

# INSIGHTS FROM CLOSURE OF THE DEFUND HATE CAMPAIGN



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The Defund Hate campaign launched in 2017 to advocate for divestment from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). In the face of the newly elected, vehemently anti-immigrant Trump administration now directing these enforcement agencies with already massively bloated budgets, the immigrant justice movement needed a compelling vehicle to obstruct the anticipated harm and expansion of punitive enforcement against our communities. Agency funding, which is deliberated annually and increased consistently for ICE and CBP, arose as a clear tactical opening. Over the course of six years, 74 organizations representing directly impacted immigrant communities, faith leaders, and civil and immigrant rights advocates signed on to the campaign and worked in coalition to demystify the federal appropriations process towards reducing annual government funding for immigration enforcement.



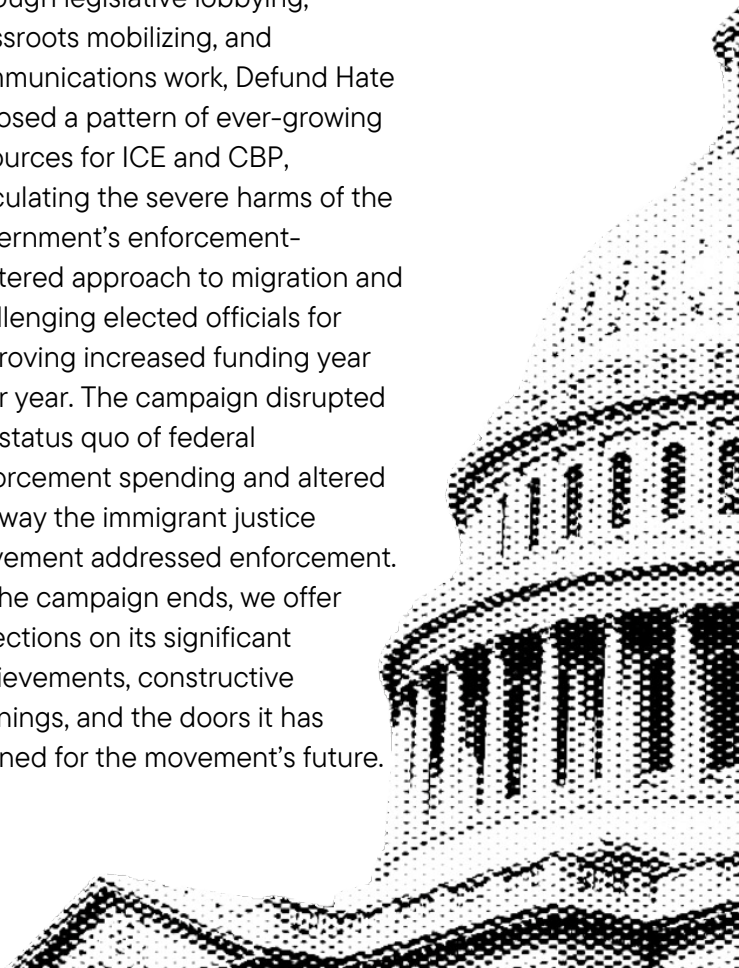
Through legislative lobbying, grassroots mobilizing, and communications work, Defund Hate exposed a pattern of ever-growing resources for ICE and CBP, articulating the severe harms of the government's enforcement-centered approach to migration and challenging elected officials for approving increased funding year after year. The campaign disrupted the status quo of federal enforcement spending and altered the way the immigrant justice movement addressed enforcement. As the campaign ends, we offer reflections on its significant achievements, constructive learnings, and the doors it has opened for the movement's future.

# 74

Organizations

# 6 YEARS

Campaign term







## CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS: TRANSFORMING IMMIGRANT JUSTICE

### DEFENDING OUR COMMUNITIES

Defund Hate began as a defensive tactic and has since played a significant role in mitigating harm against immigrant communities and people seeking asylum. Since its launch, the campaign successfully blocked approximately \$15 billion in requested funding for ICE and CBP. We know that funding would have been used to target, incarcerate, and deport more of our immigrant loved ones and further militarize border communities, and we were able to effectively articulate that impact to mobilize people against proposed funding. Defund Hate created the conditions for directly impacted communities to be centered in campaign work. Their stories and their efforts were critical to fighting back against these agencies that threaten their safety and liberty and made the campaign stronger and clear in its vision.

### POPULARIZING ABOLITIONIST TACTICS

Defund Hate politicized the appropriations process in a radical way. It provided a practical vehicle for elected officials and organizations across the political spectrum to take a strong, unified stance against the government's anti-immigrant agenda, while simultaneously popularizing an inherently abolitionist tactic: the demand to defund. Following years of frameworks that traded affirmative relief for expanded enforcement, the campaign successfully ushered in a different principled approach that prioritized reducing the resources and power of enforcement agencies. It was pivotal to growing a shared political understanding of the harms caused by tradeoffs and the necessity of divestment to achieve our collective goals for a just and welcoming immigration system.

### BUILDING UP OUR MOVEMENT

The campaign played a significant role in movement development and growth. After years of research and advocacy, partners developed extensive literacy on the budget and appropriations process that expanded movement capacity through growing involvement in the coalition, as well as regular external trainings and collaborations.

It also facilitated relationship-building within the immigrant justice movement through its robust coalition structure, building important bridges between groups working on both interior and border enforcement. As the campaign began to lean into an intersectional lens, its focus on deep and intentional relationships also extended to organizations across different progressive movements. In recent years, the campaign led the charge for immigration groups in developing intersectional frameworks, particularly through political education programming connecting immigration enforcement to issues of militarism and policing more broadly. Defund Hate created a trusting environment for organizations to learn collectively and make lasting connections.

# \$15 BILLION

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## CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS

As the political conditions shift and we face an increasingly threatening landscape, elected officials across the board are adopting more anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. Over the last few years, even previous supporters of campaign demands have shifted to the right—many reluctant to stand at odds with the Biden administration and ultimately caving to oppositional fearmongering. Funding continues to be a key strategy for pushing back against enforcement expansion, but success has been increasingly elusive in this context. The observable shift away from engagement with anti-enforcement frameworks during the Biden administration has underscored a critical gap in our power and highlighted some crucial needs.



- \* **Overcoming Silos** - We need comprehensive, base-driven strategies that are in deep coordination across immigration priorities. The siloing of field organizing and legislative advocacy work that often plagues movement strategy inhibits the building of the grassroots momentum necessary to pressure targeted officials into real action. Meanwhile, differing priorities among immigration groups without intentional coordination have contributed to message dilution as well. Elected officials need to both know our demands and perceive a broad collective front ready to hold them accountable to those demands.





\* **Broadening Our Lens** - While it was straightforward to critique the overtly racist and hateful rhetoric of the Trump administration, the same "hate" frame lost potency under the Biden administration, even as it carried out similar policies. The narrow focus of the campaign, while initially helpful in drawing broader support, ultimately limited its ability to mobilize around pivotal moments and pursue broader solidarity efforts. Compelling and intersectional frameworks that address the totality of peoples' experiences are essential to reaching our base and building strong movements.

\* **Building for the Long-Term** - Our movement often has to be defensive, and Defund Hate was certainly set up to do that work. Campaign work was almost entirely tied to the (often unpredictable) congressional appropriations calendar, leaving little room for longer-term efforts that could help lay a foundational path towards our ultimate vision. Especially in this dire moment where many must prioritize resources for short-term emergency needs, we recognize the importance of taking on the building of long-term, resilient initiatives that can be impactful beyond any single administration.

## THE ROAD AHEAD IN THE FIGHT AGAINST IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

After a great deal of consideration about how to best position our movement to be responsive to these new challenges, the chairs of the coalition, United We Dream and Detention Watch Network, and partners decided to sunset the Defund Hate campaign in 2024.

Managing the lifecycle of campaigns, from their initiation to their conclusion, is important to movement vitality. This includes recognizing when to start new initiatives and when to conclude existing ones to make room for new opportunities. This approach is crucial for learning, assessing outcomes, and creating space for innovation and growth within the movement.

We believe that our movement needs new structures that are able to respond to the current moment. We want to leverage innovation with the learnings from Defund Hate to create power-building vehicles that organically grow support for an anti-enforcement divest framework over the long term. This means fostering a more inclusive movement that comprehensively addresses the needs of all community members and growing a unified base that can effectively respond to shifting political tides.

Detention Watch Network and United We Dream remain committed to fighting for healthy, safe communities that can thrive without the threat of ICE and CBP. We invite our friends in this fight to learn and grow with us during this pivotal moment toward promising new horizons.

# RESOURCES



Go to [Defundhatecampaign.org](https://Defundhatecampaign.org) for resources to learn more about the budget and appropriations process.

**DEFUNDHATENOW.ORG**



**DEFUND  
HATE**