



DETENTION
WATCH NETWORK



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

LETTER FROM SILKY

Throughout 2025, the immigration detention system began to expand in previously unimaginable ways, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) forcefully abducting and detaining international students for their speech, the extrajudicial offshoring of detention, and the use of the massive and makeshift Everglades Detention Camp in Florida. ICE operations are proliferating into other government agencies, using military bases as deportation hubs, and growing ICE partnerships with local sheriffs and county jails. The massive reconciliation budget bill passed in July 2025 increased ICE's already massive budget by 265%, including a shocking \$45 billion for detention.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and ICE moved forward with plans to expand the sprawling immigration detention network by opening large warehouse and industrial spaces for mass detention. In April 2025, ICE Acting Director Todd Lyons was quoted saying that he wanted to see a deportation process “like [Amazon] Prime, but with human beings.” Warehouse expansion threats would supercharge the detention system into an even more consolidated, inhumane system and tool of authoritarianism.



Despite it all, people showed up for each other every single day — organizing, attending protests and Know Your Rights trainings, forming ICE watch teams, getting involved in mutual aid networks, and so much more. Communities around the country continue to prove what we know to be true: organizing works. The growing awareness around the harms of immigration detention brought the issue into the spotlight. After years of organizing against detention expansion, DWN is well positioned to meet the moment by harnessing the engagement we are seeing to build a groundswell of support for the long-term.

As a trusted convener in the immigrant justice movement with a diverse membership of over 100 organizational members in 26 states, the Network plays a pivotal role in blocking the expansion of immigration detention. While billions of dollars are flowing into increasingly militarized and brutal immigration enforcement, DWN is strategizing, granting funds, hosting trainings, and providing technical campaign support to keep up the momentum. We couldn't do this work without our community beside us every step of the way.

**TOGETHER, WE ARE
PLANTING SEEDS FOR THE
FUTURE WE WANT TO SEE.**

In solidarity,
Silky Shah
Executive Director
Detention Watch Network

OVERVIEW

Detention Watch Network (DWN) is at the forefront of the movement to end immigration detention, employing a comprehensive approach of strategic communications, collective advocacy, and grassroots organizing.

Immigration detention is the unjust and inhumane practice of jailing immigrants while they await a determination of their immigration status or potential deportation. The U.S. locks up people seeking asylum, visa holders, people who have been granted the permanent right to live in the U.S., people who have lived here for years and may have U.S. citizen spouses and children, and vulnerable groups, including pregnant women and families with children.

WE BELIEVE EVERYONE SHOULD BE FREE TO MOVE AND LIVE WITH DIGNITY IN COMMUNITY.

As a membership-based organization, DWN bridges the gap between local and national strategies to ensure we are working towards the same vision. We bring people together from across the country to build relationships, strategize, and share expertise on shifting policies and the immigration detention landscape.

AT A GLANCE



Capacity building for grassroots organizing



Local, state, and federal advocacy



Sharp media and digital strategy

BY THE NUMBERS



114

organizational members in 26 states,
including 12 new member



\$300,000

provided to 20 grassroots grantees



3,000+

press hits



4.77M

impressions on social media with 172.28K
interactions and 94.21 followers overall



13

formerly detained leaders participated in
the Freedom Fighters cohort for leadership
development



7,000+

people registered for trainings

OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

REDUCE DETENTION CAPACITY AND PREVENT EXPANSION

- DWN continued building relationships with national allies to bring our analysis to a broader audience and build solidarity across movements. For example, DWN partnered with Not Above the Law Coalition/Disappeared in America and the National Day Laborers Organizing Network to host our most successful Day of the Dead day of action ever in November 2025. Partners organized more than 45 actions across 20 states, including vigils outside detention centers, altar installations, press conferences, and demonstrations at Home Depots — all to uplift our collective demands to end immigration detention, defund ICE, and invest in community-based support and freedom.
- The DWN-led Proactive State Legislation Working Group serves as a national hub connecting grassroots advocates, providing model bill language, legal analysis, strategy briefings, narrative and press support, and cross-state coordination. At least seven bills were enacted into law in California, Colorado, Maryland, Washington, Oregon, and New Mexico. These laws closed detention loopholes, protected people at sensitive locations, limited data sharing with ICE, reduced workplace coercion tied to immigration status, addressed domestic militarization, and prevented the reuse of empty state prisons for immigration detention.
- The DWN-led “Resist and Persist Working Group” coordinated the national response to an unprecedented wave of anti-immigrant state legislation. In 2025, over 45 bills were introduced across 17 states aiming to criminalize immigrants, expand detention, and force state and local collaboration with ICE. Through strategic coordination, advocacy, and direct action, partners successfully blocked, delayed, or weakened at least 22 of these measures.



OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

BUILD MOVEMENT POWER

- DWN relaunched the Communities Not Cages campaign, working with local community organizations to stop detention expansion, shrink the system, and uplift community organizing to build a better future for everyone. The relaunch spotlighted 11 facilities that are representative of the inhumane conditions that people face system-wide. As part of the relaunch, DWN hosted a National Day of Action in April with 18 powerful actions held across the county and disbursed \$200,000 in subgrants to 10 grassroots groups waging powerful campaigns against the expansion of the cruel immigration detention system.
- DWN disbursed \$100,000 to ten Organizing Support Program grantees in early 2025. These members are leading anti-expansion campaigns, supporting formerly detained organizers' leadership development, and pushing state legislation to ban detention.
- DWN is bringing supporters into the fold by offering relevant trainings and distributing resources widely. In 2025, DWN hosted well-attended trainings and webinars on topics including Digital Security 101, Navigating Detention and Supporting Deportation Defense Campaigns, El Salvador and U.S.: People's Resistance, and many more.



OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

EXPAND NARRATIVE REACH

- DWN released over 70 press statements in 2025 and engaged closely with reporters, yielding over 3,000 media hits naming the organization and/or staff spokespeople. These hits included quotes in major publications such as The Washington Post, New York Times, NPR, Associated Press, The Guardian, The Marshall Project, Axios, Democracy Now!, and The New Republic, plus syndication in many local papers across the country.
- In Fall 2025, DWN began rolling out our new research-backed messaging guidance training module: *Seeding Change – messaging to build ambassadors for a humane immigration system*. Developed along with Goodwin Simon Strategic Research after years of research, we hosted the first training at a CNC Convening in October 2025 and began disseminating more broadly in early November.
- DWN provided technical assistance support to various shut down campaigns across the country, including in California, New Jersey, Kansas, New Mexico, Louisiana and Georgia. For example, in June 2025, DWN supported the ICE out of Dublin campaign by ghost-writing and placing an opinion piece by Dr. Douglas Yoshida MD in the San Francisco Chronicle, [“I helped care for FCI Dublin victims. Trump’s plan to reopen the prison for ICE is horrifying.”](#) Yoshida is an emergency physician at Stanford Tri-Valley Medical Center, the nearest medical center to the Dublin prison when it was in operation. Of the experience working with DWN, Doug said, “First of all thanks again for editing the Op-ed, there is no way I could have gotten it published without your help.”



BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

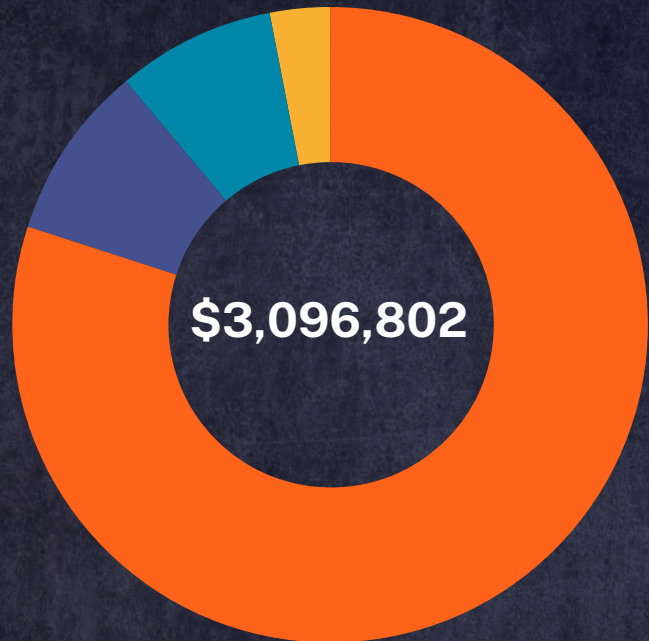
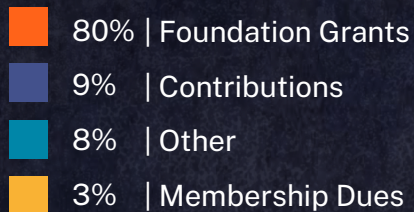
As part of our Communities Not Cages campaign relaunch DWN gathered in Oakland with 100 members and allies (including 30 virtual) for a two-day strategy convening in October. The convening included regional breakouts, collective brainstorming and long-term planning, a messaging training, and a workshop with formerly detained leaders. DWN offered 40 scholarships for this convening.

DWN and Immigrant Legal Resource Center hosted a successful “Resist and Persist” strategy convening in Oklahoma in March 2025. We brought together 35 participants representing 10 states to explore a range of tactics to push back anti-immigrant state legislation, from litigation strategies to organizing efforts.

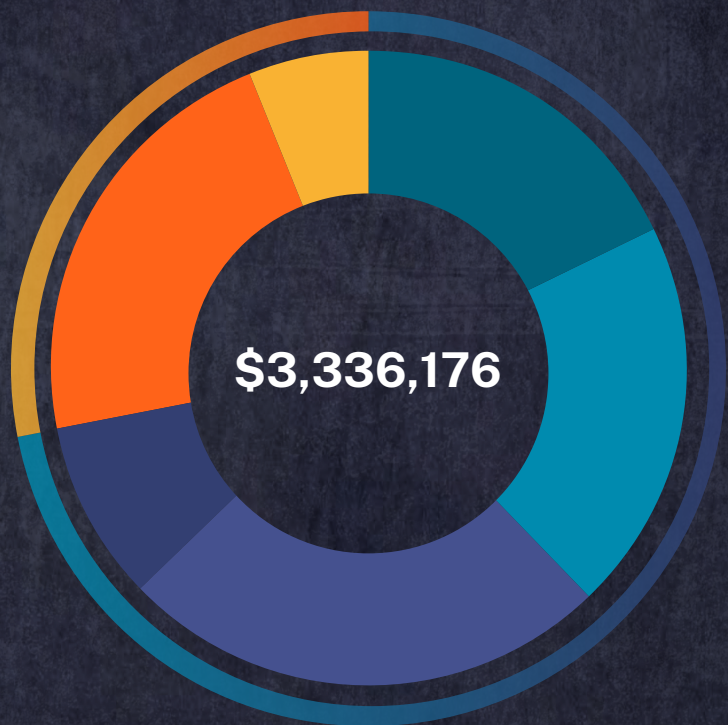
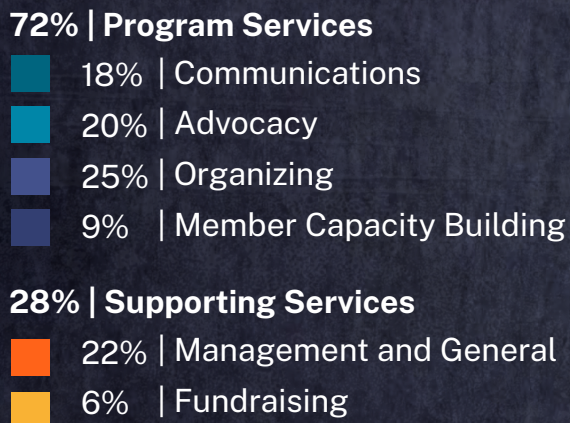


FINANCES

SUPPORT AND REVENUE



EXPENSES



FUNDERS

Anonymous

Heising-Simons Foundation

Ford Foundation

Oak Foundation

Four Freedoms Fund

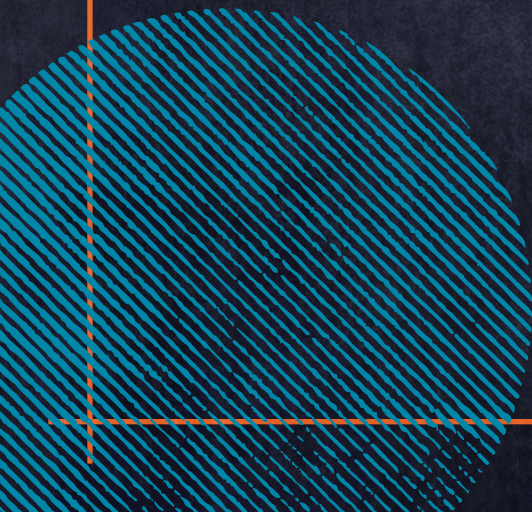
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

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