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Exciting Changes for Immigrant Advocacy in Missouri:

IFCLA begins transition to become an inclusive, immigrant-led statewide organization committed to building power for systemic changes that honor the dignity of all

St. Louis, MO - The Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America (IFCLA) announced today that they are taking an important step towards an inclusive vision for immigrant rights in Missouri: IFCLA will become an organization that builds statewide immigrant-led community power to honor the dignity of all people. Over the next 10 months, IFCLA will build an aggressive yet sustainable 3-year plan to engage communities across the state and transfer the power of the organization to those whose very lives depend on the success of this vision.

Sara John, Executive Director of IFCLA: “With great excitement and humility, our team is thrilled to expand our efforts. We look forward to building new relationships and strengthening existing ones, developing community-led legislative strategies, and changing the way immigration justice happens in our state. We will continue to prioritize transformational human connection in all that we do, while fighting to reduce the harmful impacts of privilege, supremacy and bias. We will center immigrant leadership in our organization and in our state, in order to build collective power that will abolish destructive systems and honor human dignity. We are eager to further develop this vision together, and collectively pursue a future rooted in liberation, justice and love.”

IFCLA has been an active presence on the St. Louis social justice scene since the 1980s, when several individuals began regular solidarity trips to Central America and area congregations participated in the sanctuary movement, in order to accompany neighbors in Latin America and equip US citizens to take legislative action against harmful interventionist policies in the region. Recently, IFCLA has been recognized for the work they led to support Alex Garcia and his family through over 3.5 years of sanctuary at Christ Church UCC in Maplewood, where he lived from September 2017 until February 24, 2021, when Alex claimed his freedom and walked out of the church. In the last 5 years, hundreds of people in St. Louis have been part of IFCLA’s ICE Accompaniment efforts, attended an Immigration 101 presentation, volunteered with the Immigrant Family Emergency Response (IFER) Fund, or have come to know IFCLA another way. Part of the organization’s journey with Mr. Garcia demonstrated just



how hard it is to protect one man’s dignity, one family’s right to love and live freely. IFCLA believes that every single person, every single family, deserves the same freedom that Alex is still fighting for - and that it will require much more community power in order to change the laws and policies that would make this possible.

Anjali Singh, Chair of Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates (MIRA): “Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates (MIRA) has been supporting immigrants and refugees by aiming to protect rights, building capacity, and advocating for immigrant and refugee populations within Missouri. Most recently, MIRA and IFCLA have been collaborating to form a plan to come together organizationally to best serve immigrants and refugees in our region. This plan will continue and expand the crucial work to protect and advocate for immigrant and refugee rights in Missouri. We are excited and fully support IFCLA's commitment to honor our shared vision to create a more welcoming and inclusive Missouri.”

IFCLA and MIRA have collaborated in the past and both recognize the vital need for continued work to ensure immigrant rights in Missouri are strengthened and protected.

Ellen Ziegemeier, Convener of IFCLA’s Board of Directors: “Our boards have worked together over the last few months to develop a plan to sustain our shared vision for statewide organizing, education and advocacy with and for immigrants in order to protect human rights and pursue equity and justice in Missouri. As MIRA transitions to a lesser role, IFCLA is honored to expand our work both geographically and demographically to truly build an inclusive and welcoming Missouri.”

While the team knows there will be many needs and challenges in the pursuit of this vision, IFCLA’s efforts are firmly rooted in the commitment to build an inclusive immigrant-led statewide movement, which requires an anti-racist, equity-driven and community-centered foundation. To facilitate this transition, IFCLA will launch new spaces for leadership in the organization, to include voices, perspectives and wisdom from people who are undocumented in Missouri, immigrants and mixed status families, diverse faith communities, dedicated allies, political champions and more.

Marie Kenyon, Peace & Justice Commission, Archdiocese of St. Louis: “IFCLA has been active in St. Louis for a long time and we are thrilled to support this new era of their legacy. With 4 dioceses across the state, we look forward to finding new ways to collaborate so that our immigrant neighbors are treated with compassion and respect as our Catholic faith demands.”



Rabbi Daniel Bogard, Central Reform Congregation, and Co-Convener of IFCLA’s Board of Directors: “Over and over again in the Hebrew Bible--more than any other commandment--we are reminded that we must not oppress the immigrant; that we must leverage our own stories of oppression to cultivate empathy within ourselves and our communities. During these times when optimism and hope can seem so far off, it is incredibly inspiring to see IFCLA stepping up and taking on the challenge to help transform Missouri into the welcoming, loving home to immigrants that it always could have been--and can yet still become.”

IFCLA has a long history of building relationships that honor the inherent human dignity of all persons and collaborating to fight for just policies and laws. The current iteration of the organization stands on nearly 40 years of dedicated, passionate labor, which emerged from deep solidarity and accompaniment with people in Latin America. Today, the incredible staff team leads IFCLA with a very clear shared vision: change the way immigrant justice looks in Missouri in order to center the voices of diverse, directly impacted immigrant communities to build lasting community power in pursuit of radical inclusion.

About IFCLA

The St. Louis Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America (IFCLA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that, for nearly 40 years, remains committed to standing in solidarity with immigrant neighbors and sending communities in Latin America. Through education and organizing, IFCLA convenes an inter-faith community to accompany the people of Latin America in their work for human rights and social justice. For more information, visit www.stl-ifcla.org.