Why Drop the I-Word?
Immigrant and refugee rights are increasingly under attack by U.S. institutions, while racially derogatory language used in the media and political discourse has paved the way for a rise in hate crimes against immigrants. Here are three important reasons to stop using the i-word:

It’s Dehumanizing
• The word is shorthand for racially charged terms that dehumanize people
• Usage of the word supports a long-term strategy for the mass criminalization of immigrants
• It promotes violence and discrimination
• It sends the message that immigrants are subhuman and undeserving

It’s Racially Charged
• The word affects attitudes towards immigrants and communities of color
• It’s deliberately divisive and fuels racial profiling
• The message is hidden and racially coded

It’s Legally Inaccurate (and confuses the debate)
• Immigration judges, attorneys, and (some) journalists don’t use the term because it unlawfully assumes guilt
• Ethical journalism calls for the respect of due process, and usage of “illegal” criminalizes immediately
• It’s not the role of journalists to embrace the political talking points of respective parties
LOOKING BACK:
Race Forward’s Drop the I-Word Campaign

• In 2010, the i-word was being intentionally used by the Right as part of a strategy to bring down comprehensive immigration reform.

• Race Forward, along with partner orgs, led the DTIW Campaign to help eliminate the use of the word “illegal” when referring to undocumented immigrants.

• The efforts of the 2010 campaign focused on specifically targeting news outlets & journalist associations, putting pressure on them to Drop the I-Word.

• As a result, major news outlets like Associated Press, USA Today, and the Los Angeles Times pledged to drop the word from their reporting.

• After the word was removed from the Associated Press (AP) Style Guide in 2013, there was a drastic decrease in the word’s use.