



# SEEKING SANCTUARY

Should State College be a Sanctuary City?



## OVERVIEW

By Adriana Romano, Emily Jensen, and Georgia Maczura

*First of all, what is a sanctuary city?*

According to [americasvoice.org](http://americasvoice.org), it is a city that limits its cooperation with federal immigration enforcements to protect undocumented immigrants from deportation. One way a sanctuary city might limit its cooperation with federal immigration enforcements is by not allowing police to detain an undocumented immigrant if the undocumented immigrant has not committed any serious crimes just for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to pick them up. However, by doing this, there is a possibility that police might miss a terrorist among the residents of the town. The State College Police Department has stated that State College is not a sanctuary city. Should State College protect these undocumented immigrants by becoming a sanctuary city?



## APPROACHES

*Endangering Immigrants or Endangering the Community?*

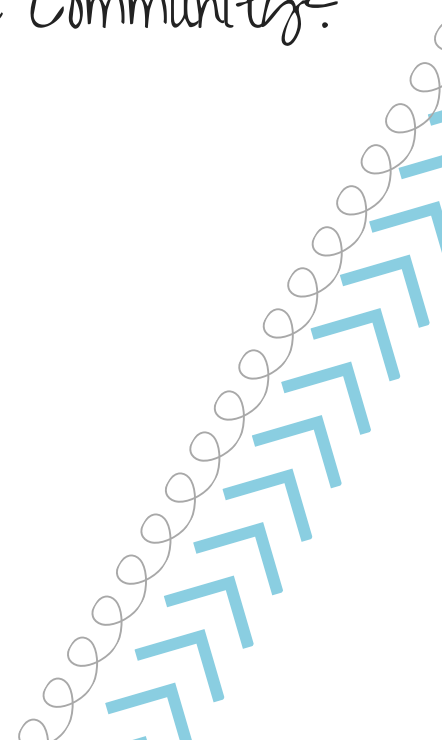
By Will Shartzter and Matt Graham

*People Help The People*

By Cassady Potts and Kamryn Dey

*Changing Communities*

By Brian Arata and Mike Pagan



# ENDANGERING IMMIGRANTS OR ENDANGERING THE COMMUNITY?

The idea of a campus declaring itself a sanctuary campus raises many questions in regard to safety. How will this affect the safety of the campus? How will it affect the community? Will this really make undocumented students feel safer? These questions are just few of many that sanctuary cities raise, however the main idea is simply this: How would State College's status as a sanctuary city affect the safety of both its students and its residents?

## Benefits

Contrary to popular belief, sanctuary cities have proven to be overall safer communities compared to cities that do not allow undocumented immigrants. The current data available on crime, immigration, and safety in cities do not support the premise that sanctuary cities are more dangerous. Research from the Oxford Handbook of Crime and Criminal Justice has shown that immigrants who are in the country illegally are less likely to commit crimes or be incarcerated by the general population. The American Immigration Council in a 2015 study that the recent period of rising immigration to the United States from 1990 to 2013 also



corresponded with plummeting crime rates across the country. Also, in a study conducted by the University of San Diego, research found that there are broad benefits for local jurisdictions that resist cooperating with federal immigration enforcement – they are safer in the aggregate and enjoy stronger economies. "For the first time we're kind of seeing that crime rates are lower when localities stay out of the business of federal immigration enforcement," according to researcher Tom Wong. In essence, sanctuary cities actually carry on the American dream; by fostering safe communities and strong economies, sanctuary cities are arguably creating a better America.

## Drawbacks

However, those against the idea of college towns, such as State College, declaring themselves sanctuary cities argue that it not only endangers the other students at the university, but the surrounding community as well. According to Jessica Vaughn, director of policy studies at the Center for Immigration Studies, College towns and campuses that pass sanctuary policies have the potential to inhibit Federal investigations into students who are of interest to ICE and the FBI. Without the cooperation of the university to turn over important documents, these investigations could hit a dead-end or lack key evidence to move forward. Critics argue that it is the duty of localities, such as the State College Police Department and the University Police and Public Safety at Penn State, to keep its citizens safe, and that



by not cooperating with Federal Authorities, they are in effect making the community less safe. If State College were to become a sanctuary city, the State College Police Department would no longer be required to comply with federal investigations of undocumented immigrants, creating an opportunity for criminals who would normally be facing deportation to remain in State College.

With competing research in regards to whether or not sanctuary cities are safer communities, it becomes the duty of the community to find a solution to both ensure the welfare of the communities as well as provide fair and equal protection to the undocumented immigrants.

# PEOPLE HELP THE PEOPLE

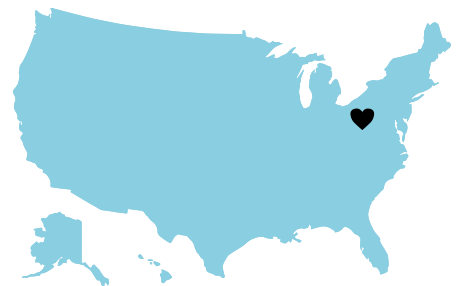


It's no secret that undocumented immigrants are discriminated against because of the country they were born in. Whether it is because of seeking equality, religious freedom, or oppression themselves, these people have more often than not chosen to flee their country in search of a better life. Developed in the past decade, sanctuary cities are places where undocumented immigrants can go in order to have equality and freedom from oppression. Here, people are given the opportunity to start over, gain work experience, and potentially have a better life. However, these neighborhoods are walking a fine line between equality and completely unfair to existing United States citizens.

## fair

Allowing undocumented workers to reside in State College would offer an opportunity for people to seek refuge in America without the many downfalls associated with living in major cities such as New York or Los Angeles. According to abc news, the price tag associated with immigration lawyers can be upwards of \$7,000. This does not include the current filing fee for Form N-400, also known as, the Application for Naturalization, which in 2018 costs \$725. This may seem insignificant to many Americans in upper or middle class, but to immigrants coming over with little to nothing, this is a huge price to pay. Sanctuary cities offer these people the chance to spend the money they do begin to make on starting home rather than lawyer bills right away. In addition, if they were not in these safe havens, they would be required to pay national taxes with none of the benefits. This is just another instance of undocumented immigrants' hard earned cash being used in ways non-beneficial to the individual and their families.

Safety in sanctuary cities is a main priority for both the residents and the citizens in close proximity. In State College, PA those who are in a nearby residence would be college students. The median age of State College residents is 21.5 with a median income of \$29,450. This means the demographic of this area is young college kids essentially figuring out their next stage of life. Another benefit of sanctuary cities is that they offer these immigrants



protection of being deported when convicted of minor crimes, whereas in a major city, a DUI or underage would potentially get the individual deported. This in turn provides a healthy relationship between the law and the members of the sanctuary cities. The law is understood and generally followed better in order to not take advantage of the situation. The recognition of these advantages and the opportunity for prosperity is a way sanctuary cities ensure safety.

## unfair

On the other hand, the path to become a U.S. citizen is a costly, and tedious one. Obtaining a green card requires mounds of paperwork, and fees that need to be paid. It is not fair to citizens who had to go through the process to obtain a green card if State College is allowing undocumented immigrants to "skip the process," especially since there are more than 445,000 people are awaiting an immigration hearing (Washington post). A sanctuary city may also be seen as a place where undocumented immigrants are able to "hide out" in order to avoid the process that many have to endure for years. In addition, community members of sanctuary cities worry that because immigrants are seeking refuge, they may be committing more crimes because the risk of deportation is gone. This is an issue that the community needs to discuss in order to analyze the issue and see what values are within the community.

# CHANGING COMMUNITY

Our community is who we are. It makes up how we act, interact, and go about our day-to-day lives. Immigrants could affect it in a variety of ways, and because of that, deciding to making State College a sanctuary city would eventually transform our community. We hope to highlight exactly how our State College community could be affected by this decision. Ultimately, the question is whether a sanctuary city status for State College will provide more beneficial or unfavorable transformations for our community.



## Benefits

On the one hand, increasing the immigrant population in State College would help diversify the community, providing many positive repercussions. While preventing State College from becoming mundane, an influx of new cultures and ideas will diversify our community, sparking local investment by those wishing to experience new cultures. Along the same economic lines, one must consider the economic benefit derived from immigrants, even undocumented, in our community. They would make purchases, work, and live in our area: in the United States, undocumented immigrants make up 5.2% of the the total labor force (Costa). Regardless of their legal status, they are contributing to our vibrant local economy. Making State College a sanctuary city would also help foster trust between undocumented immigrants and local law enforcement. By providing protection from federal enforcement agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) local law enforcement eliminates undocumented immigrants' fear of having their legal status questioned. In doing so, a better relationship between them and the law enforcement will be developed, enhancing the stability of our community.

## Drawbacks



Of course, there is another equally valid, opposing stance of community members regarding State College as a sanctuary city. Primarily, undocumented immigrants do not contribute as much to local and state taxes as legal citizens. They use tax-funded resources such as public schools, public transportation, and city infrastructure without paying their fair share. In 2014, if all undocumented,

tax paying immigrants were given legal status, their tax contributions would have risen by \$2.2 billion ("Immigrants in the United States"). This negatively affects our community by creating a drain on our public resources. A flood of undocumented immigrants can bring vast changes to our community. Lifetime community members may not want it to develop into something unfamiliar. An influx of culture and economic activity has its benefits, but for those comfortable and familiar with the current community, it can be quite daunting. Another point of consideration is the fact that undocumented immigrants are illegal. Those wishing to abide by all levels of the law (local, state, federal) may not readily allow State College to become a sanctuary city. The choice of becoming a sanctuary city seems to hold benefits and drawbacks of equal weight for our community. Therefore, it is up to the members of community to decide what is best for State College.

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