

# Rockwood Leadership Institute's Cohort-Based Programs: 2016 Third Party Evaluation



How the *Fellowship for a New California* Contributed to the Passage of the California Driver License Law

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Prepared for: **Rockwood  
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## Overview

In 2016, Rockwood Leadership Institute engaged Learning for Action (LFA) to conduct an independent evaluation of Rockwood's cohort-based leadership development programs, including contributions to individual and movement-level outcomes.

This case study details the findings from interviews with four fellows and one trainer and highlights how participation in the *Fellowship for a New California* contributed to the 2013 passage of the California Driver License Law (AB 60). AB 60 provides undocumented immigrants with access to driver licenses, and is one example of how Rockwood's cohort-based fellowships contribute to movement-level change.

## The Fellowship for a New California

Since 2011, the *Fellowship for a New California* has brought together over 90 of California's immigrant rights leaders for an intensive, 10-month leadership development program.

The fellowship includes a combination of residential leadership retreats, peer and professional coaching, and support between sessions.

Four cohorts of leaders have completed the fellowship, and continue to convene to stay in touch with peers, connect with other cohorts, and continue conversations about challenges and opportunities in the movement.

Recent conversation topics have included, but are not limited to: racial equity, criminal justice, anti-Black racism, Muslim communities, LGBT immigrants and refugees, mass deportation, and refugee communities.

The *Fellowship for a New California* was developed in partnership with the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, and supported through funding from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, and the Weingart Foundation.



*Fellowship for a New California* alums from the 2011-12, 2013, and 2014-15 cohorts gathered at the 2015 all-cohort retreat

# Driver License Laws and a Need for Alignment

## Why Driver License Laws?

Driver license laws are a primary area of focus for immigration reform because of the widespread implications for providing undocumented immigrants with protections and allowing them to conduct activities core to daily life, such as taking children to school and travelling to a job, without fear.



## Positional Differences Highlight a Need for Collaboration

Immigrant rights advocates in California have differing opinions about strategies and approaches to policies that enhance the rights of undocumented immigrants. This has made advancing policy efforts challenging as advocates have struggled to communicate and collaborate effectively.

An issue that was a key sticking point in the AB 60 policy development and implementation processes. Some advocates were staunchly opposed to heavily marked licenses, while others were more willing to compromise on the look of the license in order to advance the bill after decades of failed attempts.

This history left institutional and individual scars that contributed to a sentiment of mistrust and hindered the ability of advocates to work together successfully. While some grievances are relatively fresh, others are based in legacies that separate organizations, even when those directly involved in past conflict are no longer with the organization.

Leaders carried these grievances into the AB 60 process and acknowledge that these past wounds made it difficult to have productive conversations to advance shared movement goals.

We knew if the driver license looked too dissimilar to citizen driver licenses, folks would be less compelled to go get driver licenses.  
– Apolonio Morales



# How the *Fellowship for a New California* Contributed to the Passage of AB 60

The *Fellowship for a New California (F4NC)* contributed to the efforts of immigration rights leaders in California to pass and implement AB 60 in the following critical ways:

- Bringing leaders together
- Improving communication
- Strengthening relationships and building trust
- Encouraging collaboration, despite differences

## Bringing Leaders Together

There already existed coalitions of organizations working on the immigrant rights agenda in California. Fellows shared that the safety of the space provided by the F4NC and the context of being together with shared goals helped them better understand each other's stances, priorities, and perspectives. Furthermore, having discussions about AB 60 in an informal setting created opportunities to establish the tone for how they would work together and to prepare for future conversations and negotiations.

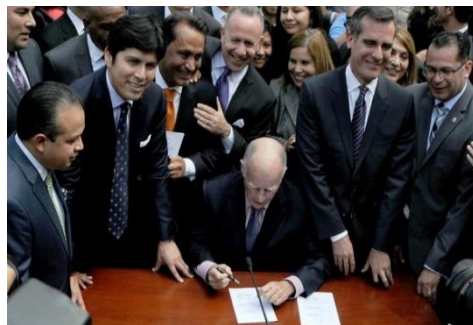
## Improving Communication

F4NC interviewees universally agree that the fellowship equipped them with shared tools, including courageous conversations\*, that contributed to more effective communication among fellows. Throughout the fellowship, leaders selected real-life conversations they would like to have, then rehearsed and refined their approaches in role-plays with peers. As a result, fellows were more willing to have difficult discussions directly with one another and to speak openly about differences in opinion. They noted that they were better able to agree to disagree, knowing they would respect each other's positions and that they shared a commitment to collaborating to reach the common vision of improving the lives of undocumented immigrants.

This ability to engage in courageous conversations was particularly important given the differences in position among organizations that had hindered previous efforts to pass a driver license bill. During the AB 60 campaign, fellows could pick up the phone and have direct conversations—including to talk through an issue to identify opportunities for compromise—before influencing those voting on the policy. Other fellows shared that they were more willing to call someone and give them a preview of something they planned to do to influence the policy process as a courtesy before it was public.

Communication improved not only among fellows in the same cohort, but also across cohorts. By knowing that someone else had been a fellow, they felt better able to jump start a conversation because they were confident that the other person could use the same tools to engage in a courageous conversation.

\*Courageous conversations involve engaging in authentic and clear communication in situations that might otherwise bring up feelings of emotion for people.



Los Angeles, CA. 10/03/2013. Photo by (John McCoy/Los Angeles Daily News)

*100% of F4NC survey participants agree or strongly agree that, as a result of their participation in the F4NC, they are **more willing to have courageous conversations.***

**I think it took courage to say let's talk about AB 60 in the cohort as it was debated in the legislature. [It was] helpful, not talking about [the] hypothetical and talking about something that was going on right now.**

*- Joseph Villela*

We had the option of picking up the phone and saying 'Hey, I heard you had these concerns, can we talk about them before the vote on the assembly or senate floor?' Before, maybe a courtesy email would have been sent, but **the fellowship provided an avenue for courageous conversations for potential conflict and discussions of what compromises would be made.**

*- Lucero Chavez*

## Strengthening Relationships and Building Trust

Throughout F4NC sessions, fellows got to know one another on a personal level, developed new connections, and strengthened existing relationships. Through small group storytelling and guided visualizations, fellows shared their visions, personal histories, and struggles in a safe and confidential space. They offered stories of why they are involved in the movement and learned about each other's lives. These experiences helped fellows connect beyond organizational identity and, as one fellow said, "humanized" each other.

These new and strengthened relationships, paired with tools such as courageous conversations, encouraged trust among fellows to grow.

## Encouraging Collaboration, Despite Differences

Personal connections and trust among fellows contributed to more effective working relationships and enhanced fellows' ability to collaborate across difference in order to advance shared movement goals.

This was particularly important among individuals and organizations with a history of disagreement. While fellows did not repair the damaged relationships entirely, the F4NC established trust and provided space and tools to openly and directly discuss the grievances hindering progress and to identify ways to collaborate more effectively.

Advocates communicated with each other more regularly and were able to have more productive discussions to understand differences and strategize about AB 60 in a more coordinated way, ultimately contributing to a version of the bill passing that was stronger than what would have been passed otherwise.

**Following the passage of AB 60, these same factors also contributed to a smoother implementation process.**

[The] fellowship helped me have relationships with folks who were working on the bill... [By] **putting a face [to the name], having an interaction with them outside work, and having the fellowship and [time together] after hours allowed me to humanize them** ... I understood that if they had a position ... it was influenced by the personal story they had and that helped me [understand their position] a lot.

- Joseph Villela

For many years there really hadn't been a trusting, working relationship between many of the organizations involved. **Developing that trust was essential and couldn't have happened without those initial face-to-face conversations.**

- Pedro Rios

We discussed that ... we would have some serious disagreements about whether we would accept or not accept what was in front of us. **What we agreed to was to work together as much as we could. [We] built a level of confidence and trust that previously had not been there.**

- Pedro Rios

*80% of F4NC survey participants agree or strongly agree that, as a result of their participation in the F4NC, they have **partnered more effectively with leaders within their movement/issue area.***

# Conclusion

## The Impact of AB 60 for Undocumented Immigrants

As a result of the passage of AB 60, California residents gained access to driver licenses, regardless of immigration status. In the first six months after AB 60 was implemented, the California Department of Motor Vehicles issued 443,000 driver licenses for undocumented Californians. This was a critical moment for California in advancing protections for undocumented immigrants and providing them with greater opportunities to integrate into their communities and live with less fear.

## The Power of Rockwood's Cohort-Based Fellowships

While this case study highlights the story of the passage and implementation of AB 60 to demonstrate how Rockwood's cohort-based leadership development programs contribute to movement-level change, this is not the only success that has come out the F4NC. The stakeholders who worked to pass AB 60 continue to collaborate to advance the rights of undocumented immigrants in California. The tools and relationships fellows took from Rockwood support ongoing collaboration. Fellows shared that through Rockwood, they gained a better understanding of the landscape of immigration organizations state-wide, built connections across organizations, and have established new and strengthened existing collaborations that enhance their ability to affect change in the state.

Rockwood's impact on the potential for relationships and collaboration extends beyond the F4NC: fellows note that they also apply Rockwood tools and skills in cross-movement efforts, such as collaboration with advocates working in criminal justice. Fellows explain that **identifying another leader as a Rockwood fellow facilitates faster relationship-building and improved collaboration, simply through the mutual recognition of a shared framework and an ability to engage in courageous conversations.**



The work we did around courageous conversations—discussing head-on the past history of hurts during previous immigration reform battles, building compassion and appreciation about the contributions of different strategies and sectors in the ecology—has helped to build stronger collaboration, trust, confidence, and relationships that have been helpful in many of the CA successes: driver licenses, Health for All, TRUST Act, etc. **Instead of competing and positioning, as a whole, we have built stronger lines of collaboration and stronger wins.**

**[There is more] awareness of each other's organizations, priorities, and perspectives and that they exist.** A greater sense of our movement/issue statewide and how we need everybody.

- Deborah Lee

### The Takeaway

This case study demonstrates that investing in leadership development through cohort-based fellowships can and does contribute to movement-level wins. Rockwood's tools are a blend of movement-agnostic frameworks. By bringing leaders together to learn and apply those tools in a issue-focused space, Rockwood creates a unique opportunity for movement leaders to come together around a shared vision.

# Appendix A: Methods and Case Study Participants

## Methods

This case study is part of a broader evaluation of Rockwood’s cohort-based leadership development programs conducted by Learning for Action (LFA), an independent evaluation firm. The case study draws on two primary data sources:

- 1. Stakeholder interviews:** LFA conducted phone interviews with four F4NC fellows and one F4NC trainer. Interview participants described how the AB 60 campaign unfolded and shared their perspectives about how their participation in the fellowship contributed to that process.
- 2. Fellowship survey:** LFA implemented a survey to former Rockwood fellows. The survey included fellows from all of Rockwood’s collaborative fellowship programs from 2010-2015, including the F4NC. LFA analyzed the survey results from F4NC fellows in order to identify themes and notable findings about the role F4NC played in supporting leadership development and advancing movement-level change.

## Interview Participants

The following people participated in interviews for this report. This list includes their cohort year, their role and the organization they worked with at the time of their participation in the fellowship.

Name	Role at Time of Fellowship	Organization	Cohort Year
Lucero Chavez	Immigrants Rights Staff Attorney, Orange County Office	ACLU Southern California	2013-14
Helen Kim	Trainer	Rockwood Leadership Institute	All
Apolonio Morales	Political Director	Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)	2011-12
Pedro Rios	San Diego Program Director	American Friends Service Committee	2011-12
Joseph Villela	Policy Director	Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)	2013-14

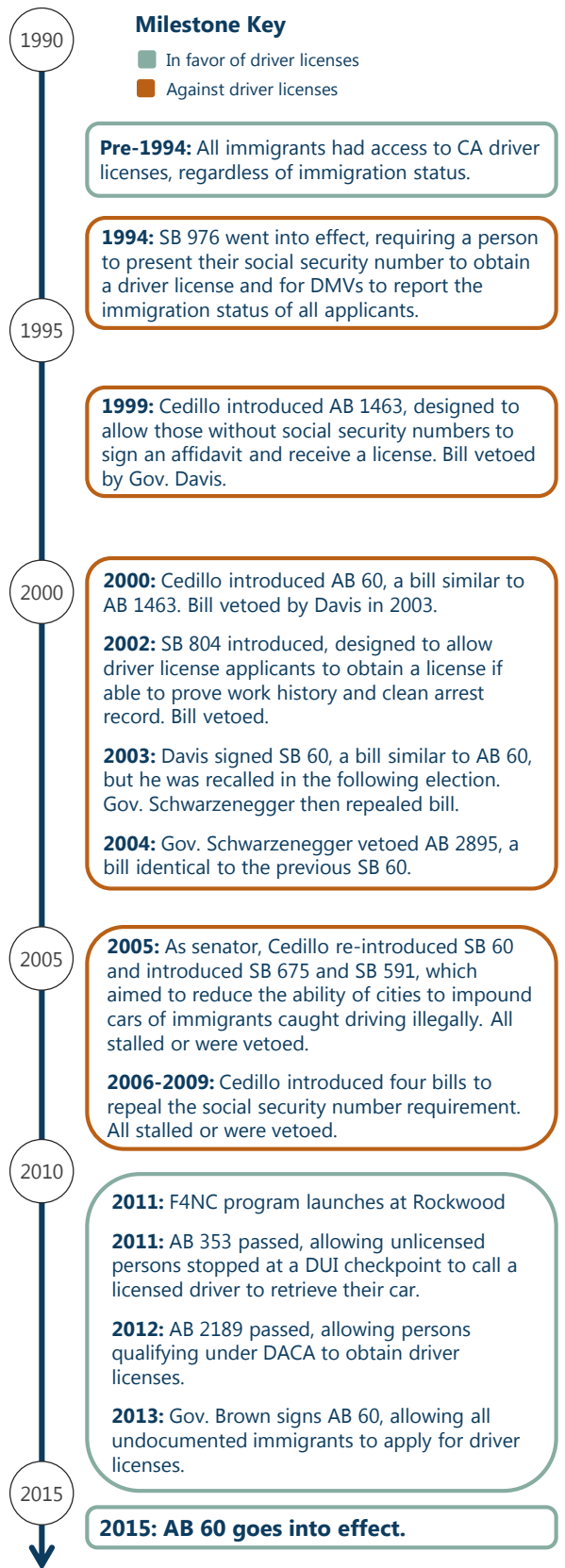
# Appendix B: The Contentious History of California Driver License Bills

## Driver licenses: a focal issue in immigration rights efforts for more than 20 years

Until the early 1990s, the climate in California for undocumented immigrants was tolerant and offered many rights and protections, including access to driver licenses. Around the time of Governor Pete Wilson's re-election in 1994, the climate shifted toward an era of restrictions and anti-immigrant sentiment.

In subsequent years, numerous efforts to pass laws extending access to driver licenses for undocumented immigrants failed until the early 2000s. After many attempts, advocates and policymakers introduced laws at the national- and state-levels, such as driver license laws, to expand immigrant rights. By the end of 2013, 10 states and the District of Columbia had passed a driver license law.

In 2013, advocates in California captured this momentum and saw an opportunity to pass a driver license bill. Governor Brown's early engagement in the development of AB 60 indicated his support, and AB 60 passed in September 2013. The bill was signed into law the following month and went into effect in 2015.





## **Acknowledgements**

LFA would like to acknowledge the partnership, time, and insights contributed by the Rockwood staff and Rockwood alums. We are grateful to the *Fellowship for a New California* alums and trainer who shared their time with us for this study. Rockwood and LFA also extend special thanks to The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, and Open Society Foundations for making this evaluation possible.

## **About Rockwood Leadership Institute**

Rockwood Leadership Institute provides individuals, organizations, and networks in the social change sector with powerful, transformative training in leadership and collaboration. Since 2000, Rockwood has trained 6,000 visionary nonprofit leaders across North America and around the world. Rockwood's programs draw on best practices in proven leadership development programs from both the private and nonprofit sectors.

## **About Learning for Action**

Established in 2000, Learning for Action (LFA) provides highly customized research, strategy, capacity building, and evaluation services that enhance the impact and sustainability of social sector organizations across the U.S. and beyond. LFA's technical expertise and community-based experience ensure that the insights and information we deliver to nonprofits, foundations, and public agencies can be put directly into action. In the consulting process, we build organizational capacity, not dependence. We engage deeply with organizations as partners, facilitating processes to draw on strengths, while also providing expert guidance. LFA's high quality services are accessible to the full spectrum of social sector organizations, from grassroots community-based efforts to large-scale national and international foundations and initiatives.