

N.J. immigrants march on federal building demanding justice

Updated: May. 01, 2023, 6:11 p.m. | Published: May. 01, 2023, 6:00 p.m.



Claudia Cabrera, center, hopes her voice is heard while marching in the Jericho Walk on Monday at the Peter W. Rodino Jr. Federal Building in Newark. Karim Shamsi-Basha



By [Karim Shamsi-Basha](#) | [NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

Advertisement



SamWell Institute for Pain Management



What would you do in a life without chronic pain?

Let us know in the comments



LEARN MORE

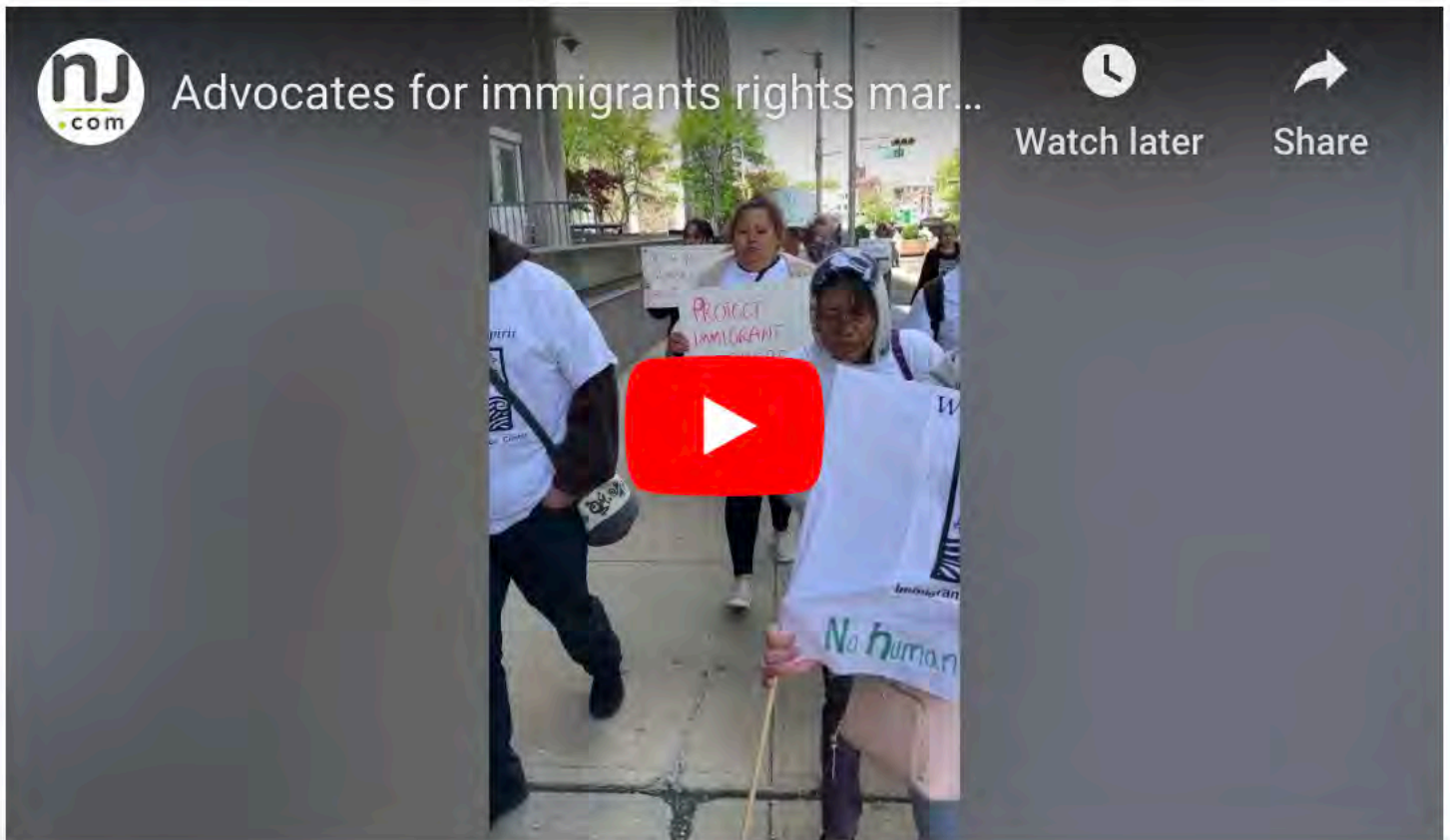


While the American flag fluttered in front of the Federal Building in Newark, Claudia Cabrera told the world that she's undocumented.

"I've been in America for 25 years," said Cabrera, a 40 year old from Guatemala. "I need TPS (Temporary Protected Status) to become legal in this country that I love. So, in the spirit of the biblical tale of walls of oppression brought down by the cries of common people, we will circle the federal building seven times and hope our cries are heard."

More than 100 immigrants and a coalition of advocacy organizations — including [Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center](#) — participated Monday in the [Jericho Walk](#), marching for immigrants' rights around the Peter W. Rodino Jr. Federal Building on Broad Street. It houses the field office of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, the federal agency tasked with policing immigration law.

“Today is [May Day](#), which belongs to all workers, all of us,” said Adam McGovern, a legislative strategist with Wind of the Spirit. “Many immigrants work hard in and for this country. And today, we want to honor them and hope to return to our former welcoming values. America was built by immigrants.”



The marchers and advocates chose the building as a symbol of what they consider a broken immigration system. They say that system has shut off legal pathways for immigrants to enter the country and become citizens.

They marched, listened to speakers and held signs supporting their cause.



Immigrants and advocacy group leaders read reflections at the march. Karim Shamsi-Basha

The [New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice](#) and [32BJ SEIU](#), the nation's largest property service workers' union, were among the coalition members participating in the walk.

“On this May Day, we stand in solidarity with immigrant workers in the state of New Jersey and across the United States,” said Kevin Brown, New Jersey state director of 32BJ SEIU. “We must remember that Black and Brown immigrant workers are at the forefront of the fight for economic and social justice.”



Sister Kay Coll has devoted her life to supporting immigrant causes. Karim Shamsi-Basha

Sister Kay Coll, 88, of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph in Bayonne, braved a cool morning breeze to support the marchers.

“Where would we all be in this country if it wasn’t for immigrants? We are all immigrants,” she said.

The Wind of the Spirits and the supporting coalition rallied against what they say is excessive funding of [ICE](#) and [Customs and Border Protection](#) as well as the legal threats against the [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#), the policy allowing “Dreamers” — immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children but who lack legal immigration status — to apply for work permits and deportation protections.

“I hope today’s Jericho Walk allows immigrant voices to be heard,” McGovern said. “We are all brothers and sisters together, and we all have immigrant heritage.”

Karim Shamsi-Basha may be reached at kshamsi-basha@njadvancemedia.com. Follow him on [Twitter](#) & [Instagram](#). Find [NJ.com on Facebook](#).