
BOTTOMLINE

Invoking Fear, Hope, and Action: A Reflective Response to Navigating the Climate for Immigrants at Three Inland Empire, California Community Colleges

By Matthew A. Witenstein , Lorraine Jones, Heather Johnson, and Yolanda Cleveland-Friday

Over the past couple of years, rising anti-immigrant sentiment in the nation has led to a torrent of complex fears, anxiety, and trauma for immigrants and those who support them. This current narrative exemplifies the volatile US immigration history that includes numerous historical markers that have placed restrictions on immigrants. As Paik and colleagues (2014) pointed out in *Teachers College Record*, many of these restrictions had been removed by the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, particularly those excluding people from non-white majority countries. As these new immigrants settled, many entered community colleges. Current immigrant flows are also predominately composed of people from non-white majority countries, and many of these individuals have accessed California's Inland Empire (IE)

community colleges. This is not a surprise since community colleges typically provide ample opportunities to support the success of local communities in numerous ways including functioning as cultural centers, building the local workforce, stimulating the local economy, and preparing the next generation of first responders and health care providers (e.g., nursing, police, and fire).

Recently, though, tensions have occurred that have affected the climate in the country and on many community college campuses. Yet, the recent election and potential changes in designations for immigrants have caused those of us who teach, work, and study at California's IE community colleges to not only experience fear but also to explore opportunities for hope that can be mobilized into action to support immigrant students.