Demanding Dignity by Speaking Truth to Power:
How United We Dream Network (UWDN) Accelerated the Immigrant Youth Movement

A case study of UWDN’s major accomplishments and lessons learned, with strategic considerations for the path forward

For presentation at Unbound Philanthropy’s Annual Retreat – February 2015

Prepared by Learning for Action
UWDN’s Key Relationships and Partnerships

UWDN has actively engaged a wide range of partners and allies including:

- **Local Affiliates**: 55 local member groups
- **Partners**: Approximately 45 allies and organizational partners
- **Policymakers**: Relationships with 15 Senators and 12 members of the House
- **Schools and Educators**: Engaged 1,632 educators and 1,542 schools
- **Government Agencies**: Relationships with 4 federal agencies: ICE, DHS, USCIS, and DoE
- **DACA Implementation Service Recipients**: Over 26,000 informed and serviced
How UWDN Has Engaged Others

**Leadership Development.** Key highlights for 2014-15 include:

- 2,967 people trained
- 1,883 people mobilized for actions
- 30 people coached

**Social Media.** Reach and activity by the numbers as of 2014:

- 55,256 Facebook likes
- 19,700 Twitter followers
- 270 Instagram followers

**Mainstream Media.**

UWDN is the go-to immigrant-led organization for interviews and comments in both English- and Spanish-language media. During an interview at MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow Show on November 19, 2014, Maddow said, “You guys are one of the most effective direct action groups I have ever seen in my lifetime.”

**Civic Engagement.**

The 2012 “I Am a DREAM Voter” Campaign brought in over 15,000 Latino voter pledges from Texas, Arizona, and Maryland. There was a 91% voter turnout rate in San Antonio District 23.

#TurnOutForWhat #DreamVoter

**Outreach to Other Social Justice Movements.**

UWDN co-founded Freedom Side, a collective of young leaders of color fighting for racial justice.

UWDN created the Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project (QUIP) in 2011.
UWDN’s Leadership in Advocating for, Defending, and Implementing Administrative Relief

In 2014-15, UWDN provided education about administrative relief via:

- **65** Presentations at Foreign Consulates
- **135** DACA Application Assistance Clinics
- **22** Pre-Screening Forums
- **296** DACA Home Office Application Assistance Events
- **154** Informational Forums
UWDN’s Impact

UWDN has **shifted public understanding** by putting a human face on immigration issues; establishing moral authority; and creating vivid visual messages.

UWDN has **built political power** by establishing a political voice; building an inside presence; sustaining outside pressure; and advocating for administrative action.

Who can forget the photograph of the women who went down to the border to see their mothers? …I don’t think people realized how violent deportations are because it’s not done in public at all. They were able to show and communicate that it’s a very violent thing.

**Nellini Stamp, Freedom Side**

In the civil rights movement, people would dress up…. You wore your Sunday best. Our Sunday best was our graduation robes – our caps and gowns were our skin, our ability to share our story and bridge our story to our families.

**Jose Luis Marantes, Mi Familia Vota**

- **UWDN employs a dynamic inside-outside**
  They’re one of the few groups that do a lot of **direct action** regardless of party, who **still have a seat** at the table.

  **Gregory Cendana, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance**

- **UWDN provides strategic guidance to policymakers.**
  We can ask UWD for the **realistic way** that this is going to be perceived in the community…. If there are two or three or five political paths, you can have a **reasonable political read** of where people are going to stand.

  **Douglas Rivlin, Office of Rep. Luis Gutiérrez (IL)**

- **UWDN creates outside pressure on policymakers by using social media to “bird-dog” them into clarifying their position on an issue.**
Immigrant youth are increasingly developing: an ethic of pride; a greater sense of possibility; ownership of their political power; and increased political consciousness.

UWDN has helped catalyze the immigrant youth movement through its: shared vision and purpose; intentional leadership development; and strong organizational-affiliate structure.

- The Network has helped foster an ethic of pride by decreasing isolation through storytelling and creating a space for healing. The DREAMers are successful because they captured an ethic of pride and when you’re proud of yourself and who you are, other people will respond in kind.

Rachel Tiven, Immigrant Justice Corps

- Immigrant youth are increasingly “owning” their political power, reflecting their knowledge that they can use their voices to demand justice for themselves and their families.

It’s also about thinking about, “What are the resources we need to change the concept of power?” Not only in terms of money, but our story, our moral voice, our power to expose discrimination and abuse, and our relationship with the media.

Cristina Jiménez, United We Dream Network

- UWDN affiliates harness local power and create an “infrastructure through which national power can be executed.”

AZ QUIP members come out as LGBTQ outside Rep. Sinema’s office.

- UWDN thrives by giving leaders space to take on challenges in a variety of venues, such as advocacy for administrative relief and the DREAM Educational Empowerment Program (DEEP).

Before DEEP and before UWDN, there wasn’t a space for youth leadership... When you don’t have those directly impacted helping inform or make the decisions, I think that you can set yourself up for failure, no matter how good your intentions are.

Erin Howard, Former UWDN Board Member
Areas of Recommendation for Reflection on the Path Forward

Defining UWDN’s Core Constituency

Defining UWDN’s Organizing Model

Balancing a Nonprofit Structure & Member-Driven Base

Building Power through Local and National Campaigns

The Role of Service Provision in Movement Building

Internal & External Communication Practices
Recommendations for Funders

Support Emerging Leaders
- Prioritize leadership development opportunities for youth, including paid leadership opportunities and leadership that connects with other social justice movements.
- Help create the conditions that leaders need to thrive.

Nurture UWDN’s Independence and Boldness
- Create flexibility and space for UWDN to maintain its fluid, dynamic, and membership-driven identity.
- Understand that required metrics often do not capture the most essential aspects of UWDN’s work.
- When making decisions, ensure that those directly affected are involved.
- Fund messaging that is bold and challenges the “powers that be.”
- Support experimentation and cross-pollination.

Help UWDN Grow Strategically
- Leverage other donors in support of UWDN.
- Support UWDN’s ability to build more political presence in DC.
- Support the growth of local organizations.
- Increase support for underserved populations.

Encourage UWDN to Ground itself in a Solid Vision that Complements the Larger Landscape:
- Insist upon rigorous coordination, strategy, and divisions of labor among organizations working in the field of immigrant rights.
- Encourage proactive strategies that support the work of other organizations.

Frankly, progressive funders do not do a good job of investing in leadership development. There are fits and starts. The [political] Right does a better job of providing leadership development, training, mentoring, [and] career ladder assistance, much better than we do.

Sue Chinn, Unite Here

Whenever there is a strong relationship between the local ICE office and the local organization working on these things, we get better results…. It can’t just be a bunch of organizations feeding into a national movement.
Unbound Philanthropy’s Contributions

UP has supported UWDN’s development, capacity, and accomplishments by adhering to the following principles, which are cornerstones of the Foundation’s Theory of Philanthropy.

**High Tolerance for Risk-Taking.**

Taking the leadership and the risk to support a group of young undocumented organizers to launch this big idea….That was a huge step for Unbound Philanthropy and a huge demonstration of their support and belief in us.

Cristina Jiménez, United We Dream Network

**Focus on Organizational Learning.**

UP has supported UWDN’s ability to continually learn and grow in many ways, such as: providing $20,000 towards UWDN’s strategic planning in 2015; supporting a 2013 evaluation of DREAM Summer and a 2011 Strategic Review; and supporting a six-month New Organizing Institute Education Fund training program for 300 immigrant youth.

**Support for Leadership Development.**

Key example: UP funded the Center for Community Change and UWDN to lead the Marshall Ganz-based movement building training for immigrant youth. In 2010 alone, more than 1,200 people were trained. The framework is now one of UWDN’s organizational backbones, and it has been replicated within the climate change, LGBTQ, and reproductive rights movements.

**Field-Building.**

UP builds the immigrant rights field by inspiring other funders to support UWDN and by helping UWDN to cultivate relationships with partners. UP is a “go-to” resource for others in the field. Mayra Peters-Quintero (Ford Foundation) shares, “When I think about partnering with Unbound, I know I will get their great thinking, thoughtful analysis, and great monitoring of a grant and work with the grantee.”

**Respect for Organizational Autonomy.**

I like it when funders give money to people and trust them. You know, do the due diligence, ask them [about] their plans and comment on them, but not be too heavy-handed. I think that’s what Unbound’s genius is.

Frank Sharry, America’s Voice

**Deep Expertise & Strategic Thought**

UP staff have strong subject matter expertise and are early supporters of innovative organizations like UWDN. Due to their strong relationship with UWDN, UP staff are able to quickly identify supports that target UWDN’s needs. Cristina Jiménez explains, “[After talking with UP], we’d always come away with a concrete set of people, resources, or insights.”