Deport the Statue” got covered on CNN’s “The Situation Room” (a 2:14 minute piece), BBC Mundo, Univision, a number of local television stations in markets such as Sacramento, California and Tampa Bay, Florida, as well as numerous online postings and 400,000 mentions the first day on Twitter.

In a way, Breakthrough was coming full circle, using art and culture (in this case, gentle satire) to reach across boundaries and engage people who might not be thinking of the rights of immigrants. It was a subversive way to get media attention, in much the way the video games had turned out to be a strong media hook. Breakthrough, like the opposition, appropriated a strong symbol of American identity that everyone could recognize, and even made her a relatable figure. And while a bit flippant, it wasn’t satire for the sake of satire, but grounded in a context where serious thinking, writing, and activism on immigration as a women’s issue had been going on for the last several years. Finally, it poked fun at anti-immigrant extremists at a time when these had begun to lose their audience, as the economic and human implications of the harsh state laws had started to adversely affect local businesses and tourism.

15The Yes Lab helps progressive organizations and activists carry out media-getting creative programs around well-considered goals.

16For example, Gloria Steinem and Pramila Jayapal had written, “Surprise! Immigration is a Women’s Issue,” published June 2010 by Women’s Media Center, an argument they and many others carried through the election and the 2013 immigration-reform effort.
They’ve [Breakthrough] become more nuanced in their messaging and they’ve branched out with the audiences they wanted to reach. Deport the Statue is a perfect example of how they use a sense of humor. Human rights and social justice organizations take themselves VERY seriously—our issues, our partners, our work—sometimes at the expense of finding better ways to communicate things. So having a sense of humor is disarming, it gets away from shouting ALL CAPS in your face, and it is such a contentious issue in the U.S... So it’s exciting to see people treated with respect and with a lighthearted touch. It may get the issue on someone’s radar who might not otherwise listen.

—Matisse Bustos Hawkes, WITNESS

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Phase 3 outcomes</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEWS:</strong> Breakthrough exploited election coverage to insert immigration issues using a multi-platform strategy (Twitter, Tumblr, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AWARENESS:</strong> Breakthrough and We Belong Together used the “War on Women” and key video products to link gender rights to immigrant rights and spotlight the plight of immigrant women; Deport the Statue expanded reach beyond the usual demographics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAPACITY:</strong> Provided video resources for partners and We Belong Together; produced supportive media work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VOICE:</strong> “The Call” and “Checkpoint Nation” presented the realities of immigrant women; supporters were encouraged to use social media to make their views known to policymakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTION:</strong> Tweeted, organized, mobilized, voted.</td>
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Breakthrough’s contribution to the current landscape of immigration reform

At the beginning of its Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program, Breakthrough set out to:

1. Create public support for fair immigration policy.

2. Lessen fear and hostility against immigrants and build bridges across religious and ethnic communities through innovative use of social media and education.

3. Raise awareness about the importance of civic engagement, voter registration, and fair immigration policies that protect human rights.

In addition, Breakthrough wanted to reach new and younger audiences, build stronger participation and creative partnerships, and also “draw from the voices of individuals and communities most affected by the issues.” By early 2012, Breakthrough felt that to a large extent, it had achieved these goals.

This section, based on a review of the program’s evolution and stakeholder assessments, makes the case that Breakthrough’s theory of change was fundamentally sound and that its strategic interventions in the “information ecosystem” ultimately contributed to a shift in media discourse and public opinion back toward a more positive strain of thinking about immigrants that reflects progressive American values. That said, the struggle is far from over, so a second important contribution that Breakthrough has made has been to strengthen the movement advocating for immigrant rights, in effect influencing what might be referred to as the “activist ecosystem.” For easy reference, Graphic 2 on the next pages summarizes Breakthrough’s results chain, as realized over the life of the program.

6.1 Shift in public opinion and media discourse related to immigrant rights

Public Opinion. Virtually everyone interviewed said there has been significant change in the discourse around immigration over the last decade, which in turn reflects stronger public support for immigration. Polling data from Gallup supports this perception. Graphic 1 illustrates a pronounced shift in the gap between those who think immigration is a good or bad thing, with a low point in 2002 (only +10 in support of immigration) to 2012, where immigration is seen as a good thing by 66 percent of the respondents versus 29 percent who see it as a bad thing. While it could be another anomalous bump (since similar numbers were hit in 2006), many think it represents ground recouped since the recession, and regardless, indicates strong majorities in support of immigration.
On the whole, do you think immigration is a good thing or a bad thing for this country today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Good thing</th>
<th>Bad thing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>29</td>
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Graphic 2 shows a downward, albeit bumpy, trend in percentage of the population supporting decreased immigration, from a high of 58 percent post-9/11 to a low of 35 percent in early 2012. Between 2009 (post-2008 financial crisis) to mid-2011 alone there was a 15 percent drop in those who thought immigration should be decreased (from 50 percent to 35 percent). Remarkably, “the 35 percent who now favor decreased immigration is the lowest Gallup has measured on this trend since 1965. At the same time, the 21 percent who favor increased immigration is the largest percentage Gallup has measured” (Jones, 2012). Overall, by mid-2011, 63 percent of respondents supported either the same or higher levels of immigration.

Media discourse. Many things affect public opinion, and one might debate whether media shapes public opinion or follows it. In the case of immigration, certainly conservative media made a pronounced effort to drive public opinion, and consequently, the way the media landscape has changed over the last 10 years is an important signifier.

The Opportunity Agenda published its first tracking report on immigration, public opinion, and media discourse in 2006, the year Breakthrough decided to commit fully to using digital media to get its message out to a much
broader audience. The Opportunity Agenda reports, which have been published episodically, have variously looked at print, broadcast, and digital media coverage of immigration, with full reports or sections on African American and Hispanic coverage and opinions, as well as one on immigration and gender. Overall, the reports capture a significant shift away from coverage of “the immigrant problem” in 2004–2005 toward much more sympathetic, nuanced, and favorable depictions and discussions of immigrants and immigration reform by 2012–2013.

Juxtaposed against Opportunity Agenda findings are launch dates of key Breakthrough products and campaigns. Findings include:

- After media coverage in the 2004–2006 period that highlighted the immigrant problem (i.e., the “tidal wave” of “illegals” crossing the border), much of print-media coverage leading up to the 2007 immigration-reform effort was around the Senate debate, immigrants, the economy, and the 2006 May Day protests. Only 5 percent of articles touched on enforcement issues.

- While many print articles were nuanced and balanced, TV coverage was dominated by Fox News or the conservative Lew Dobbs on CNN, with “hardly a peep from liberal talk-radio hosts.”

- The media frame for the 20 percent of adult Americans who are regular talk-show listeners therefore was that “they should be afraid, very afraid, because ‘illegal aliens’ pose a threat to national security, the U.S. economy and our way of life” (Opportunity Agenda, 2007: 27-28).

- In their report looking at 2008 broadcast (radio and television) media coverage after the defeat of immigration reform, although Fox News generated 30 percent of pieces on immigration, 38 percent were from NPR and 25 percent by CNN (where Lou Dobbs was still perched). However, they also found that in 62 percent of the pieces sampled, “pro-immigrant” commentators were quoted first—usually public/government officials (28 percent), followed by advocates (22 percent), and attorneys (10 percent). Importantly, a third of all stories were about enforcement or deportation, and were largely critical of strict enforcement (a central theme for Breakthrough and highlighted in ICEd and Homeland Guantanamo, which both came out in 2008).

- The 2008–2009 report on print media found that 50 percent of the 70 articles reviewed were on federal enforcement, with immigration and the economy following a distant second, accounting for only 10 percent of articles. Of these, most report on serious flaws in policies and their execution. Add to these half a dozen stories about state and local efforts to control immigration, and several feature stories about the suffering of “mixed-status families,” and the takeaway for the reader is that the system is more dysfunctional than ever, and the unintended consequences of these failed enforcement efforts are in conflict with basic American values (Opportunity Agenda, 2009: 18).

The report goes on to say:

...public discourse is less toxic than it was in 2007. There is frequent coverage of the abuses of federal enforcement efforts, and the more frequent inclusion of voices of immigrants expressing their commitment to this country and its values (i.e., “I love this country”; “I feel like I belong to this country”), which generate sympathy, soften public opposition, and reinforce the idea that “we need workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values that move us forward together” (24-25).

- In its 2012 publication on immigration and gender, covering articles from March 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012, the vast majority dealt with detention, deportation, and family separation. The articles often started with the story of an individual woman, but used these stories “to illustrate larger, systemic issues relating to mixed families and the federal government’s deportation policies and practices. The tone of these articles, without exception, were sympathetic” (Opportunity Agenda, 2012: 13). Half the articles quoted pro-immigrant advocates (26 percent) or immigrant women (24 percent), in contrast to 2008 data, where immigrants were quoted only 8 percent of the time.

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17The basic methodology for print media is to undertake electronic searches covering a two-to-three month period, two or three times a year, using keywords related to immigration. Of the thousands of articles generated, a random-number generator is used to cull a small percentage of articles, from which are selected all “usable” articles, on which content analysis is done. While the basic methodology is the same, search terms and categories of analysis have evolved over the years, so it’s not possible to do straight year-to-year comparisons.
Outcomes: Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program

**Outputs (Interlinked)**
- Video series — animation, documentary, satire
- High visibility events/campaigns
- Online games
- Supporting websites/platforms
- Curricula
- Media outreach
- Training in digital media and human rights communication

**Project/Campaign Outcomes**
- Hundreds of thousands reached through videos
- Enforcement given a human face; immigrants voice their own experience
- Over 200,000 gamers
- The issue of enforcement widely seeded in traditional and non-traditional media — millions of viewers/readers/listeners exposed
- Connections made and common ground identified amongst wide array of organizations; core organizations trained

**Program Outcomes**
- Public Outcomes: Change in attitude of youth and others
  - Wide audience informed about detention and deportation
  - Greater understanding of the intersectionality of rights
  - Broader and deeper concern about rights violations
- Changes in information/Activism Ecosystem for immigrant rights
  - Greater coverage of rights abuses in digital and traditional media
  - Great collaboration and commitment amongst a wider array of organizations on intersectionality of immigrant rights
  - Greater capacity to influence coverage and narrative about immigrant rights, reaching and mobilizing more people.

**The Changed Landscape for Immigrant Rights at the End of Breakthrough’s**

**Broad-Based Support for Immigration Reform**
- Polling data show public opinion decisively in favor of immigrants and immigration reform;
- Media analysis shows clear shift in the media narrative in support of immigration reform; highlights impact of abuses of enforcement on individuals, communities and families

**Broader, More Diverse, More Capable Movement**
- Very broad-based interest group support for immigration reform, including stronger due process;
- Progressive organizations are more media savvy; stronger collaborators and campaigns; more comfortable promoting rights of immigrant through lenses of gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.;
- Emergency of the Dreamers (independent of Breakthrough) — greater creativity, creating connections and mobilizing through music, video, graphic arts — echoing Breakthrough’s approach

**Modest Policy Gains (Spearheaded by Breakthrough Partners)**...

...but time to regroup and refocus in the face of extremely dysfunctional Congress and enforcement focus of DHS
The report noted, “the ‘system is broken’ trope had been supplanted by the ‘government is a bully.’” Overall, the report concluded that coverage in mainstream and niche media was “overwhelmingly sympathetic to immigrant women and their families” and that:

By describing the circumstances of mixed-status families and how the laws conspire to make one family member eligible for relief but another eligible for deportation, the long waits families have to endure while their applications for permanent residency wend their way through the system, and the huge expense of legal representation, readers are being educated about how the system actually works (or doesn’t work). The American public’s lack of understanding about the workings of the country’s immigration system has been a major barrier to winning more support for federal immigration-policy reform. The more the public understands about how arbitrary, irrational, and unjust the system is, the better. (24).

The only seriously negative note in the findings is a pernicious tendency, even by supporters, to portray immigrant women as passive victims with little agency of their own.

- In its 2012–2013 report, Opportunity Agenda found that “voices opposing immigration reform altogether were outnumbered and marginalized,” that “depictions of immigrants were overwhelmingly sympathetic... in part explained by increased media focus on younger immigrants,” and that in TV coverage, “commentary trended toward support for an overhaul of federal immigration policy. Most talk show hosts and guests on Fox News, for example, spoke in support of citizenship with prerequisites...” (2013: 5).

- They also noted the almost complete elimination of the term “illegal aliens” (2.8 percent in all coverage), and a slight improvement in use of the term “undocumented immigrants” over the last few years, with 27 percent of articles reviewed using this term in the 2012–13 period as opposed to 18 percent in 2010–2011. However, they noted that the term is often used interchangeably with “illegal immigrants,” a term present in 77
Key Breakthrough Launches
- “Face the Truth: Racial Profiling in America” (2010)
- “Roll Call” (“I Am This Land” contest winner) (2011)
- “Checkpoint Nation” (2011)
- America 2049 (2011)
- #ImHere campaign and “The Call” (2012)
- “Mansimran: A Sikh Teenager Deals with Bullying” (2012)
- “Deport the Statue” (2013)


Breakthrough’s contribution. In short, there has been a significant shift in media discourse and an overall positive trend in opinions that track closely with Breakthrough interventions and messaging in its multiple products. Correlation is not causation; nonetheless, a strongly plausible case can be made that Breakthrough has been an important, amplifying voice for progressive immigration reform. To summarize, Breakthrough’s specific contributions in shaping the debate have been:

- The three video games introduced the issues of detention and deportation to non-traditional audiences, such as gamers in their late teens through early 30s, through publications such as Wired;

Breakthrough offered a different take on the issues to conservative audiences because of its willingness to appear on conservative programs to present its point of view; and expanded the reach to progressives who might not have been paying much attention to detention and deportation through outlets like The Huffington Post, Daily Kos, and Think Progress.

- Breakthrough produced videos that either moved the conversation or took advantage of media coverage to sustain the conversation, especially around the treatment of women in detention and the impact on families (“The Call,” “Shackled and Detained”), the racial profiling of immigrants (“Checkpoint Nation,” “Face the Truth”), and the problem of fatalities under the immigration system (“Death by Detention,” “Deserted”). Breakthrough’s strategic and intentional press strategy enabled it to create an echo chamber for their messaging in support of due process and fairness for immigrant communities. This is evidenced by the way that Breakthrough products interfaced with the series of articles on the issue that appeared in The New York Times in 2007 and 2008.

- Breakthrough’s body of video documentation presented the human side of the issue of detention and deportation, and as a whole, offered a body of evidence that was a harsh indictment of enforcement proceedings. Importantly, they provided a platform for immigrants to speak on their own behalf.
• These videos were actively disseminated by collaborating partners and to the media, resulting in tens of thousands of viewings, potentially reaching millions of people. They were also used in a targeted way, such as the viewings by the American Bar Association Commission on Immigration in June 2009 of the stories of Juana Villegas and Ali (a Pakistani HIV-positive man who was denied medication in detention).

• People are more likely to pay attention to an issue if they get repeated exposure to the same messaging. Breakthrough on its own created and promoted multiple messaging “touch points” on the issue of immigrant rights and racial justice through its games, videos, multiple websites (see Breakthrough Products, Appendix 2), and regular presence in mainstream and digital media. It also engaged in extensive cross-promotion of other organizations’ websites, campaigns, and products, creating a collective voice in support of enforcement reforms.

Given the arc of coverage on immigrant rights, Breakthrough was spectacularly prescient in taking up the issue of detention and deportation at the outset of its program. The strong feeling of respondents, however, was that Breakthrough was critical in prompting some of the first widespread coverage of the dark side of enforcement policy in 2007 and 2008. The timing of Breakthrough’s games was fortuitous, coinciding as it did with large-scale workplace raids and other examples of the harmful implications of strong enforcement coming to light during the last years of the Bush administration. During this time, Breakthrough had prepared and positioned itself well with a well-honed media strategy and a steady stream of new content that had multiple moments of influence and impact on the movement.

In other words, though it might be difficult to “prove” that Breakthrough drove coverage of the issue in a global sense, a strong case can be made that it was well-placed to shape the narrative—to be more critical of detention and deportation policy and practice, and more sympathetic toward immigrants both as individuals and as a group. Breakthrough’s ability to move a message is particularly evident around coverage of the death of Boubacar Bah and the case of Juana Villegas. As Lisa Moore of the National Domestic Workers Alliance observes:

They were always attuned to the best way to communicate out from a setting that was very private, with the sensitivity to respect these intimate relationships. Later on, with the creation of the video “The Call” and the communication products around “Deport the Statue,” they demonstrated their capacity to reach beyond the choir.

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**Going to scale**

The question of scale was always being discussed… Their biggest success has been video. They have a strong distribution strategy that guarantees 30,000 to 50,000 views. They have a very customized, very honed distribution strategy that doesn’t rely on paid media. A lot of other organizations rely on paid media for a lot less stellar results.

— Bridgit Evans, Founder and President of Fuel | We Power Change
6.2 Contributions to strengthening the immigrant rights movement

I think the immigrant rights movement has made huge progress. Twenty years ago, we couldn’t get people’s attention. Now our campaigns better integrate strategic communication, our organizing and mobilizations are better connected to voter-education work, and our campaigns have produced spinoffs and edgy actions. In all, the aspects of what makes a robust campaign—stronger national infrastructure, politically sophisticated leaders, strategic alliances including with conservative constituencies—we are much stronger. We need to keep at it and continue to build our overall capacity, including a strong component of our movement with a human rights perspective that has strategic communication tools and outreach capacity. — Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director of New York Immigration Coalition (emphasis added)

They are incredibly creative and innovative; good at talking to different campaigns about what they want to accomplish and figuring out what Breakthrough can do to help. So on the gender and immigration lens, they were able to come to our convenings and make the link to their thinking. The Deport the Statue idea came out of that. When we launched We Belong Together, we did a gender analysis that really connected all the dots, and that is something Breakthrough grabbed onto. — Pramila Jayapal, Co-Chair, We Belong Together

When asked how the landscape for immigrant rights had changed, virtually everyone said the movement was broader and stronger. As independent support of this, Max Zahn notes that the coalition behind immigration reform in 2013 was a “kaleidoscopic assortment of strange bedfellows,” and adds, “Just for starters, the coalition includes business interests like the Chamber of Commerce and the National Restaurant Association, labor interests like the AFL-CIO and SEIU, immigration advocacy groups like United We Dream, and even religious organizations like the Evangelical Immigration Table.” This list overlooks traditional immigrant rights and human rights organizations, as well as relative newcomers, such as women’s rights organizations.

Fostering intersectional connections. From the outset, Breakthrough set out to broaden the base in support of immigrant rights by treating it as a human rights issue and foregrounding how the abuse of immigrant rights intersects with racial justice and women’s rights, LGBT rights, disability rights, etc. Breakthrough did this diligently and consistently from its first Concert for Peace in 2001 to seeking broad sponsorship (ultimately 70 organizations) for the Why Can’t America Have

18 Found at (http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/16628-unlikely-coalition-on-immigration-reform-rose-rapidly). The Evangelical Immigration Table formed a “Bibles, Badges, and Business” coalition for immigration reform.
Human Rights? gathering at Riverside Church in 2006, to repeatedly working with expanding configurations of organizations and networks (which, in turn, represented multiple members) on more intensive projects. Its video products dealt with immigration and women, LGBT rights, racial profiling, HIV/AIDS, etc., and this was reinforced by the video games that spotlighted these issues. Breakthrough didn’t create its videos and games in a vacuum. Instead, it consulted with and often deeply involved collaborating partners in design and production to insure its products would be disseminated and used.

The human rights frame not only provided continuity to Breakthrough’s own work, it also helped deepen the work of its collaborators. Margaret Huang of RWG comments:

"Breakthrough was an unusual member of RWG in that it was a human rights organization. The vast majority of members were domestic organizations working on domestic issues, so they were unfamiliar with the human rights frame. Breakthrough was critical in helping the coalition understand why human rights were relevant in the immigration debate. They helped us make sure we were lifting that up in our materials, and doing so in an understandable way... I think the coalition [RWG] became more comfortable with the human rights framing... In the fall, we submitted a report to the UN Commission on Human Rights that included materials from 12 community-based organizations. It is a much different place than we were six years ago, when a law firm wrote the report for us."

Karen Narasaki, former executive director of the Asian American Justice Center, has the following reflection on Breakthrough’s contribution to getting women’s organizations involved in the immigration issue:

When we were doing the lobbying for comprehensive immigration reform in 2006–2007, we were going after Republican women. We talked to them about how the current system negatively impacted women; that a point system awarded education, and most women around the world don’t have access to education. We were pushing this message, but it was pretty ad hoc. This round, we’ve been much more organized on this. It’s happened because of the rise of more grassroots and minority-led groups, such as the Domestic Workers Alliance and the We Belong Together Coalition. When I worked on immigration reform during the Clinton years, when we reached out to mainstream women’s organizations, they refused to work on immigrant issues. To have highly credible organizations like Breakthrough involved helped us push the women’s groups to rethink their level of engagement.

Several other respondents also commented on the value of the human rights framing of immigrant issues. For example, the Overbrook Foundation originally funded Breakthrough because it was a human rights organization doing a lot of interesting work with digital media, rather than for its work on immigration. Partly because of their work with Breakthrough, they have since prioritized immigrant rights.

Deploying its assets in service to the movement. Breakthrough came to the issue of immigrant rights bringing key assets to the table — its media capacity, its creativity and understanding of popular culture, and its deep knowledge of human rights. In addition, it approached its work in a collaborative spirit that reflected a willingness to put its assets in service to others so that they could do their work more effectively. For example, it regularly aligned its work with RWG (and to a lesser degree, DWN), producing videos and/or materials to support RWG campaigns and their annual Night of 1,000 Conversations events. As Margaret Huang of RWG observes:

"Their mission of using art, culture, and popular media was really vital and sorely lacking with the rest of our members. We’re a fairly wonky group, and Breakthrough was a breath of fresh air. Their video on racial profiling and “Checkpoint Nation” helped us reach audiences we wouldn’t have reached otherwise, and reminded us that we couldn’t just talk to policymakers.

Breakthrough often “handled the media” for different events or initiatives, such as the media logistics for a press conference that Detention Watch Network held in 2006, or the filming of We Belong Together delegations to the Arizona-Mexico border in 2011 and Alabama in 2012. In doing so, it brought together both its technical expertise and its strategic insights. Lisa Moore of We Belong Together comments:

"Breakthrough was on our advisory committee, they helped shape the delegation [to Alabama] and did good thinking about how they could document the trip through video. They thought through how to shape the narrative to raise up the issues and mobilize women to act on them. This phase of the campaign was really powerful and transformative for immigrant women who could tell their stories, and for those of us who wanted to act on their stories.

Breakthrough has also been consistently willing to impart its skill and knowledge and use its projects to build the skill of others. It has organized or taken part in numerous trainings and workshops on the use of digital media for promoting human rights. Most creatively, in collaboration with CUNY, it used the development of ICED to provide deep education to..."
students about immigrant-rights issues, along with more technical game-development skills.

Several respondents also highlighted the important strategic role that Mallika Dutt played on steering and advisory committees, commenting on her strategic thinking, her ability to break down complex issues, and her interpersonal skills. For example, Andrea Black notes, “Strategically, Mallika really understands how advocacy works and how coalitions work. She helped us navigate the relationship between organizers, advocates, and detainees when we ran into some difficult conversations during a strategy meeting.”

Bringing new energy to the movement. Working on immigrant rights was and continues to be a challenge, especially in a policy context that has, in many way, gone from bad to worse. Much of the work, particularly around detention, deportation, and racial profiling, has been a rearguard, reactive strategy, trying to deal with the negative consequences of enforcement actions. As noted above, a lot of CIR advocacy has been an inside-the-Beltway effort, with the same players jockeying for advantage. Breakthrough sought to break this dynamic by focusing its outreach on young people who potentially would be more open-minded and creatively disruptive than long-standing immigration actors. Not being tied to any particular legislative strategy allowed Breakthrough to think about an investment in engaging youth as part of a longer term, transformative strategy. The idea of using video games was intriguing to many partners, but the amount of attention the games got, particularly ICED, was galvanizing and exciting for Breakthrough partners and collaborators, since the issue of enforcement finally got coverage. As several respondents commented, Breakthrough opened up the conversation beyond the inside-the-Beltway players in ways that were accessible, engaging, and refreshing, not only for the public, but also for organizations that had been in the trenches a long time.

What one can’t say with any certainty is the extent to which Breakthrough actually influenced individual young people to take action because of its own broadcast model of outreach. What one can say is that, once again, Breakthrough was highly prescient about the potential of young people to shift the immigration reform debate. When asked about the current immigration-reform landscape, most interviewees volunteered that a key actor that has enlivened and re-energized the movement has been the DREAMers—young, college-age immigrants who came to the U.S. as children and emerged as a force in the wake of the failure of the 2007 CIR legislation.

Margaret Huang says of them,

My observation is that the work on immigration issues has been turned on its head because of the DREAMers—their organization, their passion and principle. The round in 2006–7 was almost completely an inside-ballgame effort led by lobbyists, and it failed. In this last round, it was a much more diverse and shifting strategy. There were still the D.C. lobbyists, but there were an extraordinary number of organizations—DREAMers, but also other organizations. For example, the border groups were much better organized. All of this has been fueled by youth with energy and commitment. It has affected proposed immigration policy, and the position of key players who are now being watched by these groups. It was a big lesson to me.

Rinku Sen, in an article in Colorlines commenting on the importance of storytelling, says of them,

Young, savvy with social media and artistically inclined, DREAMers have compensated for their lack of political power by telling their stories in many forms and venues. The Trail of Dreams, the route from Florida to D.C. that four of the DREAMers walked in 2010, had characters and a plot built in. They took on a heroic quest, encountered the Ku Klux Klan along the way, and their completion of the journey reinforced what might be considered old-fashioned American perseverance.20

Taryn Higashi, commenting on the dynamism of some of the artist-activists who have moved into the advocacy space around the DREAMers, highlights:

Culture Strike brings together writers and visual artists with undocumented immigrants for

Modeling media savvy
I do think groups are becoming increasingly better-resourced on communications, in part motivated by seeing what Breakthrough accomplished. Infographics, video, and song are used much more by grassroots groups. Breakthrough was one of the visible pioneers, especially with their work in India. No one does it at the level of quality that Breakthrough does. — Karen Narasaki, executive director of Asian American Justice Center
exchanges to inform each other, and then further work is generated out of these exchanges. They created *Migration is Beautiful* which is used by activists all over to organize around immigration reform.\(^{19}\)

While Breakthrough makes no claim that it contributed to or influenced the emergence of the DREAMers, what is noteworthy is how many of Breakthrough’s strategies and tactics anticipated the way DREAMers have engaged with the topic—through social media, storytelling, and by putting a human face on the issues. The DREAMers have been successful in appropriating a strong trope of U.S. identity (the American Dream); have made undocumented immigrants non-threatening (“they look/sound just like my kids”); and have made speaking out for immigrant rights cool and brave. Combine this with the energy and commitment women brought to the movement and the broad public sympathy generated by stories like that of Juana Villegas (to which Breakthrough did directly contribute), and one begins to see a broad cultural shift. It has even gotten to the point that A-list Hollywood celebrities have been willing to identify with the movement (see We Belong Together’s *Fedoras for Fairness* campaign).

In short, the cultural space that Breakthrough occupied and helped expand has become more populated, the engagement that Breakthrough sought from creative types is more manifest, and the broad coalition of people it envisioned in support of immigration reform has evolved. Many of Breakthrough’s partners have become more media savvy, a wider range of organizations are concerned with deportation and detention as a multi-dimensional rights issue, and many organizations have directly benefited from the materials that Breakthrough has regularly produced through the years.

To conclude, while it is important to recognize that many actors and factors have affected the changing landscape of immigration reform, the combination of assets that Breakthrough brought to the table—a deep understanding of human rights and their intersectionality, a commitment to the rights and dignity of every immigrant, an understanding of arts and culture as a medium through which to promote social change, and the characteristics and competencies of a networked organization (innovative, nimble, connected, and communicative), all allowed it to have an outsized influence on the movement. As many respondents have said, “It [Breakthrough] led the way” on the use of social media, on experimenting with video gaming as a tool for change, and on raising detention and deportation as a human rights issue.

At the same time, Breakthrough de-emphasized leadership in favor of “empowering individuals and communities to advocate for universal human rights by using multimedia tools to transform hearts and minds,” and consequently, it invested a lot in bringing other individuals and organizations along to share in that leadership and stand together to “achieve a world where all individuals and communities can live with dignity, equality, and justice” (Breakthrough, 2011).

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\(^{19}\)One of the participating organizations in *Migration is Beautiful* is Culture Group, founded in 2010 as a “pop-up think tank, a collaboration of social-change experts and creative producers who believe that social change begins with culture change,” echoing Breakthrough’s commitment to cultural change from its founding.
The challenge of successful policy change

Overall, there is a lot stronger and more strategic advocacy. In 2009, as a result of years of work by advocates, the president did assign an advisor to look at detention issues, and, after a scathing report was issued, the White House promised significant reforms. However, the recommendations weren’t as fundamental as they needed to be, and implementation has fallen far short. Now, we have a strong coalition of organizers and advocates. In 2013, the Senate passed a bill with all kinds of detention reforms. It was amazing all the things we were able to help get in the bill... But sadly, we now have record detentions, and conditions in detention have not changed substantially on the ground. — Andrea Black, former Executive Director, Detention Watch Network.

Breakthrough did not see its role as moving specific legislation forward, but it worked with and provided support to many organizations and coalitions that did. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that there have been two big disappointments in the immigration reform movement.

One has been the failure to pass comprehensive immigration reform. The other has been the inability to significantly influence the Obama administration to take action at a high level on detentions and deportations. The Senate’s 2013 version of immigration reform (S.744) was better than the 2007 bill and offered incremental, albeit important, improvements related to detention and deportation (based on recognition that:

One of the consequences of the broken immigration system has been the deterioration of due-process protections and a severely strained immigration court system. The changes proposed to both systems begin to address longstanding criticisms of the government’s failure to adequately use alternatives to detention, to provide sufficient resources to immigration courts to process cases, and to ensure humane treatment of those in the government’s custody (Immigration Policy Center, 2013: 15).

Nonetheless, in debates, enforcement was still the price to be paid for considering an onerous and limited path to citizenship. In any event, the bill never gained traction in the House, despite hopes that demographic and election realities would spur Republicans to rethink their fierce opposition to CIR.

25In the 2013 bill, eligible immigrants wishing to legalize their status could do so while remaining in the country with a legal provisional visa instead of returning to their country, with an accelerated process for DREAMers; the bill authorized access to counsel for certain vulnerable populations; gave judges more authority to make case-by-case removal decisions; limited the use of solitary confinement on detainees; provided for alternatives to detention, such as electronic monitoring; increased oversight on detention facilities; and mandated prompt custody determinations and bond hearings for parents and caregivers of children.
Action on the part of the executive branch has also been disappointing. Despite several reviews and improved guidelines for ICE, virtually all advocates say that realities on the ground have not changed significantly. The only action, which has benefited just a small subset of the large undocumented population, was the announcement of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals during the 2012 election season, providing administrative relief from deportation for two years, renewable for an additional two years, for undocumented youth born on or after June 16, 1981 who were brought to the country before their 16th birthday and who meet a series of eligibility requirements.

It is hard to put a good face on these very modest advances, particularly in light of how the detention system has grown. In a paper aptly called *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery*, the authors note that as of 2012, an enforcement-first approach had led to “the emergence of a complex, modernized, cross-governmental immigration enforcement system that projects beyond national borders and at the same time reaches into local jails and courtrooms across the United States,” with an $18 billion budget in 2012, “exceeding by 24 percent total funding for the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, the Secret Service, the U.S. Marshall’s Service, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms” (Meissner, et al., 2013: 9, 15).

Ironically, the expansion of the enforcement model was fueled by each successive effort at immigration reform. In a review of reform efforts from 2002–2010, Marc Rosenblum explains:

> Immigration reform is what social scientists call a “valence” issue: It is easy for politicians of all backgrounds to support immigration-enforcement measures, but it is difficult for politicians to defend any vote against immigration enforcement. Conversely, while many advocates for CIR compare their effort to the 1960s Civil Rights movement, they have not persuaded most Americans that deporting unauthorized immigrants is unjust or immoral. As a result, visa reform and legalization are not valence issues, and most politicians don’t face similar broad pressure to support CIR. These dynamics create a ratchet effect: It is relatively easy for Congress and the executive branch to pass and implement new enforcement measures, moving the starting point for the next round of debate, but much more difficult to dial back on enforcement or make incremental changes to migration benefits (2011: 11).

And even among religious, civil liberties, and immigrant rights groups, there are differences of opinion on priorities and strategy (Feldman, 2013). Under these circumstances, a broader movement is a double-edged sword. Karen Narasaki, former executive director of the Asian American Justice Center, comments:

> I think the movement is healthier than it was 2006–7; now it’s let a thousand flowers bloom, not command and control. So there is room to organize around different aspects of the issue and it’s engaged more people and brought in new perspectives and many more skills to the table. At the same time, it’s harder to coordinate and make decisions about how to go forward. Grassroots activism has made the movement more vibrant, but you need an infrastructure so it’s coordinated and not just noise... You need a table where people can come together.

We basically forced the president to announce the deferred-action program and announce rules for prosecutorial discretion. We came up short on the legislative front, but passing the bipartisan Senate bill was a huge achievement—even with its weaknesses. But we can’t get bogged down with Congress, especially because we have a lot more power in our communities because of our coalition-building work with diverse communities. The momentum and the movement building will continue. — Chung-Wha Hong, executive director, New York Immigration Coalition
Despite the challenges, Pramila Jaypal of OneAmerica and We Belong Together argues:

We have public sentiment behind us, we have the majority of Congress, and it is just a small cabal in Congress blocking comprehensive immigration reform… We got things in the Senate bill we couldn’t have gotten five years ago. We got a lot of the provisions for women we were pushing for… We have not been failing; rather, it’s a few political people that have been failing us.

Finally, echoing the argument Breakthrough has been making for over a decade, after the most recent defeat of CIR, Andrea Black, former executive director of Detention Watch Network, says:

We aren’t going to win the way we’ve been doing it. Up until recently, immigrant rights haven’t been talked about as a human rights issue. I think we need to pull it back into a human rights framework, and we really need more of the perspectives and leadership of the people most directly impacted. We need a significant cultural shift and reframing about our common vision for the United States, how we label and treat people as “other,” how we conceive of our national borders. Every time we attempt to create change in the current framework, it gets worse. The broader immigrant rights community did not bring a human rights perspective.
Throughout its Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program, Breakthrough was continually learning, adapting, and evolving as an organization. In many respects, Breakthrough has invented itself as a networked organization, gradually evolving to embody many of the characteristics that Kanter and Paine highlight (see Table 10).

Real-time feedback loops and a wealth of resources, people, and ideas have helped Breakthrough remain attuned to the environment. This, combined with a consistent and compelling vision, put Breakthrough in the middle of the immigration debate despite its newness on the scene and its modest budget. Initially, some elements got stronger as the program evolved, particularly in terms of setting more measurable campaign goals and being more specific about the actions that Breakthrough wanted supporters to take.

Their experience implementing the program in its three phases validated Breakthrough’s theory of change. The practical experience implementing the strategy that grew out of the theory helped Breakthrough affirm or develop core practices while requiring rethinking or adjustment of others.

Key concepts that were confirmed and reinforced include:

- The intersectionality of a human rights approach enhances immigrant rights advocacy by breaking down issue silos.
- Arts and popular culture play a key, positive role in conveying information, creating human connections, and building bridges between diverse individuals and activist organizations.
- Digital media is a powerful, versatile tool for engaging audiences, both through immersive experiences such as video games and in community-building that uses the power of social media to scale up Breakthrough’s influence even as a relatively new, small organization.
- Individual stories and video documentation have power to build support and understanding about the range of challenges and injustices immigrants confront.
- Working with others and investing in the relationships has a huge multiplier effect, especially when there are strong complementarities in distinctive competencies.
- Taking a long-term perspective and making sustained investments to bring about a cultural shift is more effective than tying advocacy to specific pieces of legislation.
Practical lessons learned include:

- Research on public attitudes and opinions to tailor the message is critical. This was brought home with the rollout of ICED, when Breakthrough found that a message around fairness and due process rights was more effective than talking about families being broken up.

- There are alternatives to celebrity endorsement for occupying pop-cultural space and raising a controversial issue’s profile; only when an issue gets “safe” enough will celebrities engage.

- Strategy must drive technology use rather than vice-versa. Breakthrough invested substantially in games on the premise that they would be especially effective in influencing players’ opinions, but this was an untested assumption (with mixed or weak research evidence to date, according to James Diamond), and Breakthrough’s limitations in funding, lack of design experience, and barriers to marketing prevented the organization from testing it fairly. While Breakthrough regards its gaming work as a valuable and important experiment that delivered significant exposure for and attention to human rights abuses in the immigration enforcement system, its future plans to build on its multi-platform capabilities will use more manageable and less costly products.

- The broadcast model of awareness-raising and education limited Breakthrough’s ability to assess the effectiveness of its work and potentially limited its impact. Consequently, the organization has decided that it needs to develop its own constituency, which it will cultivate and drive toward deeper levels of engagement through focused campaigns with clear targets and specific asks.

The theory of change that was such an important touchstone for Breakthrough’s Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Program is now at the heart of its new strategy, which focuses on creating a cultural shift to make violence against women unacceptable. The organization’s U.S. and India programs are now both focused on this strategy, bringing Breakthrough’s full set of resources, skills, assets, and experience to bear on another longstanding human rights challenge. It is actively capitalizing on what it’s learned over the last 12 years and building on the hundreds of relationships it has forged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Crawl, Walk, Run, Fly Assessment Tool for Networked Nonprofits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies specific target audience</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies what success looks like and the value it brings to the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Networked Mindset—understands social media and networked approaches as part of overall program plan</td>
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<td>Has social-media policy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does listening and influencer research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Allocates sufficient resources</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selects social media tools for audience and capacity to implement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Has a formal ladder of engagement and uses that to guide strategy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Works transparently and measures trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has an editorial calendar for content production and cross-channel distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Takes steps to foster online community, with linkages to other organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crowd-sources ideas and strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>All staff are involved in social media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Builds relationships with stakeholders, measures relationships on an ongoing basis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Measures, monitors, and evaluates</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website linkages and integration with social media</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic cross-promotion and integration among social channels</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic links between social media and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>— print materials</td>
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<td>— email marketing</td>
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<td>— mobile</td>
<td></td>
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<td>— offline activities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1: Evaluation Frameworks


While this guide is for community-level projects, it is a useful frame for this evaluation as well. It proposes a generic impact framework, which has basic relevance for Breakthrough:

![Evaluation Framework Diagram]

They further break down information-related outcomes along five dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEWS</td>
<td>Residents are more informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOICE</td>
<td>Community members are more empowered to contribute their perspectives through digital media and at local meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTION</td>
<td>Residents are active participants in local democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWARENESS</td>
<td>Residents are more aware and educated about an issue that affects them or their community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPACITY</td>
<td>Organizations or individuals acquire new skills or resources to access and use community information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix 2: Breakthrough Products

## Video (documentary and animation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>“Bringing Durban Home: Combating Racism Together,” narrated by Alice Walker</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“America Rocks,” animation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“South Asian and Arab Comedians: Race in America” (Speak Up, Act Up event, nearly 105,000 views)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Why Can’t America Have Human Rights?” (Music video set to “So Much Trouble in the World” by K-Salaam)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Susan Davies Fights to Save a Friend from Deportation”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Through Thick and Thin: Immigration and Gay Couples” (promotional film by Breakthrough with Immigration Equality and Human Rights Watch)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>“America Rocks,” animation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“South Asian and Arab Comedians: Race in America” (Speak Up, Act Up event, nearly 105,000 views)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Why Can’t America Have Human Rights?” (Music video set to “So Much Trouble in the World” by K-Salaam)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Through Thick and Thin: Immigration and Gay Couples” (promotional film by Breakthrough with Immigration Equality and Human Rights Watch)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>“Agatha Joseph: Exposing Detention”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Tearing a Family Apart”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Live from Jail” (92,000 views)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“A Military Man Behind Bars”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Army Man Ordered Deported”</td>
<td>(16,700 views)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>“The Immigrant Shuffle” — ICED game trailer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“What Happened to Boubacar Bah?” (trailer for Homeland Guantanamo)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“America’s First Coloring Book,” animation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Don’t Deport Me, Scotty,” animation (19,000 views)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Death by Detention” (winner of 2009 DoGooderTV Best Nonprofit Award)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“Restore Fairness,” campaign video launched with 21 co-sponsors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Juana Villegas: A Pregnant Women Detained”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Shackled and Detained” (31,000 views as of 2012; 40,775 as of April 2014)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Denied Medical Care: An HIV-positive Detainee Speaks Out” (Ali, a Pakistani HIV-positive man, tells his story)</td>
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<td>“A Surprise Visit”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Army Man Fights for Justice” (Trinidadian green-card holder faces deportation)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Two Moms Fight to Stay Together”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Sarah” (a woman separated from her children)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Esmeralda: A Transgendered Detainee Speaks Out”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>“Face the Truth: Racial Profiling in America” (part of Night of 1,000 Conversations; 49,000 views)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>“Deserted”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Checkpoint Nation” (part of Night of 1,000 Conversations, July 2011; 10,000 views)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Films generated by the I Am This Land contest:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Winner: “Roll Call”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Runners Up: “I’m Coming Out,” “American Girl,” “American Dream,” and “Listen” (<a href="http://www.iamthisland.org/">http://www.iamthisland.org/</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plus 65 video clips on Zooglio as part of America 2049; <a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/Zooglio">https://www.youtube.com/user/Zooglio</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>“Mansimran: A Sikh Teenager Deals with Bullying”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>“Deport the Statue” (102,000 views)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Breakthrough-created websites

- [www.breakthrough.tv](http://www.breakthrough.tv) (Breakthrough's primary website)
- [www.blisted.breakthrough.tv](http://www.blisted.breakthrough.tv) (to promote greater activism)
- [www.ICEgame.com](http://www.ICEgame.com) (platform for video game)
- [www.homelandgitmo.com](http://www.homelandgitmo.com) (platform for video game)
- [www.restorefairness.org](http://www.restorefairness.org) (website for Restore Fairness campaign)
- [www.iamthisland.org](http://www.iamthisland.org) (website for video contest)
- [http://imherebreakthrough.tumblr.com](http://imherebreakthrough.tumblr.com)
- [www.deportthestatue.us](http://www.deportthestatue.us) + [www.legalspac.com](http://www.legalspac.com) (the website for Legals for the Preservation of American Culture)
### Breakthrough-Created Websites continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For America 2049</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://america2049.com/">http://america2049.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://dividedwewillfall.com/">http://dividedwewillfall.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://smrttid.com/">http://smrttid.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://zooglio.com/">http://zooglio.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://serennco.com/">http://serennco.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://councilonamericanheritage.com/">http://councilonamericanheritage.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://gooddayeverydaynews.com/">http://gooddayeverydaynews.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://twitter.com/ZooglioNews">http://twitter.com/ZooglioNews</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Publications

- *Immigrants Helped Build America*, with the National Immigration Forum
- Breakthrough contributed to *Setting Priorities for Human Rights Communications in the U.S.*, 2006.

*ICED* curriculum and discussion guide
Appendix 3: List of Interviewees

Maria Archuleta  
Communications Officer, U.S. Programs, Open Society Foundations; Former Media Relations Associate, American Civil Liberties Union

Andrea Black  
Former Executive Director, DetentionWatch Network

Heidi Boisvert  
Founder and CEO Of Futureperfect Lab; former Multimedia Director, Breakthrough

James Diamond  
Research Associate, Center For Children And Technology at The Education Development Center

Mallika Dutt  
Founder, President and CEO, Breakthrough

Bridgit Evans  
Founder and President, Fuel | We Power Change

Stephen Foster  
CEO, Overbrook Foundation

Matisse Bustos Hawkes  
Senior Communications Manager, WITNESS

Taryn Higashi  
Former Manager, Ford Foundation’s Migrant and Refugee Program; Current Executive Director, Philanthropy Unbound

Margaret Huang  
Deputy Executive Director Of Campaigns and Programs, Amnesty International USA; Former Executive Director, Rights Working Group

Pramila Jaypal  
Executive Director, Oneamerica; Co-Chair, We Belong Together

Maurine Knighton  
Senior Vice President Of Operations, Nathan Cummings Foundation

Chung-Wha Hong  
Former Director, New York Immigration Coalition

Farah Malik  
Co-Owner, A Peace Treaty; former Breakthrough staffer

Madhuri Mohindar  
Multimedia Manager, Breakthrough

Lisa Moore  
Gender And Immigration Campaign Organizer, National Domestic Workers Alliance

Karen Narasaki  
Former Executive Director, Asian American Justice Center

Mary Notari  
Yeslab

Dillon Paul  
Media Arts Teacher, Flushing International High School, Flushing, New York

Sarnata Reynolds  
Senior Advisor On Human Rights, Refugees International; Former Policy And Advocacy Director, Refugees and Migrants’ Rights, Amnesty International USA

Marc Sokol  
Vice President, Finance, Operations and Planning, Breakthrough

Ishita Srivastava  
Multimedia Manager, Breakthrough

Thanu Yakupitiyage  
Media Coordinator, New York Immigration Coalition
Appendix 4: Bibliography

Breakthrough Documents
Annual Report 2003–2005
Annual Report 2006
Annual Report 2007
Annual Report 2008
Annual Report 2009
Annual Report 2010
Annual Report 2011
Annual Report 2012–2013
Breakthrough (2008) The I Can End Deportation Curriculum
Srivastava, Ishita (n.d. [2012]), Breakthrough’s #ImHere Campaign, Design and Impact Report, Breakthrough.

Other Sources
Boisvert, Heidi (n.d.) “Game/World: Moving Players Beyond Clicktavism,” submission to Meaningful Play Conference

_______ (n.d. [2008]) “Media Content Analysis, Immigration On-the-Air: A Scan of Broadcast News and Commentary Programming.”


