Forming Solidarity out of Emergency: Black Immigrant Lives Within #BlackLivesMatter

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#UndocuBlack Network

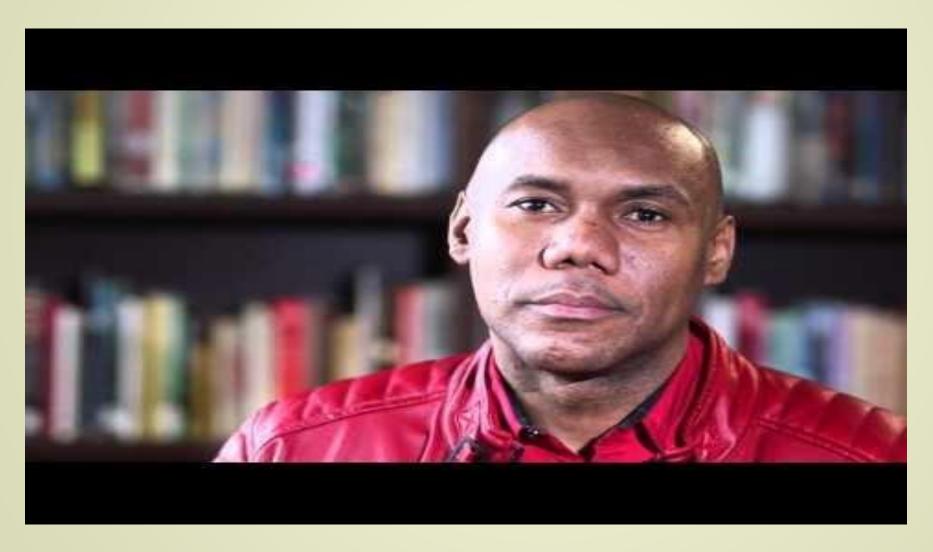
- The UndocuBlack Network was co-founded by five UndocuBlack folks. Within six months of the organization's founding the members of the UndocuBlack Network were able to create a convening. It was the first of its kind, an Undocumented and Black Convening.
- The event took place in January 15th-17th, 2016.
- It featured participants of an age range of 15-50+ representing Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean.

#UndocuBlack Network



BIN Kinship Assembly 2016

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eM4xUkL6WqU



Testimonies of #UndocuBlack Organizing

• "After five years around immigrant rights organizing, that was the first time I felt like no one was left out. Queer, trans, differently abled, multi lingual, young, old no organizing and lots of organizing experience came together." — Deborah Alemu, UT Graduate, member of University Leadership Initiative, on attending the BIN Kinship Assembly

Battling Silence by Kemi Bello

First, I was illegal
An identity given to me
By a socio-political complex
Hell-bent on forcing me to
Reject my notion of self.

Illegal is illegal, they said —
More than my age
More than my gender/sexuality
More than my humanity —
I was now this thing, an 'it'
No longer a human being.

Then, I was a dreamer An identity that built A collective consciousness And finally made me Part of an 'us.'

I was put on a giddy high
Of dreams deferred
Of "I have a dream"
Of a rainbow of caps & gowns.
For we are the dreamers,
The mighty, mighty dreamers.

Never mind those whose dreams
We are not acknowledging because
They do not match our own.
Never mind those who will not make it
Far enough to don a cap and gown.

Suddenly, a proclamation: "But we are all dreamers," documented or undocumented.

Then I was undocumented An identity borne of the realization That I am more than just legislation, That this new piece of paper Would not magically heal the wounds of the struggle Wrought by lack of papers to begin with, That to drive home the assertion that No human being is illegal, We must first stop referring to ourselves as such, That dreams without concrete, effective action and empowerment Would not serve my growth.

Again, it was said:
"But we are all undocumented,"
united in this struggle.

Then I became unafraid, Unashamed, Unapologetic – About my immigration status, About refusing to bow down to rhetoric & political punting, about choosing a movement over a campaign, about acknowledging the full, wide, deep and beautiful spectrum of the undocumented experience, and about reclaiming my voice and demanding that it be the only vehicle through which my story is told.

This time though,
We were not "all unafraid."
Instead, I was being divisive,
I was being stubborn,
I was selfish, petulant,
I was Radical.

Once again labeled an "other" In the delicate world of "Us" I called home.

At the end of the day,
Though our many struggles
and experiences intersect,
And you say we are all
dreamers,
My dream of existence in a
society
That still views me as illegal,
as an it,
Has yet to come true.

You say we are all undocumented, Yet I am the one who has to justify, In a court of law, The right to call the dirt I walk on And the air I breathe My Home.

Can I not claim an identity of my own, Without it being co-opted, rebranded, Misinterpreted and censored by those who are not affected? Those who support, understand, Sympathize, fight alongside, But who are not undocumented?

If you truly support me,
You would understand
the importance of my words,
for they are one of the few
weapons I own.
If you truly support me,

You would understand,
The necessity,
In a world in which
I am constantly told I have
no rights,
To have an identity to call
my own.

If you truly support me, You would understand that My struggle is not about you. If you truly support me, You would understand that We both lose When I remain silent.