



Q1 REPORT 2025

BORDERLESSMAGAZINE

Top: David, a Rwandan refugee, holds a photo of him with his two sisters and two nieces at Navy Pier. David now works as community support specialist at Refugee One in Chicago. Oscar Gomez/Borderless Magazine

MISSION

Borderless Magazine NFP is reimagining immigration journalism for a more just and equitable future.

As a nonpartisan and nonprofit news outlet, we:

- **Report and publish stories** on immigration and immigrant communities in English & Spanish
- Mentor and train emerging BIPOC and immigrant journalists in investigations, community reporting and photojournalism in our **Pathways program**
- Give professional journalists the tools they need to report on immigration issues fairly and accurately through our **Immigration Reporting Lab**

VALUES

People Centered: We approach our coworkers and the people we interview, train, and mentor with humility and an appreciation of their innate human dignity. We never deceive each other or the people who entrust us with their stories.

Resilience: We see strength and power in each other and uplift one another in everything we do. We see suffering in the world, but find ways to take care of each other — and ourselves — as we serve our community.

Community First: We are deeply connected to immigrant community members. We prioritize the expertise, desires and needs of immigrants and those who care about them.

Equity: We strive to create spaces and opportunities for people who do not traditionally have power or a platform in the journalism industry, particularly BIPOC and immigrant community members.

Fearless: We bravely report the truth of our communities. We are not beholden to political or financial interests. We hold ourselves and others accountable as we help build a more just future.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



When Donald Trump was sworn in, we saw fear consume our immigrant communities in Chicago and beyond.

For weeks, his administration threatened Chicago with “massive raids.” Then, days before his inauguration, immigrants, advocacy organizations and local news outlets were on high alert as a steady stream of leaks published by national outlets shared sparse details of immigration operations planned for Chicago.

We scrambled as an industry to provide updates where rumors were rampant and details were sparse.

When federal agents showed up at a school on Chicago’s South Side on Jan. 24, local news outlets’ desire to be first to break the story fed into our community’s fear and the spread of misinformation. Chicago Public

Schools initially said ICE agents were denied access to the school but later clarified that it was the Secret Service, not ICE. By that point, however, the damage had already been done. False news of a school raid had spread widely, fueling the fears that our immigrant communities had already been feeling.

There’s no way around it. The first quarter has been heavy and confusing for those of us who care about immigrants. And that was the point: overwhelm people with edicts and misinformation and let fear spread.

Since Trump took office, Borderless Magazine’s editorial team has been fielding tip after tip of potential immigration enforcement activity. Like many local news outlets, we initially chased these leads and checked their legitimacy.

Above: Borderless Editorial Director Mauricio Peña interviews Ald. Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez (33rd) outside the Belmont Blue Line CTA station as an intergovernmental coalition gathered to defend communities against threats of deportation raids on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine

“Our vow to our community is simple: We want to give you facts, not fuel fear.”

But we quickly paused our breaking news efforts. We found that many of the tips were unfounded or simply had too many outstanding questions for officials to give our readers a full picture. The decision was simple: We didn't want to add to the chaos without any concrete answers.

In January, I wrote about the deep fear our communities are feeling. Veronica, who has been here for over two decades, told me she's had countless sleepless nights wondering what will happen under a second Trump presidency.

“Fear,” she told me, “is the most powerful weapon you can imagine.”

Borderless Magazine wants to allay those fears by empowering our readers with information to make the best decisions for themselves. This information is critical now more than ever.

Our editorial team constantly discusses where we can fill information gaps and

where we can fill information gaps and provide critical information to our readers. That work doesn't stop at reporting and writing; it also means creating social media videos and having our field canvassers distribute this information to our communities.

Our vow to our community is simple: We want to give you facts, not fuel fear.

We have never shied away from hard stories and challenging topics. But we will not report a story until we can verify its accuracy and provide our community with as much true information as possible.

As we navigate Trump's second term, Borderless is committed to reimagining immigration reporting for a more just future for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. We will continue to honor our roots and never lose sight of who we do this work for.

-Mauricio Peña, Editorial Director

Q1 BY THE NUMBERS

35

STORIES
PUBLISHED

1.6M

VIEWS
ON INSTAGRAM

47K

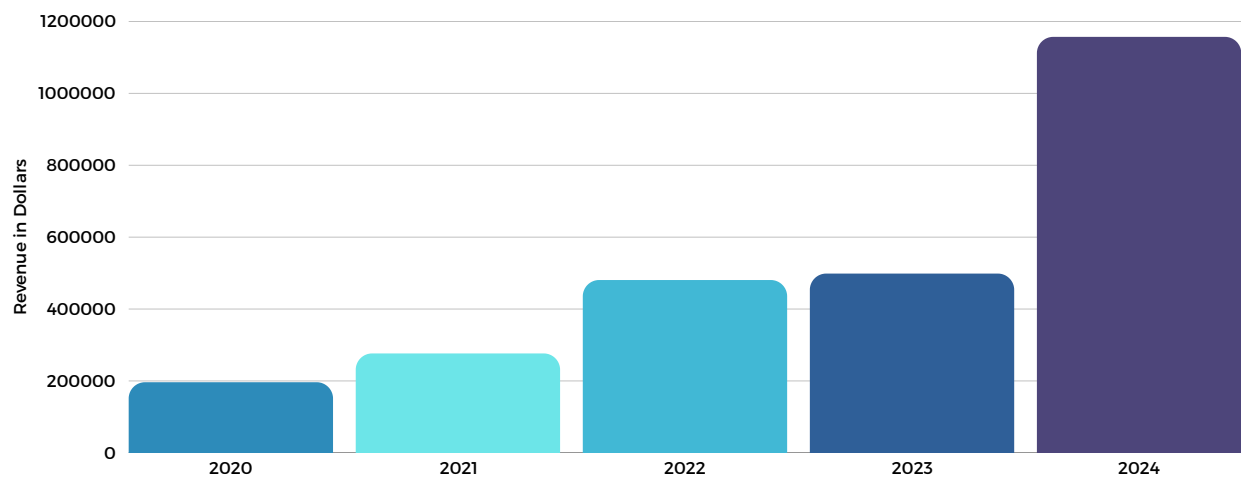
PAGEVIEWS ON
BORDERLESSMAG.ORG



30

MEDIA APPEARANCES &
MENTIONS

ANNUAL REVENUE GROWTH



Q1 RECOGNITION FOR OUR WORK

RICHARD H. DRIEHAUS FOUNDATION AWARD

Finalist
For our investigations into
Chicago's migrant shelter system

STUDS TERKEL COMMUNITY MEDIA AWARD

Winner
Editorial Director
Mauricio Peña

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS & EDITORS

NICAR Conference Panelist
For our investigations into
Chicago's migrant shelter system

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB JOURNALISM INSTITUTE

Interview
Executive Director Nissa Rhee on
how journalists can better report
on immigration



READER RESPONSES

A woman wearing a teal felt hat with silver ornaments and a red vest over a grey long-sleeved shirt is stirring a large, dark, steaming pot with a long wooden spoon. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“Borderless provides essential news on immigration.”

“Borderless Magazine makes a difference in the lives of many. Keep fighting the good fight!”

Top: Mairam Bekisheva cooks Sumolok for Nooruz in Des Plaines. Fatema Hosseini/Borderless Magazine

IMPACT



Shining light and changing laws

- In 2022, [Borderless published an investigation](#) that showed while the Chicago region has a growing Muslim population, with Afghan, Rohingya, and African refugees and asylum seekers moving here, most public schools did not offer halal food options for students. That changed in March when Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker signed the “Faith by Plate Act.” The new law makes Illinois the first state in the nation to require public schools, hospitals and prisons to offer halal and kosher meals to those who request them.
- Trump’s border czar, Tom Homan, told CNN in January that “Know Your Rights” information in Chicago was impacting the administration’s efforts to deport immigrants in the city. He called Chicagoans “very well educated.” Borderless’ “Know Your Rights” posts and videos on Instagram were viewed by 1.2 million people and shared over 11,400 times.

Strengthening the media ecosystem

- Marketing & Engagement Manager Diane Bou Khalil [talked to the Reynolds Journalism Institute](#) about how Borderless is using LinkedIn and Instagram ads to reach more readers.
- Executive Director Nissa Rhee [spoke with the National Press Club’s Journalism Institute](#) about tips for covering immigrant communities.
- Audience Engagement Reporter Katrina Pham spoke on a panel at the Chicago Headline Club’s FOIA Fest about our investigative reporting.
- Pham also spoke to a student from ASU’s Cronkite School of Journalism in Phoenix about audience engagement.
- Editorial Director Mauricio Peña spoke on a panel at the national Investigative Reporter and Editors’ NICAR conference in Minnesota about our investigations into Chicago’s troubled migrant shelter system.

IMPACT



Meeting community where they're at

- Marketing & Engagement Manager Diane Bou Khalil spoke about Borderless' reporting to a class at DePaul University in January and at the Chicago Cultural Alliance's Activating Heritage Conference in March.
- Audience Engagement Reporter Katrina Pham spoke to undocumented immigrants about their rights and Borderless' reporting at an Illinois Undocumented Advocacy Network event
- Pham also spoke about Borderless' reporting on ICE and deportations on WTTW's Chicago Tonight in January and on City Cast Chicago in March.
- Borderless stories were republished by Block Club Chicago, La Raza, South Side Weekly, Hyde Park Herald, Chicago Reader, Cicero Independiente and The Triibe.
- Borderless field canvassers distributed stories at seven community events.
- Development & Impact Manager Sarah Luyengi and contributing reporter Deborah Douglas held a Borderless book club meeting to discuss Nancy Johnson's book "The Kindest Lie."

MEET OUR NEW DEPUTY EDITOR



Hillary Flores joined Borderless as deputy editor in February.

She received her BA in Communications and Media at DePaul University and her Master's in Journalism from Northwestern University, specializing in Media Innovation and Content Strategy. As a student, she cofounded La DePaulia, an online Spanish-language news site that amplifies the voices of underserved communities in Chicago. Hillary has worked for local and national news outlets, including Block Club Chicago, Daily Beast, Cicero Independiente and South Side Weekly.

Most recently, she worked in news production and digital streaming for Univision Chicago and CBS Chicago.

Board Members

Maty Ortega-Cruz, President
Shapelle Pisano, Treasurer
Suzanne Franklin
Ghazala Irshad
Claire Rychlewski
Nicholas Tarasen

Staff

Nissa Rhee, Cofounder & Executive Director
Mauricio Peña, Editorial Director
Diane Bou Khalil, Marketing & Engagement Manager
Hillary Flores, Deputy Editor
Sarah Luyengi, Development & Impact Manager
Siriluck Poontong, Finance & Admin Manager
Aydali Campa, Reporter / Report for America Corps Member
Max Herman, Visuals Editor
Fatema Hosseini, Investigative Reporter / Roy W. Howard Fellow
Katrina Pham, Audience Engagement Reporter
Tara Mobasher, Medill Reporting Fellow
Oscar Gomez, Pathways Photojournalism Intern



READER RESPONSES

“[Borderless is] telling stories that are underrepresented elsewhere, especially in mainstream corporate media.”

“Your work is more important now than ever, Thank you.”

Top: Aydali Campa, Reporter and Report for America Corps Member interviewing David, a Rwandan refugee, who works as a community support specialist at Refugee One in Chicago. Oscar Gomez/Borderless Magazine

STAND TOGETHER, TAKE ACTION TOGETHER

With attacks on immigrants and
new outlets like Borderless
escalating, our work is more
important than ever.

Will you step up and commit to
Borderless' future with a
meaningful donation today?



borderlessmag.org/donate