



Coalition of African and Caribbean Communities in Philadelphia  
*Advocating and organizing for stronger African and Caribbean Immigrant and Refugee Communities*

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to join hands with all of you today. My name is Dr. Eric Edi and I am from Cote d'Ivoire. I am representing the Coalition of African and Caribbean Communities in Philadelphia (AFRICOM) and speaking to the lived realities of Black African and Caribbean immigrants nationwide.

AFRICOM actively supports the inclusion of a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented people who have made the United States of America their homes. We actively support this inclusion for several reasons. First, Black immigrants have been subject to the unjust and racist lawmaking of the U.S. immigration system, the lies and false promises for change by congress members, and abuse from American society for TOO LONG. Second, we have made extensive contributions to the U.S. culture and economy. And most importantly, we deserve this inclusion because it is a simple matter of human rights.

### **Specific contributions and challenges of African and Caribbean immigrants and refugees**

We believe that it is right to combat the ignorance surrounding the worth of undocumented Americans in the U.S. Those who believe that immigrants arrive in the U.S. and twiddle their thumbs without earning their keep are wrong. In 2018, Black immigrants *earned* more than \$133 billion, paid almost \$36 billion in taxes, and had a spending power of nearly \$98 billion ([New American Economy Research Fund \(2020\)](#) ). Undocumented immigrants bring with them dreams of creating a better life for themselves and our loved ones; we know how sacred a second chance is, especially in a country that claims to value and reward work ethic, ambition, and perseverance. We are the blueprint for “American hustle”, because ALL Americans were once immigrants. And we are just as deserving of the American Dream as the ancestors of our Congress members and Representatives who, today, have the power to impact the lives of 11 million Americans for the better.

The New American Economy Research Fund found that “almost 3 in 10 (27.5 percent) of all Black immigrant workers—or more than 750,000—work in the healthcare sector,” specifically as personal care aides, nursing assistants, and registered nurses (2020). We have taken care of your loved ones before COVID-19 and will continue to care for them during the global pandemic and long after it is gone. How can we justify being blind to the struggles of undocumented Americans even as they support and risk their lives for us in the most desperate of times? The New American Economy Research Fund emphasizes that “as Americans continue to age, the number of new healthcare jobs will increase more than any other occupation field in the future, making Black immigrants critical”, we argue not only to “the industry’s future”, but to the future of the U.S. economy and the country overall.



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The call to Action is clear and simple: **Congress needs to include a pathway for citizenship for all 11 million undocumented Americans.**

The U.S. prides itself to be a “global Leader” and “the best country in the world,” “the melting pot”, and “the land of the free.” This pride does not reconcile with how horribly the government treats the very people who make those titles possible. We challenge our congress members, representatives, presidential administration, and government to end the lip service and walk the walk; to step up to the challenge and prove to the world that the U.S. is beginning to earn the title of “the land of the free.” We are that challenge, our brothers and sisters in prisons are that challenge, our children in cages are that challenge, all 11 million of us are that challenge to you. You cannot talk about diversity without representation and inclusion for ALL the people who make this country more just, equitable, and free.

All 11 million undocumented Americans need to have the freedom to actively participate and reap the opportunities of American citizenship rights and freedoms without being subject to fear, exclusion, or exploitation. (To Congress) Include a pathway to citizenship for all 11 million of us in the federal budget package NOW.

**Statement prepared by AFRICOM Team**

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