

BORDERLESSMAGAZINE

2021 IMPACT REPORT



ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN HERRERA

FROM THE BOARD

Dear Borderless Magazine friends and supporters,

When President Joe Biden took office last year, many of us hoped that he would change the racist and unjust immigration policies of his predecessor. But less than a year later, we saw chilling images of border patrol officers, dressed like cowboys and wielding horse reins like whips, chasing Haitian refugees trying to cross into the United States. At the same time, Vice President Kamala Harris told Guatemalan migrants fleeing poverty, "Do not come."

At the center of these policies are real people, who are trying to visit, seek refuge or work in the United States. As an immigrant from Mexico, I intimately understand their struggles. During the pandemic, not even my parents were able to come visit me, due to the backlog of immigration cases.

Where are these human stories of immigration? Since President Biden took office, Pew Research Center found that left-leaning and more politically mixed news outlets have reduced their immigration reporting, while right-leaning outlets have increased their coverage. Negative stories about immigration now dominate the media.

We all know what the impact of that negative, racist viewpoint can look like. We had a president leading that narrative for four years. But what is shocking is the lack of stories being published by news outlets challenging that viewpoint in a nuanced and humane manner. In the same study, Pew found that 43% of Americans would like to see more coverage of immigration in the media. We are demanding that the media do better.

Borderless Magazine is doing this work from the ground up. What do immigrants need, think or feel right now? No one is asking and answering these questions in its coverage each week like Borderless does and providing accessible coverage in English and Spanish.

Immigrants and their families are a core part of this country. There's little debate about it. And the only news outlet that I continue to see systematically giving a voice to our nation's immigrant diasporas is Borderless Magazine. We couldn't have done this without the support of our readers and members.

In the pages of this report you'll learn about some of the impact Borderless has had on the lives of immigrant communities in Chicago and beyond. We thank you for your support and are excited about what the future will bring.

*Sincerely,
Sebastián González de León, Borderless Magazine Board 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 our:

- **Reporting**
- **Pathways mentoring program**
- **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 our supporters who make this work possible. Thank you for your support in 2021 and we look forward to building more with you in years to come.



THE TEAM

Sebastián González de León, Board President
Sarita Muley, Board Vice-President
Jessica Ramos, 2020-2021 Board Treasurer
Lekisha Gunn, Board Secretary
Alex V. Hernandez, Board Member and Cofounder

Nissa Rhee, Cofounder and Executive Director
Michelle Kanaar, Cofounder and Art Director
Jen Montojo, Development Director
Diane Bou Khalil, Engagement Reporter
Claire Voon, Deputy Editor



Contributors:

April Alonso, 2020-2021 Catchlight Local Chicago Fellow
Camilla Forte, 2021 Pathways Photojournalism Intern
Claudia Hernández, Contributing Reporter and Translating Chicago Stories project coordinator
Adriana Reza, 2021 Pathways Reporting Intern
Chelsea Verstegen, Contributing Reporter
Ata Younan, Contributing Reporter

2021 HIGHLIGHTS

We celebrated two years as Borderless Magazine in 2021!

We hired our third full-time employee!

Our new development director, Jen Montojo, is making sure that we can continue to fund our work for years to come.



We published in print!

Our bilingual comic book and zines brought our work to new communities who have limited access to the internet and news.



Our reporting changed lives! Our investigation into evictions in Little Village led to the removal of an abusive security guard. And our investigation into the spread of COVID-19 in immigrant detention centers in the Midwest showed for the first time how county jails were endangering the lives of immigrants.

REPORTING

In 2021, we published **183 deeply-reported stories** that held the government and powerful entities accountable while creating space for immigrants to share their own experiences.

Last year's stories were written by people whose families come from **Mexico, China, Colombia, Singapore, South Korea, Russia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malaysia, Iraq and Lebanon**. Here are our most-read English stories of 2021.

1. How a Femme Liberation Collective Is Practicing Community Care

As told to April Alonso, photos by April Alonso

Femme Defensa is addressing a lack of government aid in the Chicago neighborhoods of Pilsen and Little Village through direct community care.

2. Left Behind: How Deportation Affects a Chicago Mother and Her 6 Kids

Story by Rita Ocegüera, photos by Samantha Cabrera Friend

A Chicago mother explains how her husband's 15-year-old conviction led to three deportations and a family torn apart.

3. How a Social Worker is Centering Immigrant Survivors of Violence

As told to April Alonso, photos by April Alonso

Chicago organizer Carolina Gallo provides support to survivors of domestic abuse who are often failed by — or fearful of — the government.



REPORTING

99% of our stories in 2021 were reported, photographed or illustrated by immigrants or the children of immigrants.

4. How a Network of Coordinated Grocery Runs Is Feeding Chicago

5. “I Love That My Cooking Brings People Together”

6. “This Work Calls Me”: A Tamale Vendor Embraces Her Streets

7. Musicians Who Make Good Neighbors

8. FOIA Victory Bolsters Calls for Real Immigration Reform

9. As Afghan Children Come to the US, Disagreements Ignite Over Who Should Care for Them

10. How to Help Afghan Refugees in Chicago and Beyond

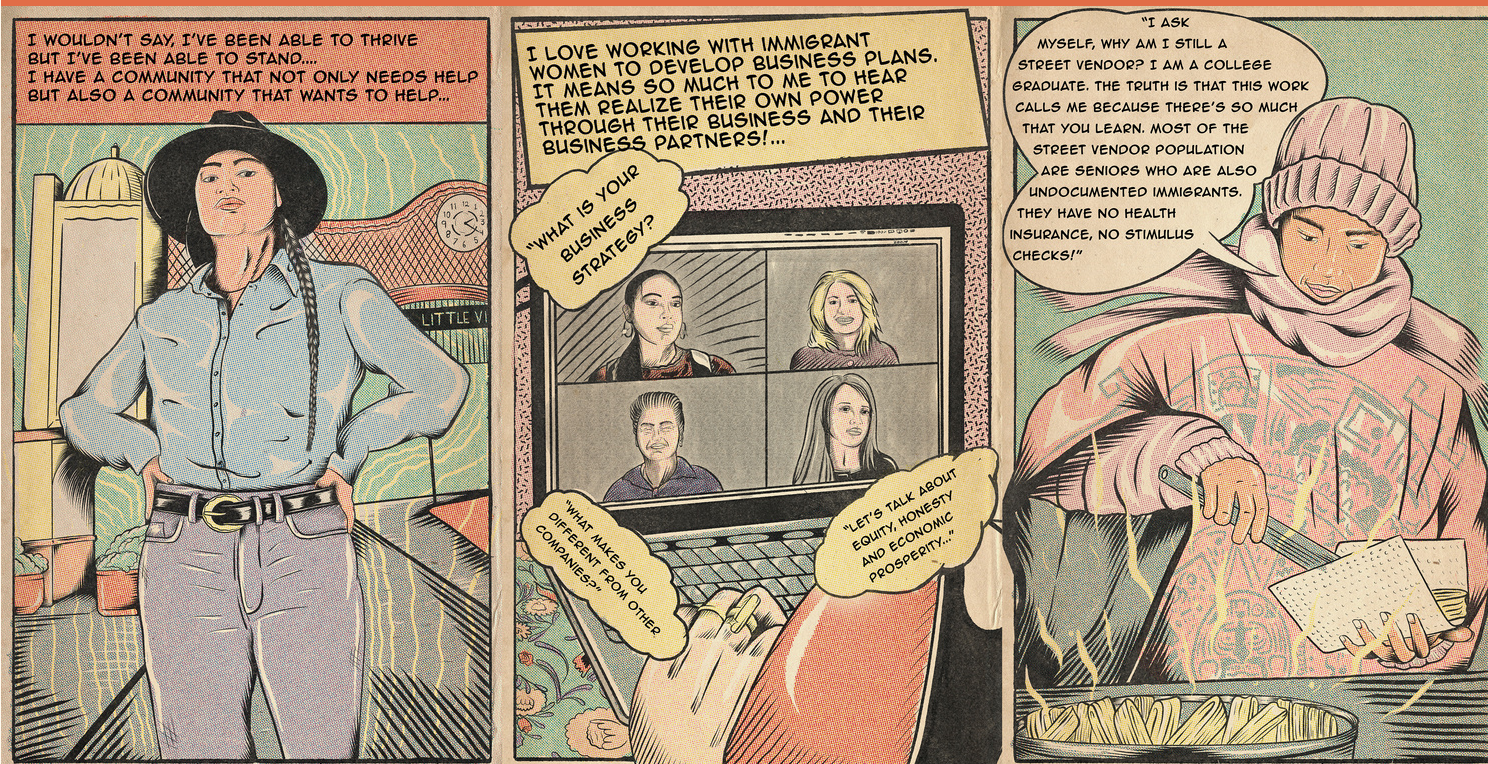


Illustration by Brian Herrera

REPORTING

Like our journalists, our audience is young and diverse. The majority of our readers are under age 40 and **45% of our audience** reads our stories in Spanish. Two of our top three most-read stories last year were in Spanish.

Here are our most popular Spanish stories of 2021.



1. Luchando por los derechos de los inmigrantes indocumentados en Michigan

Historia por Emma Glassman-Hughes, fotos cortesía de Gema Lowe

Gema Lowe, quien hace 30 años emigró de México a Estados Unidos, describe su recorrido como defensora en Grand Rapids de los inmigrantes indocumentados.



2. Cómo es que una trabajadora social se centra en ayudar a las inmigrantes sobrevivientes de violencia doméstica

Según le fue contado a April Alonso, fotos de April Alonso

Carolina Gallo es una organizadora comunitaria en Chicago que ayuda a las sobrevivientes de abuso doméstico, quienes muchas veces, son defraudadas por los sistemas existentes o les tienen miedo.



3. Dejados atrás: cómo la deportación afecta a una madre de Chicago y a sus 6 hijos

Historia por Rita Ocegüera, fotos de Samantha Cabrera Friend

Una madre de Chicago explica cómo la condena de su marido de 15 años condujo a tres deportaciones y a una familia destrozada.

REPORTING

Beyond our website, our stories have been adopted into the curriculum of local schools and after-school programs. 27,000 7th graders in Chicago Public Schools now read our reporting each year.

4. Cómo Un Grupo De Mujeres ‘Femme’ Trabaja Para Ayudar Al Prójimo

5. Cómo es que una red de esfuerzos coordinados alimenta a Chicago

6. ‘Me encanta que mi cocina reúna a la gente’

7. “Este trabajo es mi llamado”: Una vendedora de tamales se aferra a su barrio

8. Los negocios de ‘Asia en Argyle’ luchan por sobrevivir mientras se enfrentan al paisaje urbano, la pandemia y la reconstrucción de CTA

9. La victoria de FOIA impulsa una verdadera reforma migratoria

10. El chef de Mis Moles lucha por recuperarse de la pandemia

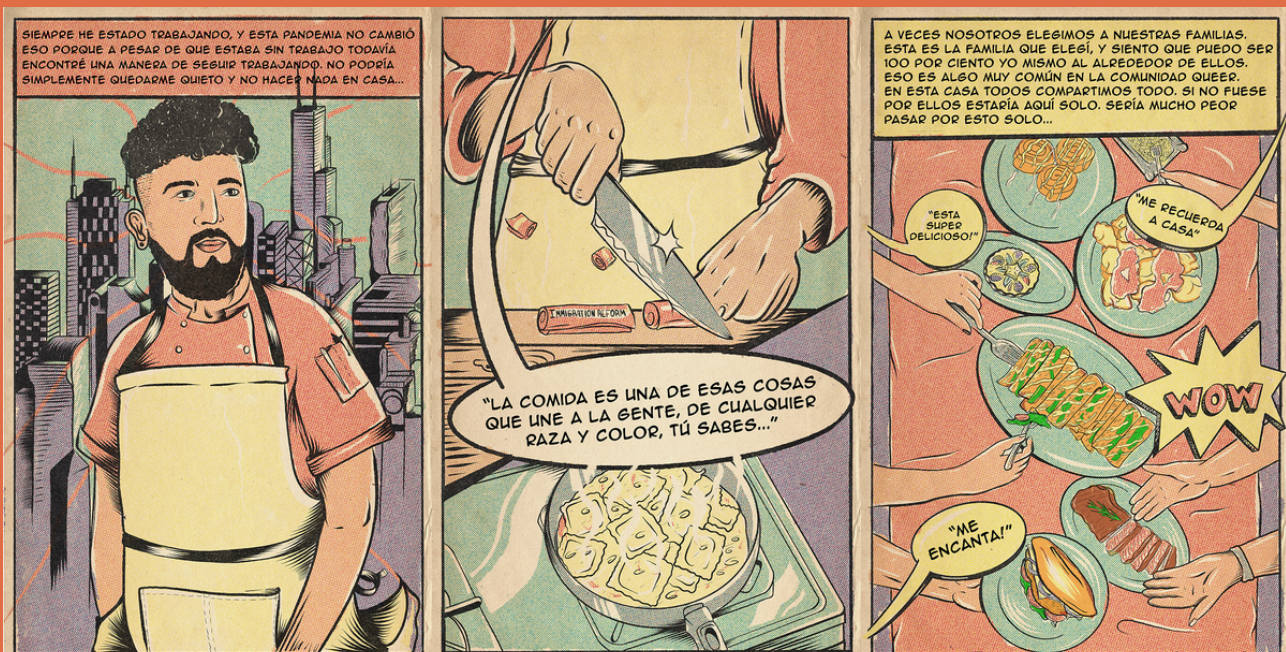


Ilustración por Brian Herrera

SPOTLIGHT: 'RECLAIMING THE SACRIFICE ZONE'



Making Change Through Comics

We're especially proud of our bilingual comic book, "Reclaiming the Sacrifice Zone," which was named the Best Visual Journalism Project of 2021 in the national LION awards. The comic documents the David-and-Goliath fight of young Latinx organizers taking on the notorious polluter General Iron.

After the comic was published, the city of Chicago denied General Iron's operating permit citing environmental and racism concerns.

We produced the comic book in collaboration with the Southeast Youth

Alliance and have been distributing it across the South and West Sides of Chicago this year. The comic has also been incorporated into both the Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Park District curriculum and will continue to inspire young people to protect their community and the environment for years to come.



— MIKE CENTENO,
Illustrator



— MARIA MAYNEZ,
SYA organizer

SPOTLIGHT: 'THE FAMILY THAT TRANSGENDER ASYLUM SEEKERS BUILT'



RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY FOR MAKING 'IMPACTFUL CHANGE' FOR UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES

When Borderless reporter Claudia Hernandez met transgender asylum seeker Susana Coreas, she was living in a shelter in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Claudia's story, along with her gorgeous photos of Susana and the community for trans migrants she had built there, helped Susana cross the border last summer.

"Due to Borderless' story, we were contacted by many media outlets," said Coreas. "The attention of the media helped us a lot to cross the border. The immigration officers made an unprecedented exception just for us.

All this attention has brought us a lot of help. We were lucky to have our story out."

That help included the donation of a building in Mexico for the transgender asylum seekers to live in while they were waiting to cross the border. Another person donated \$45,000 to help cover food and other expenses.

Now that Susana is safely in the United States, Borderless' reporting continues to help her and other transgender asylum seekers.

SPOTLIGHT



Borderless partnered with the nonprofit CatchLight to bring on April Alonso as a photojournalism fellow. She produced three stories as part of our series, 'Mi Barrio Me Respalda,' on individual change makers who were filling in state and federal gaps in support during the pandemic.

*Below: Grocery Run Club
Cofounders Jorge Saldarriaga
and Lucy Angel. April Alonso for
Borderless Magazine/
CatchLight Local*

"I think it is important to showcase the work that everyday people are doing for the betterment of their communities to show what sustainable care can look like and the strength of community solidarity.

Oftentimes in the media, grassroots and community work is shown as a glamorous thing, but that leaves out those who don't have access to funds, grants and resources. The people that make the most impact are those in your community, such as someone building a garden in a backyard to feed many or a social worker using the resources and experiences they have to help others navigate systems that have barriers. They are everyday people that want life to be livable for those in their community."

- **April Alonso**,
contributing reporter and photojournalist



PATHWAYS

Pathways is one of two training programs in the country that serves immigrant journalists.

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 internships, fellowships and one-off projects. Our award-winning team gives mentees comprehensive training in interviewing, writing, research and visual storytelling.

We offer paid opportunities to make sure our

positions are accessible and inclusive. In 2021, **we spent over 1,000 hours offering mentorship and guidance** so that journalists can advance in their careers and follow a path that leads them to become the newsroom decision makers of tomorrow.

Additionally:

- We spoke to 435 elementary, high school and college students at schools across the country about immigration and journalism.
- We adopted and worked closely with two classes at Northeastern Illinois University and Northwestern University.

WE BELIEVE IMMIGRANTS' VOICES ARE POWERFUL AND SHOULD BE AT THE CENTER OF ANY COVERAGE ABOUT IMMIGRATION. WE KNOW RACIST NARRATIVES WILL ONLY CHANGE WHEN THE NARRATORS AND NEWSROOM DECISION MAKERS CHANGE.



April Alonso



Cassidy Jackson



Brian Herrera



Fran Velazquez



Claudia Hernández



Camilla Forte



Adriana Rezal



Diane Bou Khalil

Pathways Alum

PATHWAYS

Where are they now?

*Pathways 2020 alum **Fran Velazquez**,
now reporting at CoinDesk*



“The internship at Borderless meant putting the skills I learned in school to the test. From then on, Borderless instilled in me the importance of being thorough and handling stories that affect people with care. My experience at Borderless gave me the opportunity to report in Spanish and connect with sources in person, two areas of my career that I am continuing to explore within the cryptocurrency space.”



*Pathways 2021 alum **Adriana Rezal**,
now reporting at the San Francisco Chronicle*

“The summer I spent as a reporting intern with Borderless Magazine’s Pathways Program was pivotal to my journalism career. Learning their 'As-Told-To Method' raised my standards for journalistic ethics when interviewing vulnerable sources. The internship opened my eyes to the impact nonprofit news outlets can have in their local community.”

IMMIGRATION REPORTING LAB

Borderless gives journalists and newsrooms the tools they need to responsibly report on immigration. 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.

In 2021, we trained journalists across the world at the Collaborative Journalism Summit, the Institute for Nonprofit News' annual conference and Google News Initiative's Startup Workshop series.

Our engagement reporter, Diane Bou Khalil presented a TEDx talk on her work with Borderless and the Borderless 'As-Told-To Method.'

Borderless also ran the Institute for Nonprofit News' Translating Chicago Stories Project, helping nine local newsrooms translate their English stories into Spanish.



OUR STORIES WERE REPUBLISHED IN:

The Chicago Sun-Times
Block Club Chicago
Cicero Independiente
Injustice Watch

WBEZ
La Raza
Open Campus
Conexión Migrante
Chicago Tribune

OUR COLLABORATORS WERE:

Institute for Nonprofit News' Broken Ladder project
(BridgeDetroit, Sahan Journal, Wisconsin Watch)
Chicago Independent Media Alliance
Local Media Association's Solving for Chicago network
Injustice Watch
Catchlight

BY THE NUMBERS

278,009	Pageviews on Borderlessmag.org in 2021	UP 179% †
107,124	Unique visitors to Borderlessmag.org in 2021	UP 170% †
\$276,453	Revenue from donations, grants & program service fees	UP 41% †

† Vs. 2020

BUILDING COMMUNITY: BORDERLESS MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

In October 2021, Borderless Magazine joined prominent news organizations around the country by launching a membership program to help sustain the public service we provide to the community. We successfully ended 2021 with **124 members**, including **42 new individual donors**. We have doubled our revenue from individual contributions from \$5,172 in 2020 to \$12,027 in 2021. Most importantly, we are fostering a space where we can help meet members' needs by responding to their feedback on who and what we cover.



Our zine launch party on Chicago's Southwest Side in July 2021. The zine included our 'Mi Barrio Me Respalda' stories.

RECOGNITION

Foundations that supported us in 2021

Chicago Headline Club Foundation
Crossroads Fund
Field Foundation
Google
Healthy Communities Foundation
Illinois Humanities
Institute for Nonprofit News

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Local Independent Online News Publishers
Local Media Foundation
McCormick Foundation
The Miami Foundation
Northwestern University
PEN America



2021 Awards and Recognitions

- “Best Visual Journalism Project of the Year” award for our comic book, “Reclaiming the Sacrifice Zone” in the national Local Independent Online News awards
- Three finalist honors from the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Awards:
 - "Best Illustration" among all media for our comic book, "Reclaiming the Sacrifice Zone"
 - "Best Investigative or In-depth Reporting" for "As COVID-19 Spread Through Midwest Detention Centers, ICE Struggled To Provide Accurate Data"
 - "Best Reporting on Race and Diversity" for “The Family That Transgender Asylum Seekers Built”
- Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) Breaking Barriers award finalist for “The Family That Transgender Asylum Seekers Built”
- INN Emerging Leader of 2021 award finalist for Borderless Executive Director Nissa Rhee

JOIN US!



As a nonprofit news outlet, we rely on donations from readers like you to keep our critical reporting on immigrant communities free and accessible to all.

Become a Borderless member by making a tax-deductible donation today.

Go to [**www.borderlessmag.org/donate**](https://www.borderlessmag.org/donate) or contact Jen Montojo at [**jen@borderlessmag.org**](mailto:jen@borderlessmag.org) to make your donation.

We can't do this work without you. Thank you!