

BORDERLESSMAGAZINE

2020 IMPACT REPORT

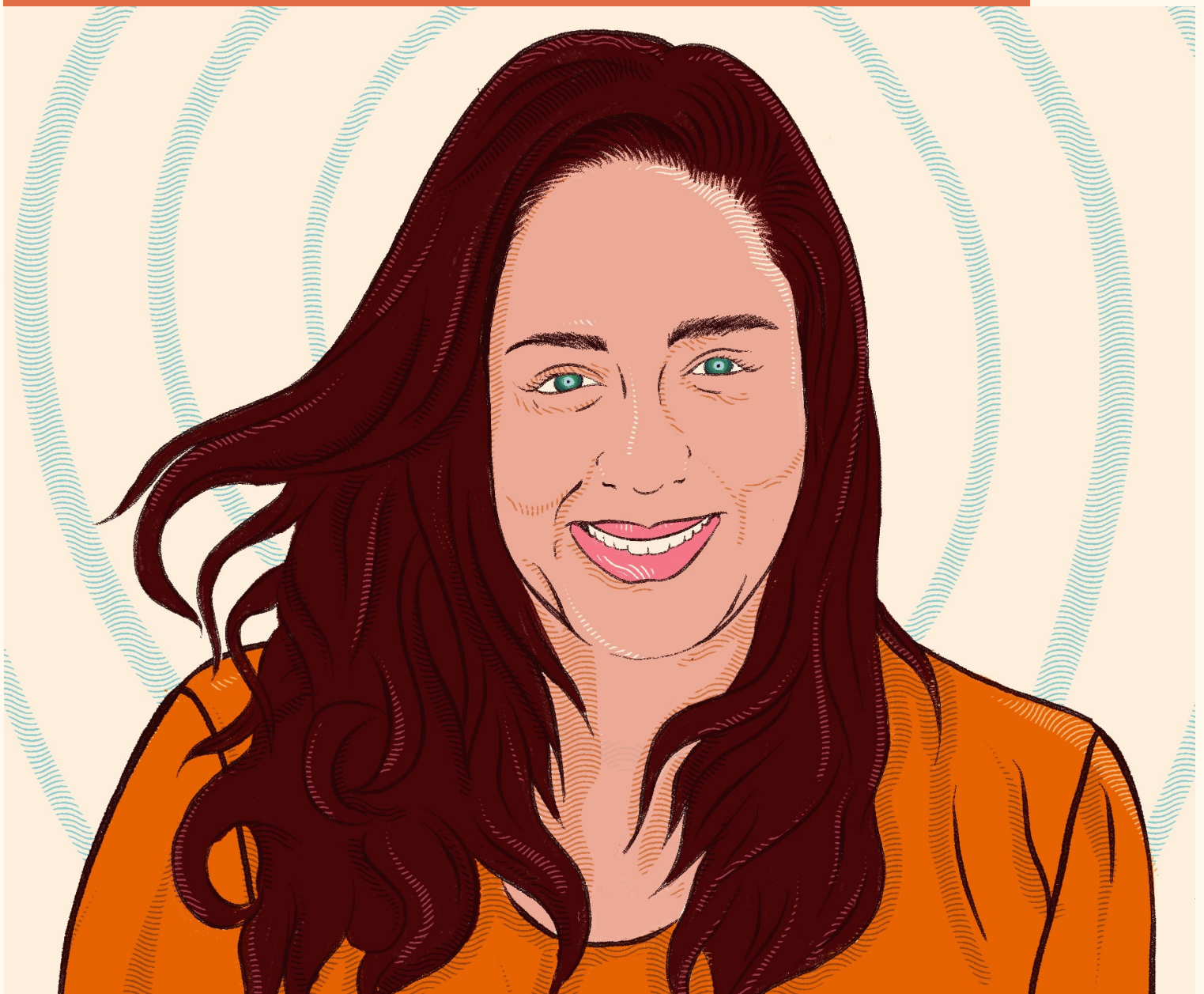


ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN HERRERA

FROM THE BOARD

Dear Borderless Magazine friends and supporters,

What is the role of journalism right now? The last four years of Trump's presidency were a time of great pain and difficulty for immigrants like ourselves and our communities. We are living in a pandemic that has taken the lives and livelihoods of so many in our region. And we are experiencing a racial reckoning that is challenging the structural racism imbued in our immigration and criminal justice systems.

Now more than ever, journalists must uncover stories of abuse, offer people context and needed information, and be a platform for the voices of the people most impacted by the issues in the headlines.

This year, in the first full year of its existence, we're proud to say the Borderless team has done all of this. They've uncovered [how the pandemic has strained the immigration court and detention systems in the Midwest](#) and how [meatpacking employees were fired after protesting unsafe conditions during COVID](#). They've pioneered new ways to report with immigrants like [María Salud](#), an undocumented cleaner whose employer put her health at risk. And they've mentored journalists, photographers and artists who themselves are immigrants.

The work of Borderless has shown not only the struggles, but also the resilience, of immigrant communities through articles about [teachers supporting their students in closing gaping technology inequalities](#) or how the [Assyrian community in Chicago banded together](#) during the pandemic. It has also been an example for other local news outlets on how to better meet the information needs of immigrants and their communities.

While January marked the end of President Trump's tenure, the questions and concerns raised in the past four years around who we welcome into our country will remain paramount. These questions are especially urgent in the Midwest, a region built on the labor of many vibrant immigrant communities. For us in the heartland, immigrant communities are not a policy issue: they are our neighbors and the building blocks of the cities and towns we call home.

That makes the work of Borderless essential. We're excited to help nurture a project asking how can local media better serve immigrant communities in Chicago and beyond, in part by building a home for immigrant and BIPOC journalists? With your support, we've started this work.

In 2021, we hope we can continue to build this work together.

Sincerely,

Yana Kunichoff, 2019-2020 President
Sebastián González de León, President



MISSION

Borderless Magazine NFP is a nonprofit news outlet that is reimagining immigration journalism for a more just and equitable future.

Borderless Magazine amplifies the struggles and strengths of immigrant communities in the Midwest through:

- **Reporting**
- **Pathways**
- **Immigration Reporting Lab**

These three programs respond to the information and language needs of

immigrants and aim to create a more representative media landscape that includes their voices and experiences.

As a nonprofit news outlet, Borderless Magazine is indebted to its supporters who make this work possible. Thank you for your support in 2020 and we look forward to making more impactful stories in 2021.



THE TEAM

Yana Kunichoff, 2019-2020 Board President
Sebastián González de León, Board President
Sarita Muley, Board Vice-President
Kavitha Selvaraj, 2019-2020 Board Treasurer
Jessica Ramos, Board Treasurer
María Inés Zamudio, 2019-2020 Board Secretary
Lekisha Gunn, Board Secretary

Nissa Rhee, Cofounder and Executive Director
Michelle Kanaar, Cofounder and Art Director
Diane Bou Khalil, Engagement Reporter



Contributors:

April Alonso, Catchlight Local Chicago Fellow
Alex V. Hernandez, Cofounder and Production Editor
Claudia Hernández, Contributing Reporter and Coordinator for Translating Chicago Stories project
Francisco Velazquez, Contributing Reporter
Chelsea Verstegen, Contributing Reporter
Claire Voon, Contributing Editor
Ata Younan, Contributing Reporter

REPORTING

Borderless Magazine covers **labor, justice and advocacy** issues impacting Midwestern immigrant communities through a lens of **equity and resilience**.

Below, you'll find our top-ten most-read stories of the year. The list includes stories in English, Spanish, Filipino and Mandarin. The stories were written by people whose families come from the Philippines, Lebanon, Iraq, Mexico, and El Salvador. **87 percent** of the freelance reporters, journalists and photographers we worked with in 2020 were **immigrants or the children of immigrants**.

10. Dispatches from a COVID-19 Hotspot: A Neighborhood Transformed

Story and photos by Diane Bou Khalil.

How Chicago's thriving, multicultural neighborhood West Ridge has been hurt by the pandemic

9. Dispatches from COVID-19: Finding Hope in Wicker Park's Mexican Community

Story and photos by Fernando Moreno

A Mexican DACA recipient shows the resilience of Latinx families during the pandemic. [Leer en español](#)

8. Young, African and Refugee

Story by Michelle Kanaar and Nissa Rhee, photos by Michelle Kanaar

After fleeing conflict, three young Africans find themselves navigating a city struggling with racism, inequity and violence



REPORTING

In 2020, we published **92 deeply-reported stories** that held the powerful accountable and held space for immigrants to tell their own experiences.

In April, Borderless Magazine's executive director Nissa Rhee reported on how the COVID-19 pandemic was impacting the Chicago Immigration Court and nearby immigrant detention centers. After the investigation was published, the **Department of Justice temporarily shut down Chicago's immigration court to address concerns about COVID's spread.**



7. A People's Guide to Fighting Racism

Story by Diane Bou Khalil and Nissa Rhee, illustration by Grae Rosa

Six Black and Latinx community leaders share what we need to do to address structural racism in the wake of police violence



6. 'Hard-to-Count' Assyrian Community Prepares for the Census amid COVID-19

Story by Ata Younan, photos by Michelle Kanaar

Local Assyrian leaders encouraged community members to write in 'Assyrian' as their race in 2020's census after massive undercounting in previous national surveys



5. Locked Up with COVID-19

Story by Nissa Rhee, photos by Michelle Kanaar

An investigation into how the coronavirus pandemic was straining immigration court and detention systems in the Midwest

REPORTING

94 percent of Borderless Magazine's stories in 2020 were written, photographed or illustrated by people from **African, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, or Middle Eastern communities.**

The stories that we published this year helped a homeless undocumented student **pay her tuition**, **raised money** for the families of people in local immigrant detention centers to buy **holiday presents** for their children, and uplifted the voices of former **Rohingya refugees who were voting for the first time** at a Chicago polling place this November.

4. Nonprofit Motorcycle Club Raises Money to Help Assyrian Elderly Community

Story by Ata Younan, photos by Michelle Kanaar

How the Assyrian Knights motorcycle club delivered care packages to 187 families during the pandemic



3. 'We Just Want What We Deserve': Former Strauss Meatpacking Employees Protest Unsafe Working Conditions During COVID

Story and photos by Francisco Velazquez

An investigation into the firing of undocumented workers. [Leer en español](#)



2. Green Card Lottery Winners Challenge Trump's Immigration Ban

Story by Sruthi Darbhamulla and Lu Zhao

How Trump's executive order kept 37,000 Diversity Immigrant Visa lottery winners from coming to the U.S. [中文阅读](#)



REPORTING



"Caregivers are often portrayed as abused and downtrodden in Filipino films and mainstream media. I think the fact that [this story] was told from a first-person perspective really made it stand out. It offers an accurate perspective of what her day-to-day life is like, and her care for her patients and love for her job really shines through in the piece."

- **Pat Nabong**,
Filipina contributing reporter and
photojournalist

1. Dispatches from COVID-19: A 72-year- old Filipina Essential Worker Tries to Stay Healthy While Taking Care of Her Patients

Story and photos by Lilia Antazo and Pat Nabong

A Filipino caregiver shares what it's like to be a frontline healthcare worker in Chicago during the pandemic. [Basahin sa wikang Filipino](#)



PATHWAYS



Borderless provides pathways for emerging journalists from immigrant and other marginalized communities to report on immigration and learn from professional journalists. We mentor emerging journalists through a mix of paid and unpaid internships, fellowships and one-off projects. Our award-winning team gives mentees comprehensive training in interviewing, writing, research and visual storytelling.

With Borderless Magazine's support, Pathways alum **Brian Herrera** received a prestigious CatchLight fellowship and **Francisco Velaquez** started his Master's program focusing on Spanish-language journalism at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism.

IN 2020, WE SPENT 700 HOURS MENTORING EMERGING JOURNALISTS FROM AFRICAN, LATINX, ASIAN, INDIGENOUS AND MIDDLE EASTERN COMMUNITIES.

PATHWAYS

Pathways alum **Claudia Hernández** is a dual Mexico-U.S. citizen who grew up in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. When Claudia's summer work plans were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Claudia came on as our first border reporting intern.



"I am glad I was able to work with such a professional and ethical team and learn about the right way to approach and write about people from vulnerable communities. I got to meet amazing journalists and now I feel much more confident about my knowledge and the work I do."

- Claudia Hernández



Pathways alum **Diane Bou Khalil** was born in the U.S. and raised in Lebanon. She became our engagement reporter after working as our first social media intern.

"Ethical reporting, good communication, journalistic research, teamwork, organization and technical competence are all skills I picked up and will always value because of this opportunity. The topics I was able to cover vary... Just like immigrants, it is never down to one category or box."

- Diane Bou Khalil

IMMIGRATION REPORTING LAB



Borderless gives journalists and newsrooms the tools they need to responsibly report on immigration. This includes our recently published **“The State of Immigration News in Chicago”** report, which provides concrete suggestions for journalists to better serve immigrant readers.



We provide training workshops to newsrooms and journalist associations, give

other outlets the opportunity to republish our stories, and collaborate with other outlets on larger reporting projects.

OUR STORIES WERE REPUBLISHED IN:

- BELT MAGAZINE
- BLOCK CLUB CHICAGO
- CHICAGO READER
- LA RAZA (IN SPANISH)
- THE TRIIBE
- UNIVISION (IN SPANISH)

We trained journalists both locally at the Chicago **Society of Professional Journalists’ Freedom of Information Act conference** and nationally at the **Institute for Nonprofit News’ annual conference**.

Borderless Magazine also spoke to students at **Northeastern Illinois University, Northwestern University, DePaul University, and The New School** about our unique approach to immigration reporting.

IN 2020, WE COLLABORATED WITH 88 LOCAL NEWS OUTLETS TO STRENGTHEN OUR NEWSROOM.

IMMIGRATION REPORTING LAB

IMAPCT

Since our founding in 2017, we have used the “as-told-to” method of reporting to center immigrant voices. This year we worked with local Korean immigrant artist **Danbee Kim** to illustrate our process so that we could share it with other newsrooms. Listening to immigrants is at the heart of our reporting and publishing process.



In 2020, Borderless Magazine took over the administration of the [**Institute for Nonprofit News' Translating Chicago Stories**](#) project. The project helps ten local newsrooms translate their stories from English into Spanish and then offers those stories for free syndication to local and national news partners, **increasing language accessibility** in the Chicago media ecosystem.

BY THE NUMBERS

99,703	Page views on Borderlessmag.org in 2020	
39,741	Unique visitors to Borderlessmag.org in 2020	
23,991	Page views on Borderlessmag.org in 28-day period	UP 920% *
8,568	Unique visitors to Borderlessmag.org in 28-day period	UP 627% *
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1,219	Facebook followers	UP 101% †
75,570	People saw our content on Facebook	UP 173% †
1,084	Twitter followers	UP 87% †
348,000	Tweet impressions	UP 124% †
1,000	Instagram followers	UP 125% †
14,740	People saw our content on Instagram	UP 533% †
181	LinkedIn followers	
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126	\$150,000.00 Individual donors	UP 2,420% †
10	Foundations that supported us	UP 100% †
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6	Outlets that republished our stories	UP 200% †

* Nov. 22, 2020 to Dec. 19, 2020 vs. Nov. 22, 2019 to Dec. 19, 2019

† Vs. 2019

RECOGNITION

Foundations that supported us in 2020

Borealis Philanthropy's Racial Equity in Journalism Fund
Chicago COVID-19 Journalism Fund
Chicago Headline Club Foundation
Crossroads Fund
Facebook Journalism Project
Field Foundation
The Lenfest Institute for Journalism
Local Media Association
McCormick Foundation
PEN America

Awards and Recognitions

- 2019 Chicago Headline Club Lisagor Finalist for the ["Best Illustration" award](#) in the Best All Media category for our comic book [The Promise](#)
- Named [one of Chicago's best journalism nonprofits](#) by Literary Hub magazine
- Executive Director Nissa Rhee and Art Director Michelle Kanaar were named by PEN America [as Local Journalist Heroes](#)
- Executive Director Nissa Rhee was named a Leadership in Democracy Fellow by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation

