



Q3
REPORT
2025
BORDERLESSMAGAZINE

Our 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Mission

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

Q3 BY THE NUMBERS

45

Stories
published

20

Media
appearances &
mentions

987,000

Total audience reached
during Q3 across five platforms



Cover image: Several flower bouquets, candles, and signs were dropped off at a vigil for Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez along Grand Avenue in Franklin Park five days after he was killed by ICE agents. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine

Previous page image: Engagement reporter Katrina Pham records a video recapping a story in Franklin Park, IL, on Friday, Sept. 12, 2025. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine

Above image: Borderless Cofounder and Executive Director Nissa Rhee talks with supporters at an open house event at HAIBAYÔ in Uptown. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine

MEET OUR NEW CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Carlos
"CJ"
Ortuño



Image: Courtesy of Carlos Ortuño

CJ Ortuño is the Chief Development Officer at Borderless Magazine. He leads the fundraising strategy, including developing our major donor campaign to support our mission of reimagining immigration journalism for a more just and equitable future.

A 20-year nonprofit leader, CJ brings deep expertise in philanthropy, development operations, and systems-building. Before Borderless, he served as Vice President of Philanthropy at Civic News Company—the parent company of Chalkbeat, Votebeat, and Healthbeat. He guided national and local fundraising teams and partnered with editorial leadership to expand support for nonprofit journalism. He previously worked as a Vice President at Teach For America, where he designed and scaled a national training and coaching program for more than 200 fundraisers.

CJ is recognized for building strong teams, establishing clear systems, and developing fundraising strategies that align with an organization's mission and values. He's coached fundraisers at all levels, from board members and reporters to executive directors and campaign volunteers.

He lives in Chicago with his wife and daughter. In his free time, he enjoys reading, working out, attending concerts, and exploring the world of tea.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In August, Borderless cohosted an open house at Haibayô to celebrate the MacArthur and Field Foundations' 2025 Leaders for a New Chicago honorees: Nissa Rhee, our cofounder and executive director, and Hac Tran, Haibayô's cofounder.

More than 100 readers, neighbors, and community members perused local vendors while enjoying speeches from our honorees and live music by DJ Nunya.

The evening featured a special exhibition of Borderless' photojournalism, spotlighting the strength and stories of Chicago's immigrant communities.

This celebration honored visionary leaders shaping the future of our city and served as a powerful reminder that real change is rooted in community.

Images: Borderless staff, supporters, and Chicagoans attend a joint open house event with HAIBAYÔ in Uptown. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine



WHY DO YOU SUPPORT BORDERLESS?

A photograph of three Aztec dancers in traditional headdresses. The headdresses are made of black feathers with gold, purple, and red accents. The dancers are wearing gold jewelry and colorful clothing. They are looking down and appear to be in a procession.

“You all give a voice to to people who deserve to be heard, now more than ever.”

“To support those who are **dedicated to delivering information and resources that are vital for our community** to make right choices and act on them.”

*Images: Aztec dancers lead a procession opening the People's Mass during Fiesta del Sol on Sunday, Aug 3, 2025.
Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT, COURTS AND POLICY

HOW CHICAGO COMMUNITIES ARE RESISTING ICE RAIDS

During a raid in Pilsen, federal immigration agents detained two workers at Don Pedro Carnitas in June.

The raid was part of the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, which has targeted immigrants in everyday settings. In response, local organizers, elected officials, and advocacy groups have developed robust rapid response networks to monitor ICE activity, educate residents on their rights, and support at-risk individuals and families. These efforts, exemplified by Pilsen's Puño network, rely on community collaboration, mutual care, and proactive strategies to protect residents.

TRUMP AND DOJ RESHAPE IMMIGRATION COURT, SPARKING 'WIDESPREAD FEAR AND PANIC'

The Trump administration and the Department of Justice have reshaped U.S. immigration courts with stricter policies, mass firings of judges, removal of protections, and expedited deportations. The Trump administration and the Department of Justice have reshaped U.S.

immigration courts with stricter policies, mass firings of judges, removal of protections, and expedited deportations. These changes have made courts more punitive, with asylum denials rising sharply and fewer immigrants able to access legal representation.

Combined with record ICE arrests and overcrowded detention centers, many immigrants now navigate complex, unfamiliar systems alone, facing long delays, out-of-state detention, and limited communication with lawyers. These changes have created confusion, fear, and vulnerability across immigrant communities.

WHAT RIGHTS DO I HAVE IF ICE STOPS ME ON THE ROAD?

After the fatal ICE shooting of Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez in Franklin Park, legal experts advise individuals to prioritize safety and comply with orders if stopped by agents. ICE requires a warrant or reasonable suspicion to stop individuals.

Drivers may be asked to show their licenses and registration; however, passengers are not required to provide identification. Experts recommend that individuals have documents ready and establish emergency plans. Bystanders should be able to document safely without physically intervening and contact the rapid response groups.

HEALTH AND ECONOMY



LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS STEP UP AS UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS LOSE HEALTH COVERAGE

When Illinois ended the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults program on July 1, over 30,000 undocumented immigrants lost access to healthcare. Many expressed frustration and uncertainty about continuing care.

Our reporting showed that the funding cut disproportionately affects vulnerable communities and places additional strain on hospitals. HBIA had previously saved the state an estimated \$65 million annually by reducing unpaid hospital care. Personal stories, such as Bertha García Silva losing cancer coverage after 30 years in Chicago, highlight the human impact of this change.

Left image: Chicagoan Bertha García Silva said the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults program was her first opportunity to get health insurance. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America.

Right image: People walk past and sit outside the re-opened Argyle Red Line CTA station in Uptown on Thursday, Aug. 7, 2025. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine



CTA UNVEILS NEW ARGYLE RED LINE STATION, BUSINESSES SPLIT ON WHETHER IT WAS WORTH IT

After four years of construction, the renovated Argyle Red Line station reopened as part of the CTA's \$2.1 billion Red and Purple Modernization project.

For business owners Xin He Tang, who survived the pandemic, anti-Asian hate, and previous construction disruptions, the benefits remain uncertain: "It hurt a lot of the businesses here," she said. Some businesses have seen an increase in foot traffic, while others remain concerned about recovering from years of lost customers.

READER RESPONSES

"You tell critical stories that **help our community feel less alone.**"

"I appreciate your community-centered approach to covering vulnerable populations."

Image: Caroline Williams, founder of the Chicago Muslims Green Team stands in the Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary—one of her favorite nature sites in Chicago. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine

AS-TOLD-TO STORIES

MEET THE WOMAN LEADING EFFORTS IN THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY MAKING CHICAGO GREENER

Caroline Williams, 50, an immigrant from Indonesia, channels her Muslim faith into environmental activism.

Founder of the Chicago Muslims Green Team (2018), she promotes sustainable living, supports Chicago's Tree Equity Program, and has requested 500 trees citywide. Her work showcases immigrant leadership and faith-driven climate action in the Islamic community.



SYRIAN-BORN REFUGEE CHASES HER DREAM OF BECOMING A DOCTOR

Hanin Alawad, born in Syria, fled with her family to Egypt in 2011. She excelled in school, studying independently while her mother worked to support her. In September 2024, they resettled in Chicago with help from RefugeeOne.

Despite culture shock, Hanin graduated from high school in nine months. She was accepted to UIC to study biology, aspiring to become a doctor and honor her late grandmother, while building a new life in the United States.

CHANGING MINDS BY SHARING HER STORY: HOW ONE DREAMER FOUND HER VOICE

Ada*, a DACA recipient, navigated uncertainty as a student but found hope through support networks and advocacy. After struggling in high school, she discovered resources for undocumented students at a university. She also joined a student organization, shared her story publicly, and found healing and a sense of community.

Ada emphasized the power of storytelling to raise awareness and change perceptions while coping with ongoing fears of ICE raids.

*Pseudonym

Image: Syrian refugee Hanin Alawad arrived in Chicago last fall and is now attending college. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America.

ARTS & CULTURE

CHICAGO'S GOTH ARTISTS SUPPORT IMMIGRANTS

When ICE raided Don Pedro Carnitas, Chicago's goth community responded with the F—k ICE Benefit Show. Over 100 attendees raised \$1,800 for the National Immigrant Justice Center while Know Your Rights cards were distributed at the merch table.

Our photojournalist, Camilla Forte, documented subcultural solidarity that is often overlooked in immigration organizing. The photo essay features Latino acts, including Fantasma Negra and Grave Love, who say the current raids are affecting every community.

SUMMER FESTIVALS BECOME SITES OF CULTURAL RESISTANCE

As "Operation Midway Blitz" deployed 250 federal agents to Illinois, Chicago's festivals became contested ground. While some festivals were canceled, others adapted to the new circumstances. Fiesta del Sol, for instance, trained volunteers on their rights and designated safety zones, and no arrests occurred.

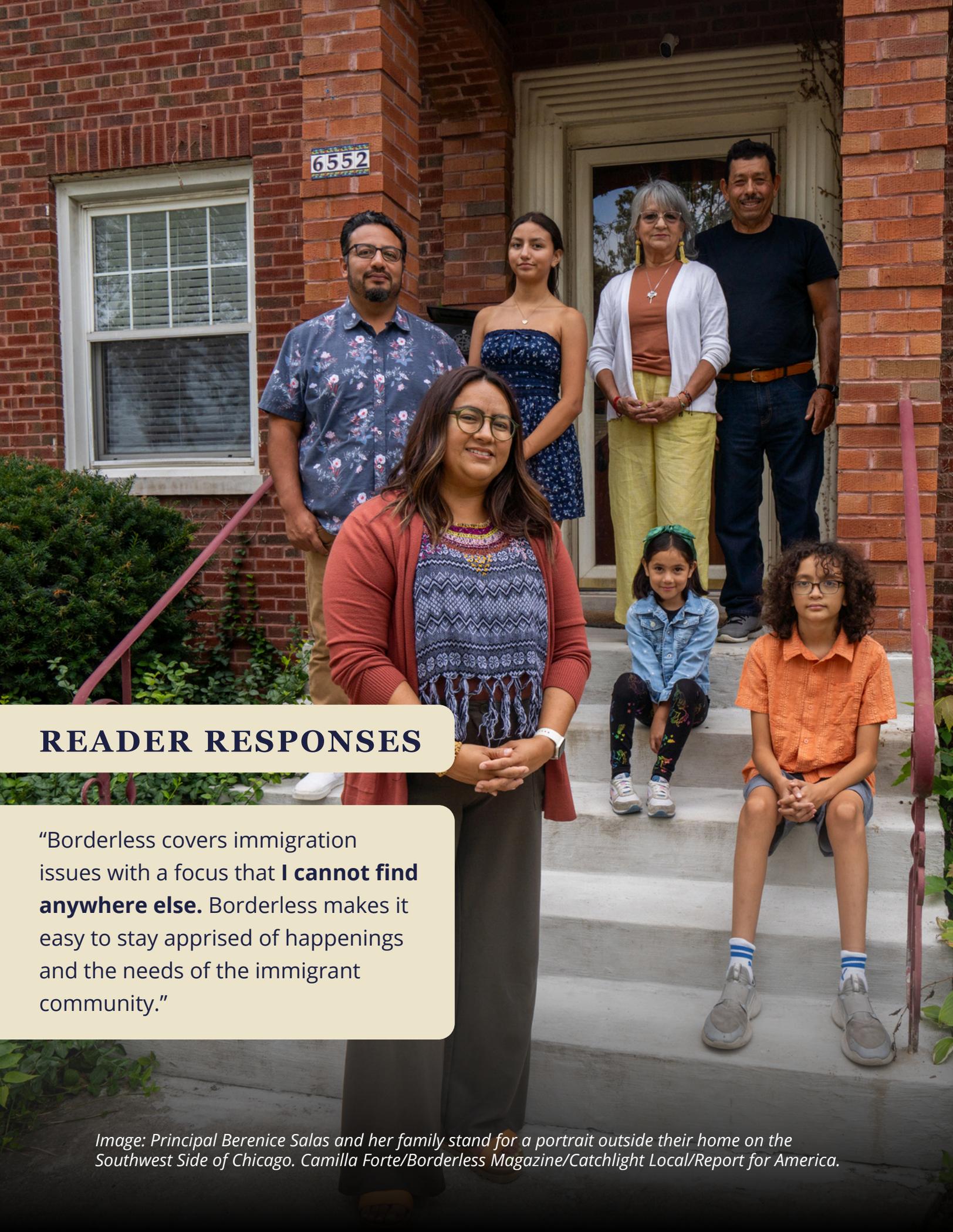
Our reporters covered how organizers navigated a delicate balance of fears over ICE enforcement and preserving traditions. The story documents how celebration becomes a form of political resistance, centering on multigenerational voices from the community who say they are "here to stay."



Left image: Nathali Flores (left) and Chelsea Medina (right) organized a benefit show for the Chicago Gothic Scene after seeing the impact of ICE raids on immigrant communities. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America.



Right image: Aztec dancers kick off the Little Village Mexican Independence Day parade on Sunday, Sept. 15, 2025. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America.



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READER RESPONSES

“Borderless covers immigration issues with a focus that **I cannot find anywhere else**. Borderless makes it easy to stay apprised of happenings and the needs of the immigrant community.”

Image: Principal Berenice Salas and her family stand for a portrait outside their home on the Southwest Side of Chicago. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America.

AMPLIFYING OUR WORK

Borderless expanded its impact through strategic media partnerships, speaking engagements, and content collaborations, which brought its reporting to a broader audience across Chicago and beyond.

LEADING INDUSTRY CONVERSATIONS

Executive Director and Co-founder Nissa Rhee moderated the AAPI Nonprofit and Philanthropic Leadership Series at HANA Chicago Center. The panel highlighted emerging leaders doing critical work in their community. She also joined panels at Inspired Generosity's "From Margins to Mainstream: Advancing Narrative Change" showcase and the LION Publishers Conference in St. Louis, where she discussed how newsrooms can celebrate and communicate their impact.

REACHING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Our reporting appeared in influential newsletters read by policymakers, legal professionals, and advocates, including Politico, Immigration Forum, and the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). These features ensured our investigations reached decision-makers and those working directly in immigration law and policy.



ON THE AIRWAVES

Borderless reporters discussed our reporting on CityCast Chicago. Environmental Reporter Aydali Campa discussed floods and threats to FEMA funds, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's decision to dismiss an environmental discrimination case in Chicago. Reporter Katrina Pham discussed Broadview's ICE processing center and the conflicting narratives surrounding the fatal shooting of Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez.

Marketing and Engagement Manager Diane Bou Khalil co-hosted a virtual book talk at Women & Children First, featuring Alix Dick, Antero Garcia, and Erika L. Sánchez, on the book "The Cost of Being Undocumented."

LOCAL MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

Our reporting was republished by Block Club Chicago and South Side Weekly, among others. These partnerships extended our reach to new audiences.

Image: Engagement reporter Katrina Pham interviews restaurant owner Aa Surinrat on Argyle Street on Thursday, July 17, 2025. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America.



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Photojournalist / CatchLight Local
and Report for America

Image: Borderless staff members pose for a photo at an open house event celebrating Cofounder Nissa Rhee's "Leaders for a New Chicago" award at HAIBAYÓ. Luna Nguyen

BOARD

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Ghazala Irshad

Board Member

Image: Lluvia Ramirez, the senior program manager for the public health division at AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), helps connect people to health services while they wait for pending asylum applications. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America.



**STAND TOGETHER,
TAKE ACTION
TOGETHER**



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Borderless' future with a
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