

# DROP THE I-WORD

## 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



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## **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.