

Q2 REPORT 2026

BORDERLESS *MAGAZINE*

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On the cover

Rocio Villalva Salgado (left) and Omar Contreras (right) pose for a portrait outside Dulce De Leche Cafecito in Roscoe Village on Monday, May 11, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for Americ

Our Mission

BORDERLESS

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.

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.

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.

BORDERLESS

Q2 By the Numbers

Local reporting trusted by our region's 1.7 million immigrants

25
MEDIA APPEARANCES

36
STORIES PUBLISHED

207K
TOTAL AUDIENCE REACHED

6
COMMUNITY EVENTS

Indian American center volunteers Melanie Ramos (left)and Sonam Mohindra (right) review policy talking points on after boarding the bus to Springfield on May 6, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

MEET OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A lifelong Chicagoan and daughter of Mexican immigrants, Nancy began her career in community storytelling at 15 — and now leads the newsroom into its next chapter.



This spring, Borderless Magazine welcomed Nancy Villafranca-Guzmán as our new Executive Director, ushering in an exciting new chapter for the organization.

A lifelong Chicagoan and the first in her family born in the United States, Nancy is the daughter of Mexican immigrants from Durango and was raised between Pilsen and Mexico.

At just 15 years old, she began working at the National Museum of Mexican Art, an experience that sparked her lifelong passion for preserving culture and elevating immigrant stories.

Nancy brings more than 25 years of nonprofit leadership experience, having served in executive roles at the National Museum of Mexican Art, the Chicago History Museum, the City of Chicago, and PODER, where she led strategy and fundraising for programs serving Spanish-speaking immigrant communities.

She succeeds cofounding Executive Director Nissa Rhee, whose leadership transformed Borderless from a volunteer reporting project into an award-winning nonprofit newsroom.

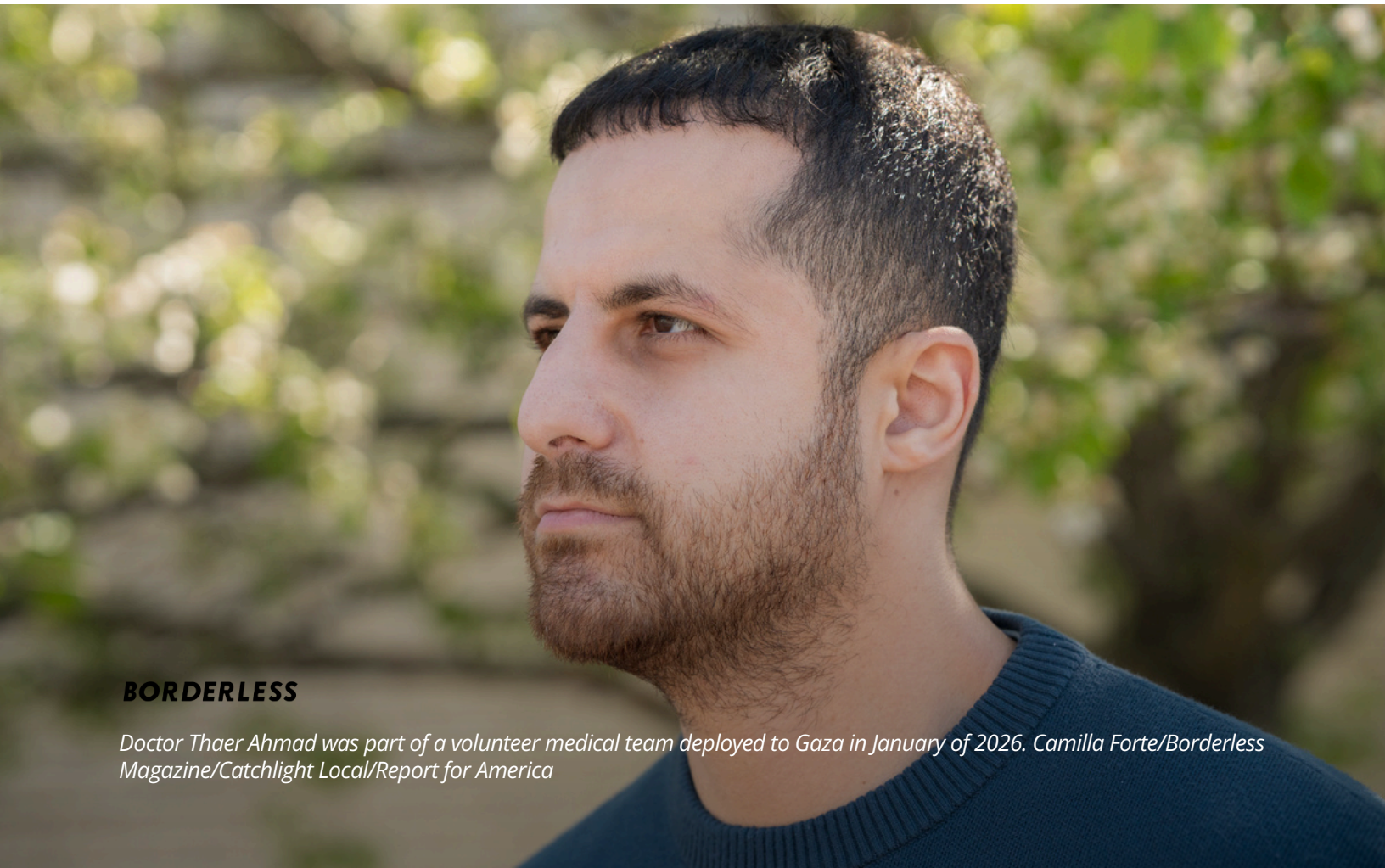
Together, this leadership transition positions Borderless to deepen its community impact, expand multilingual journalism, and ensure immigrant communities continue to have access to trusted, independent reporting.

As-Told-To

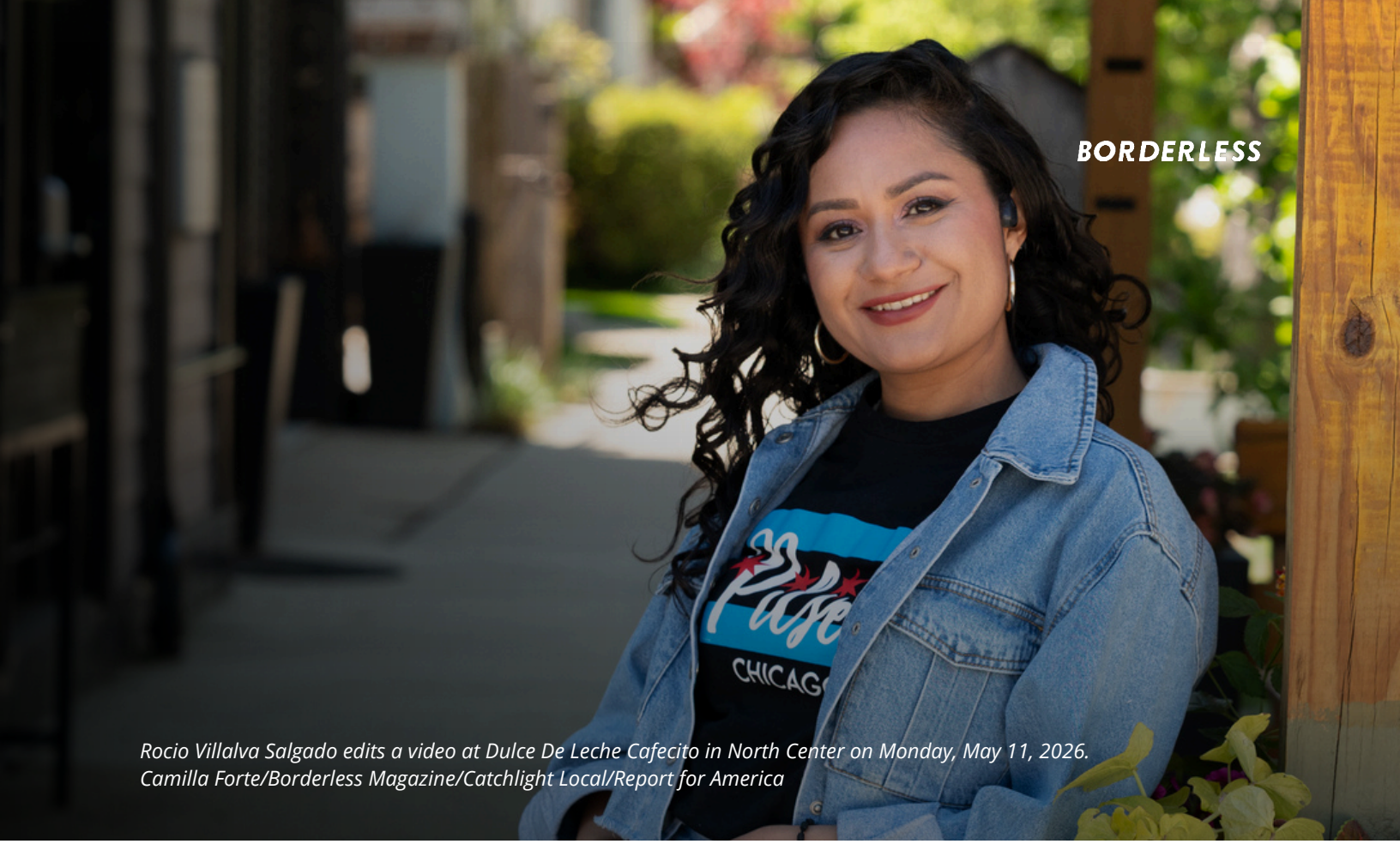
Inside Gaza's Hospitals: Chicago Doctor Reflects on His Mission Amid An Ongoing Crisis

Dr. Thaer Ahmad spent years traveling to Gaza as a volunteer physician prior to 2023. Now, he continues to treat patients in Chicago's South Side while advocating for Palestine's healthcare workers.

When Chicago emergency physician Dr. Thaer Ahmad returned from volunteering in Gaza, Borderless Magazine gave him the space to share his story in his own words. Through his firsthand account, readers witnessed the realities facing healthcare workers providing lifesaving care amid relentless bombardment, dwindling medical supplies and impossible ethical decisions. As a Palestinian American raised in the Chicago area, Dr. Ahmad also reflected on how global conflict deeply affects local immigrant and diaspora communities. By centering lived experience over political rhetoric, Borderless fostered empathy, expanded public understanding and amplified a trusted community voice. The story demonstrated how local journalism can connect Chicago audiences to global humanitarian issues through powerful, community-centered storytelling.



Doctor Thaer Ahmad was part of a volunteer medical team deployed to Gaza in January of 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America



Rocio Villalva Salgado edits a video at Dulce De Leche Cafecito in North Center on Monday, May 11, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

How a DACA Recipient Built a Business While Navigating DACA Uncertainty

Despite barriers to attending college as an undocumented immigrant, this DACA recipient paved her own career path as a content creator to uplift immigrant-owned businesses in Chicago.

When Borderless Magazine profiled Chicago content creator Rocio Villalva, we highlighted how one DACA recipient transformed uncertainty into opportunity. After years of feeling limited by barriers to higher education and an uncertain immigration future, Villalva built a thriving business using social media to uplift immigrant-owned restaurants and small businesses across Chicago. Through her firsthand story, readers gained insight into the realities of growing up undocumented while discovering the resilience, entrepreneurship, and leadership flourishing within immigrant communities. By centering Villalva's voice, Borderless challenged harmful stereotypes and celebrated immigrants' contributions to Chicago's cultural and economic life. The story reinforced our commitment to amplifying lived experiences that foster belonging, inspire hope, and reshape public understanding of immigrant communities.

BORDERLESS

Health is a human right

Immigration policy reaches far beyond the courtroom. Borderless Magazine documented how decisions around healthcare and nutrition shape the daily lives of immigrant families across Illinois.

Our reporting investigated Illinois' new Health Care Sanctity and Privacy Law, which requires hospitals to establish protocols for interactions with immigration enforcement. While the law aims to protect patient privacy and encourage immigrants to seek care without fear, our reporting raised critical questions about enforcement and whether hospitals can safeguard patients when federal agents are involved.





We also explored how changes to SNAP eligibility and federal funding cuts are affecting families, local farmers, and neighborhood markets. By connecting the experiences of vendors, advocates, and families, we showed how reduced food assistance can increase food insecurity while straining the small businesses that rely on SNAP customers.

Together, these stories demonstrated that health equity extends beyond hospitals. Access to healthcare, nutritious food, and safe public institutions is deeply connected and essential to the well-being of immigrant communities.

Enforcement & Courts

What happens when immigration enforcement collides with the justice system?

Our reporting uncovered continued ICE arrests outside courthouses despite new state protections, covered the Illinois Accountability Commission's investigation into Operation Midway Blitz, and examined how Cook County's public defender immigration unit adapted to meet a surge in demand for legal representation.

Together, these stories provided critical context on evolving immigration policies, elevated the voices of those most affected, and held public institutions accountable while helping readers understand the legal challenges facing immigrant communities across Illinois.



Fred Tsao with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) speaks at a press conference to raise awareness about the presence of federal agents outside courthouses on May 7, 2026. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine



I believe strongly in the work Borderless does to draw attention to the inequities and injustices of the current immigration policies.

— Borderless reader

Queer prom attendees dance to Flores Negras' DJ set on June 13, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America



Aisha sheikh, a member of the "I Speak Power" (ISP) leadership program, lines up to board the bus to Springfield on May 6, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

POLICY & ORGANIZING

As federal funding cuts put immigrant healthcare, legal aid and community services at risk, Borderless Magazine documented how Asian American advocates mobilized across Illinois to defend the programs their communities rely on.

As Illinois faced federal funding cuts and mounting uncertainty for immigrant communities, Borderless Magazine reported from the frontlines of Asian American Action Day in Springfield, where advocates urged lawmakers to protect healthcare, legal aid and essential social services. Our reporting connected state budget decisions to their real-world consequences, showing how proposed cuts would affect immigrant families across Illinois. By centering the voices of community organizers, volunteers and first-generation immigrants, we highlighted a movement often overlooked in statewide political coverage. The story also challenged stereotypes about Asian American civic engagement, illustrating how communities are organizing, building coalitions and shaping policy debates. Through accessible, community-centered journalism, we helped readers understand what was at stake—and why these decisions matter far beyond the state capitol.



How Schools Became Safe Havens for Immigrant Students

Amid rising ICE activity, Chicago Public Schools teachers organized on their own time to support undocumented students and families with legal resources, safe passage routes and emergency funds.

As fears of immigration enforcement disrupted classrooms across Chicago, Borderless Magazine reported on how teachers organized outside school hours to support undocumented students and their families. Our reporting documented sanctuary groups that coordinated Know Your Rights trainings, legal resources, safe passage routes, emergency funds and mental health support as students faced mounting anxiety over ICE activity. By centering the experiences of students, educators and families, we illustrated how schools became vital spaces of trust and community care during a time of uncertainty. The story also highlighted the ripple effects of immigration enforcement on attendance, learning and student well-being, helping readers understand that the impact extends far beyond immigration policy and into classrooms, neighborhoods and everyday life.

Schools became vital spaces of trust and community care during a time of uncertainty.

Illustration by Jen Chavez for Borderless Magazine.
Andronike Giannopoulos, librarian and media specialist at a Lincoln Park High School, helped set up a safe passage program to support students who were at higher risk of being targeted by ICE.Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

Service Journalism

BORDERLESS

Beyond the headlines, Borderless equipped immigrant communities with timely guides, expert-backed information, and local resources during moments of uncertainty.



Illustration by Jen Chavez for Borderless Magazine

During moments of uncertainty, our audience turns to Borderless not only to understand what's happening, but also to answer practical questions like:

- Can I still receive food assistance?
- Do I need a REAL ID to travel?
- How do I renew DACA?
- Where can I find an immigration lawyer?
- What do these new Green Card rules mean for me?
- How do I vote in Illinois?

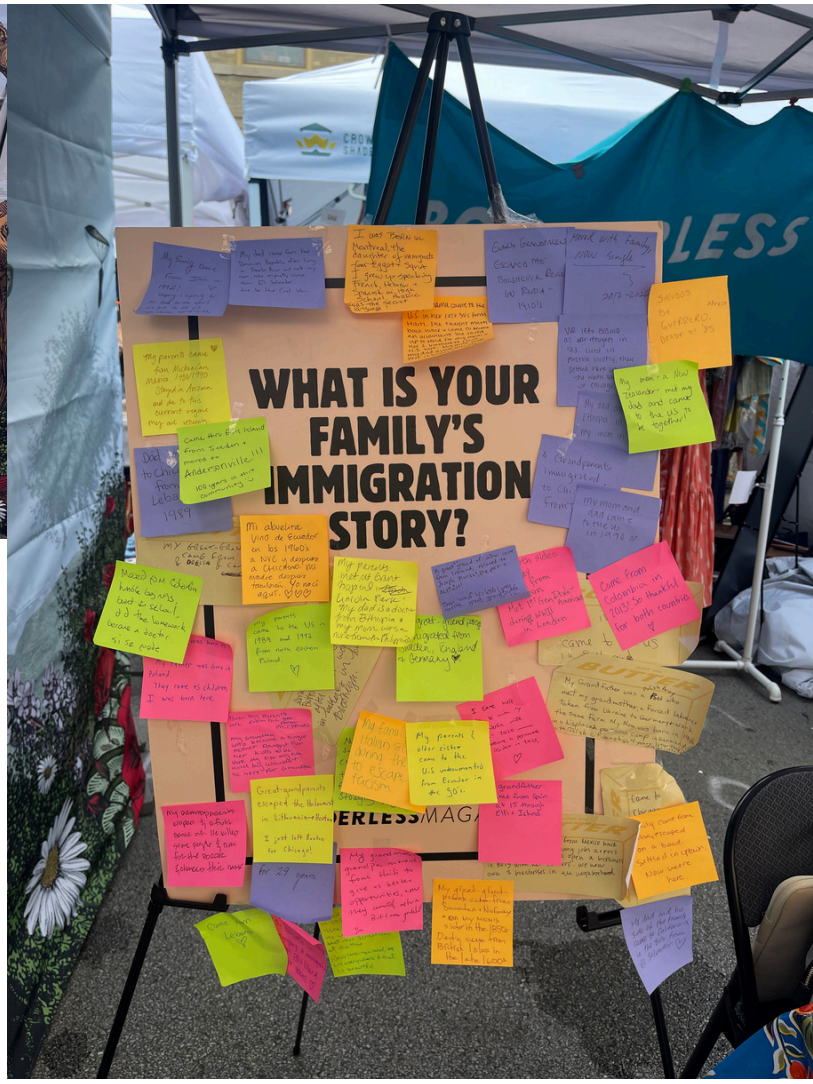
By combining expert reporting with actionable resources, Borderless helps readers make informed decisions, access essential services, and navigate systems that are often confusing and constantly changing.

BORDERLESS

The Ripple Effects of Our Work

From attending community events, training students and professional journalists how to better cover immigration to bringing our work to the stage





Borderless' booth at Andersonville Midsommarfest on June 14, 2026.

- Co-founder Nissa Rhee spoke at Truman College, discussing how Borderless Magazine's reporting helps Chicagoans understand immigration and take action through trusted journalism.
- Camilla Forte participated in a public event at the Chicago Art Department, highlighting Borderless' visual storytelling and community-centered reporting.
- Katrina Pham spoke at the University of Chicago during Immigrant Voices: Telling Chicago's Immigrant Stories, sharing insights on reporting with and for immigrant communities.
- Borderless Magazine hosted a booth at Andersonville Midsommarfest, where staff engaged hundreds of festival attendees through a community storytelling activity inviting people to share their family's immigration story. Visitors also signed up for the newsletter, donated to support Borderless' journalism in exchange for exclusive merchandise, and connected with the newsroom in person.

Staff

Nancy Villafranca-Guzman
Executive Director

Nissa Rhee
Cofounder &
Executive Director

Mauricio Peña
Chief of Staff

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This report was published by Borderless Magazine NFP in July 2026.
Any inquiries about this report can be directed to info@borderlessmag.org

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