



# Q2 REPORT 2025

## **BORDERLESS**MAGAZINE

*Top: Members of the Republic of Vietnam Veterans light candles and incense during a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War on May 3, 2025. Photo by Max Herman for 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

## REPORTING FROM ‘A WAR ON OUR DEMOCRACY’

**By Mauricio Peña, Chief of Staff**

All eyes have been on immigrants the past few months.

Like many of you, our team has been bombarded with videos of masked Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in tactical military gear, sweeping through neighborhoods, rounding up day laborers and detaining parents during traffic stops as their children cry out.

And Borderless has been on the front lines.

Over the last few weeks, our reporters:

- Witnessed a woman detained at immigration court immediately after a judge dismissed her case;
- Documented the pleas of community members, calling for a grandmother's release from ICE detention;
- Reported how elected officials and community groups denounced Trump's new travel ban; and
- Covered Chicago demonstrations against Trump and ICE raids across the nation.

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson called the recent attacks on immigrants “a war on democracy.”



At Borderless, we know what we're seeing is far from new.

Go back 70 years, and you'll see the U.S. government carrying out “Operation Wetback,” a campaign that used military-style tactics to deport hundreds of thousands of Mexican laborers. During those sweeps, immigration officials filled three planes with immigrants and flew them weekly from Chicago to Mexico, often to “unfamiliar parts” of the country, according to historians.

The rhetoric, at the time, was that Mexicans were here to steal jobs from U.S. workers, even though many were invited as part of the U.S.-Mexican Farm Labor Program a decade earlier.

# “We do not live in a war zone, and yet, politicians insist on weaponizing immigrants.”

More than seven decades later, we see the same rhetoric and tactics used by Trump and federal agents. As recently as this past weekend, Trump directed ICE to expand deportations in Democratic-led cities, including Chicago and New York City. These operations and the deployment of the National Guard and active military against civilians are meant to spread fear within our immigrant communities.

We do not live in a war zone, and yet, politicians insist on weaponizing immigrants.

Borderless's predecessor, 90 Days, 90 Voices, started as a rapid response project during Trump's first travel ban in 2017. Eight years later, that hasn't changed. We are still reporting stories WITH and FOR our immigrant communities.

Our focus remains on the people impacted by local, state and federal immigration policies. Our team set out to tell their story in a way that keeps them safe and affirms their humanity.



For many, myself included, it's difficult not to feel helpless. As journalists, our job is to give our communities the facts they need to understand the world around them so they can make informed decisions and live healthy lives

Our community gives me hope at this moment. We've seen folks stand up to defend their family, friends, neighbors, students, and colleagues in a moment of uncertainty.

At Borderless, we are committed to serving immigrant communities, whatever the future brings. Even when the news cycle has moved on, our eyes will remain on our immigrant communities.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: REPORTING FROM 'A WAR ON OUR DEMOCRACY'

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# Q2 BY THE NUMBERS

44

STORIES  
PUBLISHED

530K

VIEWS  
ON INSTAGRAM

105K

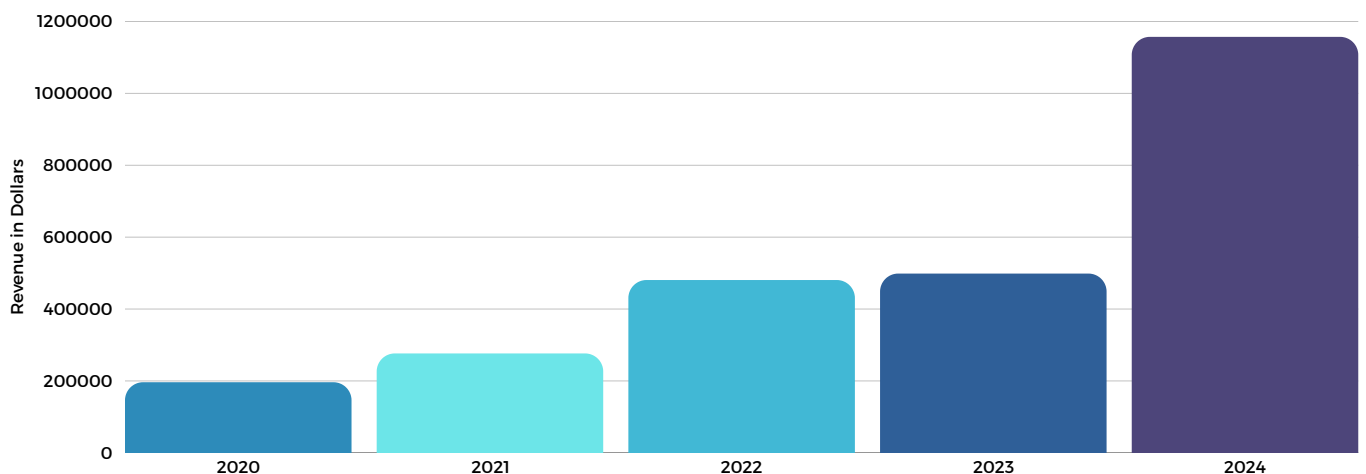
PAGEVIEWS ON  
BORDERLESSMAG.ORG



30

MEDIA APPEARANCES &  
MENTIONS

## ANNUAL REVENUE GROWTH



# Q2 RECOGNITION FOR OUR WORK

## 2025 LEADERS FOR A NEW CHICAGO

Winner

Nissa Rhee, cofounder and executive director honored by MacArthur Foundation and Field Foundation

## STUDS TERKEL COMMUNITY MEDIA AWARD

Winner

Mauricio Peña, editorial director

## RICHARD H. DRIEHAUS FOUNDATION AWARD

Finalist

Investigations on Chicago's migrant shelter system

## LION PUBLISHER'S OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE AWARD

Finalist

Borderless was recognized for transforming its internal structure and culture

## LION PUBLISHER'S COMMUNITY MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Finalist

Executive Director and Cofounder Nissa Rhee is honored for leadership in collaboration, mentorship, and innovation.

## LION PUBLISHER'S BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD

Finalist

Borderless is honored for its growth, award-winning investigations, and commitment to accurate, impactful journalism.



## READER RESPONSES



"You are essential to our understanding of the situation and viewpoint of Chicago's diverse immigrant communities."

"I support serious cause-driven investigative journalism."

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

# IMPACT



## Reporting that sparked action

- Our in-depth story about El Comedor Comunitario, a migrant-run soup kitchen facing eviction, brought new visibility to the triple crisis in Chicago: homelessness, hunger and deportation threats. Following our reporting, migrants living in the building found housing.
- After hundreds of complaints and dozens of citations, MAT Asphalt on the Southwest Side was forced to install pollution mitigation technology last April. More than a year later, Borderless found the company was still receiving complaints, and city inspectors' notes show instances where the facility continued to emit "strong noxious asphalt odor."
- Over the last three months, Borderless Magazine reporters have continued to report on Trump's sweeping immigration agenda, the cancellation of Temporary Protected Status, the impact of Trump's tariffs on small businesses, and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

## Events and panels

- With support from the Walder Foundation, Borderless hosted a convening for Chicago newsrooms to strengthen immigration coverage across the city. Over a dozen journalists joined to learn from an immigration lawyer, share newsroom efforts, and collaborate on next steps.
- Our team spoke on conference panels at INN Days, Investigative Reporters and Editors, and trained fellows from the Next Challenge.
- Borderless reporters have appeared on WTTW and CAN-TV. Chief of Staff Mauricio Peña was profiled in The Interviewist on ethical interviewing practices and international publication Germany's taz interviewed Nissa Rhee for World Press Freedom Day.

## Fakten für Migrant\*innen

Das „Borderless Magazine“ für Migrant\*innen in Chicago will über Trumps Änderungen der Einwanderungspolitik informieren, ohne Ängste zu schüren

Borderless Magazine ist ein gemeinnütziges überparteiliches Nachrichtenmagazin in Chicago. Wir berichten über Migration und migrantische Communities in der Stadt. Eigentlich war Borderless als kurzfristiges Projekt geplant, das sich wegen der mangelhaften Berichterstattung über den „Muslimban“ herausgebildet hat, ein Dekret des US-Präsidenten Donald Trump 2017 aus seiner ersten Amtszeit. Uns wurde klar, dass Bedarf an einer dauerhaften Lösung bestand, weshalb im Oktober 2019 unsere Webseite re-launched wurde und wir seitdem als Borderless veröffentlichten.

Chicago hat eine riesige Einwanderungsbevölkerung, etwa 20 Prozent unserer Stadt haben eine Einwanderungsgeschichte. Etwa jedes dritte Kind in unserem öffentlichen Schulsystem hat mindestens einen eingewanderten Elternteil. Gleichzeitig kann man einen massiven Rückgang von Medienhäusern beobachten. Dadurch entsteht eine große Lücke in der Berichterstattung über Migration – aber auch für Migrant\*innen, die kein Englisch sprechen. Deshalb erscheinen alle unsere Artikel auf Englisch und Spanisch. Je nach Thema und redaktionellen Kapazitäten veröffentlichen wir auch in Mandarin, Dari-Farsi, Filipino und Arabisch.

Wir sind gemeinnützig, das heißt, wir finanzieren uns größ-

tenteils durch Spenden. Alle unsere Geschichten sind ohne Paywall kostenlos lesbar und frei teilbar. Der Großteil unserer Finanzierung kommt von institutionellen Geldgebern, also Stiftungen, sowie von privaten Spenden. Während des ersten Quartals 2025 hatten wir 1,6 Millionen Aufrufe auf Instagram und knapp 50.000 Aufrufe unserer Webseite.

Die zweite Amtszeit von Präsident Trump beeinflusst unsere Arbeit auf zwei Ebenen: Zum einen gibt es fast täglich Veränderungen bei dem Thema Migration. Es ist wirklich eine Herausforderung, da

den Überblick zu behalten. Vor allem, weil wir großen Wert darauf legen, Fakten zu liefern und keine Angst zu schüren. Zum anderen haben gemeinnützige Organisationen wie wir auch noch andere Probleme, so werden von der Regierung in beispiellosem Ausmaß angegriffen. So hat die Regierung anderen non-profit Organisationen die Gemeinnützigkeit entzogen – und es gibt Gerüchte, dass noch weitere folgen sollen.

Sollte das passieren, könnten wir unsere ganze Finanzierung verlieren. Das ist eine sehr ernste Angelegenheit. Wir erleben, wie Nachrichtenagenturen angegriffen werden. Ihnen werden Klagen angedroht oder sie werden tatsächlich verklagt. Für eine kleine Organisation wie unsere wäre eine Klage ein riesiges finanzielles Problem.

Und dann gibt es noch das Thema Einwanderung: Wir haben Teammitglieder, die keine US-amerikanische Staatsbürgerschaft besitzen, und sie oder ihre Familienangehörigen sind von allem, was passiert, betroffen. Das ist eine große Herausforderung, weil sich so vieles verändert und außerhalb unserer Kontrolle liegt.

Julia Beltzig ist freie Journalistin in Berlin und war 2024 mit dem Daniel-Hauser-Stipendium der taz Panter Stiftung in den USA.



Nissa Rhee ist Executive Director des Borderless Magazines. Sie ist eine preisgekrönte Journalistin mit fast zwei Jahrzehnten Berufserfahrung, hat globale Themen als Produzentin bei Chicago Public Radio behandelt, war Auslands-korrespondentin in Südkorea und Vietnam für The Christian Science Monitor und recherchierte zur Reform des Strafjustizsystems in Chicago für City Bureau.

# IMPACT



## Spring fundraiser and merch launch

- Borderless hosted our Spring Fundraiser at Haymarket House in May. Over 130 people joined us for a joyful night of community, storytelling and sets from DJs Eva Maria and DJ Nunya. The House Party at Haymarket House also featured beverages, appetizers and a writing station where attendees shared their immigration stories.
- Our team launched our first merch line, including branded hats and keychains.



## Community engagement

- Our field canvassers have attended various community events this spring, including Midsommarfest, to hear from residents, distribute resource guides, and share our reporting.
- Our team has met and trained students from local universities to talk about our approach to immigration journalism.
- Borderless hosted a lunch and learn with local business to discuss our reporting and field canvassing efforts.

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# MEET OUR VISUALS EDITOR



Max Herman is a documentary photographer, visuals editor, and former music and arts writer. As a photographer, he has been drawn to stories focused on immigration, police accountability, education, housing rights, and art for over a decade. In 2017, Max began to focus on long-form storytelling – photographing migration conditions and the humanitarian aid response along the Arizona-Sonora, Mexico border for Latino USA. Most recently, Max has worked as a visuals editor, supporting the work of other photographers and illustrators at ProPublica, Borderless, CatchLight and City Bureau.

## **Board Members**

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

## **Staff**

Nissa Rhee, Cofounder & Executive Director  
Mauricio Peña, Chief of Staff  
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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  
Camilla Forte, Photojournalist / CatchLight Local and Report for America

## READER RESPONSES



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

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

*Top: “If we don’t stand up for something, we’ll lie down for everything,” said Gregory Mann, spokesperson from the nonprofit organization for post-incarcerated people, Equity And Transformation (EAT). Immigrant rights advocates and labor organizers denounced President Donald Trump’s immigration policies. Lucy Baptiste/Borderless Magazine*



# STAND TOGETHER, TAKE ACTION TOGETHER

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



[borderlessmag.org/donate](https://borderlessmag.org/donate)