



**Q1**

**REPORT**

**2026**

**BORDERLESSMAGAZINE**

## **Our Mission**

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

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **On the cover**

*Luis Guillermo fled to the U.S. in 2017 after his work as a journalist put him at risk of government retribution. His Venezuelan passport expired in 2021, and without a consulate, he has no avenue to get the documentation needed to travel anywhere. "I find myself in a golden cage," Guillermo said.  
Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

# Q1 By the Numbers

*Local reporting trusted by our region's 1.7 million immigrants*

**26**

Media  
Appearances

**175**

Professional  
Journalists &  
Students Trained



**9**

Community  
Events

**50**

Stories  
Published

**300K**

Total Audience  
Reached

# Practical Guides for Urgent Moments

*Borderless' community-focused stories and videos help readers navigate policy changes and access essential support*




Oscar Gomez/Borderless Magazine

## *How to get free food*

During Trump's second term, federal SNAP rules changed dramatically, making food harder to access. We broke down the new eligibility changes for our readers and provided crucial context to the complicated system. We also published guides explaining who's affected and where to find local food assistance when benefits fall short.

## *How to vote in the election*

Our step-by-step voter guide covered everything a Chicagoan needed to know for the March primary: how to register, where to vote, your rights at the polls, and language access resources so nothing was lost in translation. We also published a Spanish Instagram/TikTok video to make our work even more accessible to Chicagoans.



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

— Borderless reader

*Mohamad, who relies on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to help feed his family, prepares dinner while his daughters, Shafiqah (right) and Atiekah (left) raid the kitchen for snacks on Jan. 14, 2026.  
Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

# Investigating Deportations

## *Widowed Mexican Father Who Agreed to for Voluntary Departure Didn't Know He Had a Chance to Stay in Chicago*

Jaime, a Mexican immigrant living in suburban Chicago, was detained by federal agents in October 2025 and taken to the Broadview Processing Center. For four days, he was held in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions — sleep-deprived and cut off from legal counsel. When he asked for a judge, agents told him he had a deportation order and pushed him to sign a voluntary departure form.

Believing he had no other choice, he signed

and was deported. But Jaime's attorney had already secured an emergency hearing for him, paving the way for him to stay.

Reporter Aydali Campa spent months reporting on Jaime's case and the urgent questions it raises about coerced departures, language barriers, and the denial of due process. Jaime's son was invited to the State of the Union speech following our story, and the case received national media attention.

*Since his dad was taken by federal agents in October, Jaime Jr. has been taking care of his younger, teenage sisters. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*





*Mariana Peña Ramírez, from Venezuela, lost her 7-year-old son, Adrian, during a fire in her former apartment building in Chicago's South Shore neighborhood. Oscar Gomez/Borderless Magazine*

## **Shining Light on Housing Safety**

*After a deadly fire, a migrant family asks why?*

Mariana Peña Ramírez fled Venezuela and arrived in Chicago in 2023 with her family, seeking asylum and a fresh start. They moved out of a city-run migrant shelter and into a South Shore apartment through a state rental assistance program. Then, in June 2024, a fire — later ruled arson — tore through the building.

Mariana escaped. Her seven-year-old son, Adrian Matias Linares, and her brother-in-law did not. Both died from the fire.

Reporter Fatema Hosseini spent over a year investigating the fire, building code violations, and the state's oversight of the migrant housing assistance program.

“[I donate] 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.”

— Borderless donor



Students react as Lia Sophia Lopez speaks at a rally at Federal Plaza during a nationwide school walkout against ICE on Feb. 13, 2026. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine

# Labor Reporting that Digs Deep

*Our months-long reporting on a development near Chinatown*



Developers are calling it a transformation. Some Chinatown residents are calling it a warning sign. Borderless delved deep into the approved Chicago Fire stadium at The 78 — and the community pushback it's fueling.

Despite promises of jobs, growth, and affordable housing, many say the project

advanced without meaningful input from those most affected. Now advocates are demanding a Community Benefits Agreement to guard against displacement and secure long-promised investments. The story cuts to a familiar tension: large-scale development moving fast, with immigrant communities left fighting to avoid erasure.

*The 78, a vacant tract of land in the South Loop next to Chinatown, will house the new Chicago Fire stadium. Related Midwest and the Chicago Fire held a ceremonial groundbreaking on Tuesday. Second image: Debbie Liu, president of the Ping Tom Park Advisory Council, says without a Community Benefits Agreement, local residents may be affected by gentrification or other impacts from the new Chicago Fire stadium.*

*Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

## Spotlighting Community Leaders

*We spent months photographing and interviewing Latino leaders on how Operation Midway Blitz impacted their work*

Photojournalist Camilla Forte spent weeks interviewing Latino community leaders in Chicago to understand how ICE's escalated actions in fall 2025 affected local immigrants. She then used Borderless' As-Told-To Method to partner with those leaders in telling their stories in their own words, documenting their work through her photography. The stories in her three-part series were among our most-read in Q1.

Camilla first met Diana Martinez, a community health worker in Little Village, while reporting

on a separate story. She returned to Martinez to explore how the crisis continued to shape her work. Through Martinez's first-person account, the piece reveals how she moved women's support groups online and maintained critical health outreach despite fear, isolation, and limited resources.

The story highlights the often-overlooked role of community health workers as first responders in times of crisis—and shows how trust-based care networks became a lifeline for immigrant communities.

*Community health worker Diana Martinez leads her GEMAS group (Grupos de Empoderamiento para Mujeres con Apoyo y Superación) through self-esteem building exercises on Feb. 10, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*





*In September, David Barboza took a break from much of his environmental organizing work through the Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF) to focus on rapid response work during Operation Midway Blitz. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

## *An environmental organizer sets his sights on ICE*

Reporter Camilla Forte revisits environmental organizer David Barboza in this As-Told-To story, tracing how his work shifted during Operation Midway Blitz. After previously interviewing Barboza, she follows up to examine how immigration enforcement reshaped his Southeast Side community.

He describes moving from fighting industrial pollution to rapid response to ICE raids—documenting sightings, sharing Know Your Rights information and supporting neighbors. His account reveals emotional toll and strong power of collective action as organizers built networks to protect one another.

**“You tell critical stories that help our  
community feel less alone.”  
– Borderless donor**



*Ozzy Gámez pays for his wholesale pastry order from Salgado's Bakery in Albany Park on Feb. 3, 2026  
Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

# The Ripple Effects of our Work

*From training students and professional journalists how to better cover immigration to bringing our work to the stage*



*Borderless photojournalist Camilla Forte on stage at CatchLight Live: Sharing What Matters in Chicago on March 31, 2026. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine*

- Borderless staff worked with Northwestern Professor Craig Duff to bring our reporting to the stage in Sanctuary Stories
- Our editorial team appeared on City Cast Chicago, WGN's Outside the Loop Radio, and WTTW Chicago Tonight to discuss our local reporting.
- Borderless was invited to present strategies for engaging immigrant and multilingual communities. at the Online News Conference 2026.
- Borderless journalists co-hosted workshops and public conversations, including Covering Immigration Today and Catchlight Live: Seeing What Matters.
- Executive Director Nissa Rhee was featured in the Belgian publication MO\* Magazine, highlighting Borderless' reporting on immigration enforcement, community resistance, and media coverage in Chicago.

# Our First Strategic Plan

*Cofounder Nissa Rhee will pass the torch in 2026*

## **BORDERLESS** 2026-2028 Strategic Plan

*Equipping immigrants and their loved ones  
with life-changing news and information*

In January 2026, we released our first strategic plan, marking a new chapter in its growth as a community-centered newsroom serving Chicago's immigrant communities.

The plan reflects nearly a decade of organizational maturity, sustained revenue growth, and expanded reporting capacity, including surpassing \$1.2 million in annual revenue and strengthening staff infrastructure. It reaffirms commitment to accessible immigrant journalism and outlines a long-term vision for deeper engagement and sustainability. As part of this transition, Borderless will welcome a new executive director this year.



*Read the full  
2026-2028 Strategic  
Plan by visiting  
**[borderlessmag.org/  
strategic-plan](https://borderlessmag.org/strategic-plan)***

## Staff

**Nissa Rhee**  
Cofounder &  
Executive Director

**Mauricio Peña**  
Chief of Staff

**CJ Ortuño**  
Chief Development Officer

**Siriluck Poontong**  
Finance & Admin Manager

**Diane Bou Khalil**  
Marketing & Engagement Manager

**Hillary Flores**  
Bilingual Deputy Editor

**Max Herman**  
Visuals Editor

**Natalie Giustini**  
Development Associate

**Katrina Pham**  
Audience Engagement Reporter

**Aydali Campa**  
Reporter / Report for America Corps  
Member

**Tara Mobasher**  
Newsletter Writer and Reporter

**Camilla Forte**  
Photojournalist / CatchLight Local and  
Report for America

## Board

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**Demetrio P. Maguigad**  
Board Member

This report was published by Borderless Magazine NFP' in May 2026.  
Any inquiries about this report can be directed to [info@borderlessmag.org](mailto:info@borderlessmag.org)

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TAKE ACTION  
TOGETHER**



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