

Q3 REPORT 2026

BORDERLESS*MAGAZINE*

Table of Contents

2 Our Mission

3 Q3 By the Numbers

4 Organizational Highlights

5 Arts & Culture

6 Borderless Guidebook

9 Enforcement & Courts

10 Service Journalism

11 Immigration Policy

12 Education

13 Labor & Economics

15 Health

16 The Ripple Effects of Our Work

17 Staff

On the cover

A spectator celebrates after Mexico wins against South Korea during a World Cup viewing at Monochrome Brewing in Pilsen on June 18, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/ Catchlight Local/ Report for America

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.

Q3 By the Numbers

Local reporting trusted by our region's 1.7 million immigrants

45
STORIES PUBLISHED

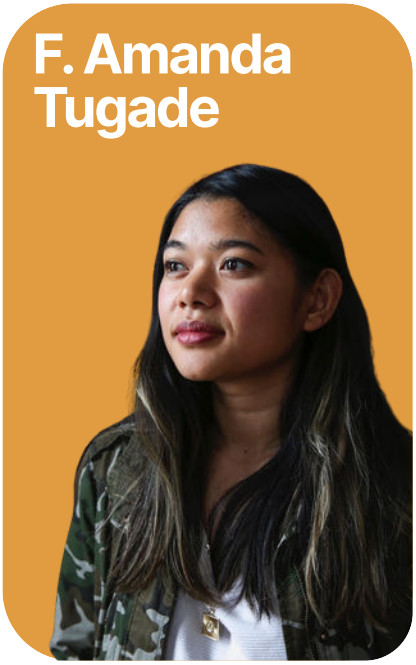
436K
TOTAL AUDIENCE REACHED

$40K
RAISED

138
PEOPLE JOINED CONVERSATIONS ON IMMIGRATION

Juan Angel Chavez (right) discusses skate ramp improvements with a volunteer at Marshfield Courts, a DIY community space in the McKinley Park neighborhood on June 7, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

Organizational Highlights



This quarter, Borderless Magazine welcomed F. Amanda Tugade, who covers the intersection of labor, economy, environment, and health. Her reporting experience brings valuable insight into the issues affecting immigrant communities and the ways policy decisions shape everyday life.

Prior to joining Borderless, Amanda was a reporter at the Des Moines Register, where she covered social justice issues in Iowa, with a focus on housing, food insecurity, immigration and civil rights.

Her stories have appeared in USA Today, Chicago Reader, Chicago Magazine and several suburban publications across the Chicagoland area.

A graduate of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Amanda is a two-time City Bureau fellow and a two-time Peter Lisagor Award winner.



Borderless reporter F. Amanda Tugade speaks with members of Brighton Park Neighborhood Council before a press conference outside Chicago Public Schools headquarters on July 30, 2026. Max Herman/ Borderless Magazine

Arts & Culture







The traditions, shared experiences and gathering places that connect Chicago's immigrant communities.

Photojournalists Camilla Forte and Max Herman captured how World Cup watch parties transformed local gathering spaces into celebrations of cultural identity, while Panini sticker exchanges brought immigrant families and neighbors together through childhood memories, shared traditions, and a love of soccer. These stories revealed how familiar rituals create opportunities for connection, belonging, and cultural continuity.

We also explored how a community theater project used puppetry and storytelling to teach families about trees and neighborhood health, demonstrating how art can make environmental education engaging and accessible.

Left: *Actor Dre Meza plays "Acorn" during Free Street's debut performance of "Touch Grass" at Davis Square Park in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on July 22, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

Through our Borderless Guidebook series, residents introduced readers to the artists, community organizers, independent businesses and gathering places that define McKinley Park, West Ridge and Albany Park. By centering local voices, the series celebrated immigrant contributions and documented the neighborhood histories and relationships that make these communities home.

Middle: *David Rosa wears a luchador mask at the Mexico vs. South Korea World Cup watch party at Monochrome Brewing in Pilsen on June 18, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

Right: *Fans celebrate after Morocco scored their third goal against Canada during a World Cup viewing event at Alhambra Palace on July 4, 2026. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine.*

BORDERLESS

Borderless Guidebook

McKinley Park
West Ridge
Albany Park

Through original reporting and photography by Camilla Forte, Borderless Magazine's Guidebook series explored McKinley Park, West Ridge and Albany Park through the eyes of local residents.

The series highlighted neighborhood businesses, cultural spaces and gathering places while celebrating the people, stories and traditions that make these communities unique. The Chicago Reader amplified the series across print and digital platforms, republishing Borderless' stories in its October food-themed print issue and co-publishing accompanying videos on its Instagram account.

Albany Park

Albany Park native and tattoo artist Brian Nazario introduces readers to the neighborhood's independent businesses, parks, and community gathering places. Through destinations including Salgado's Bakery, Ronan Park, La Fogata, and Nick's Billiard Academy, the guide offers a personal perspective on a neighborhood shaped by generations of immigrant communities.



The Salgado's Bakery on Kimball Avenue serves a mix of sweet and savory pastries. Patrons can also order tortas made to order at the counter. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

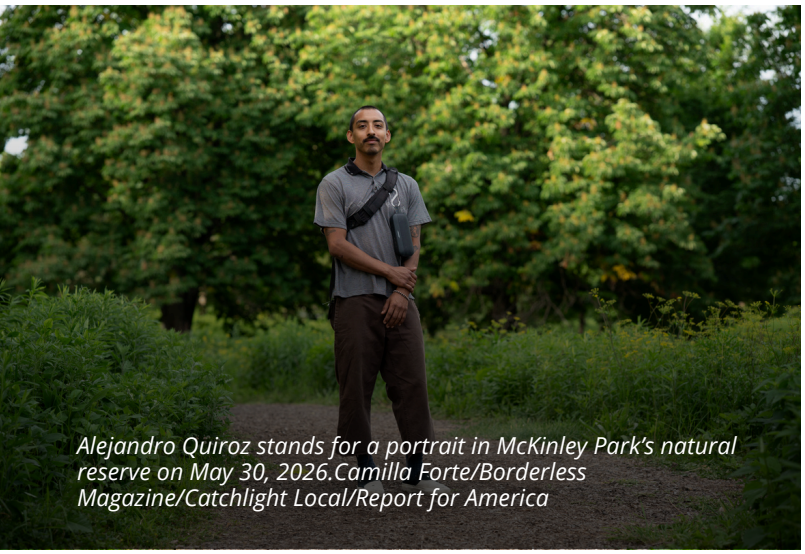


Brian Nazario, who grew up in Albany Park, says that the neighborhood shaped who he is today. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

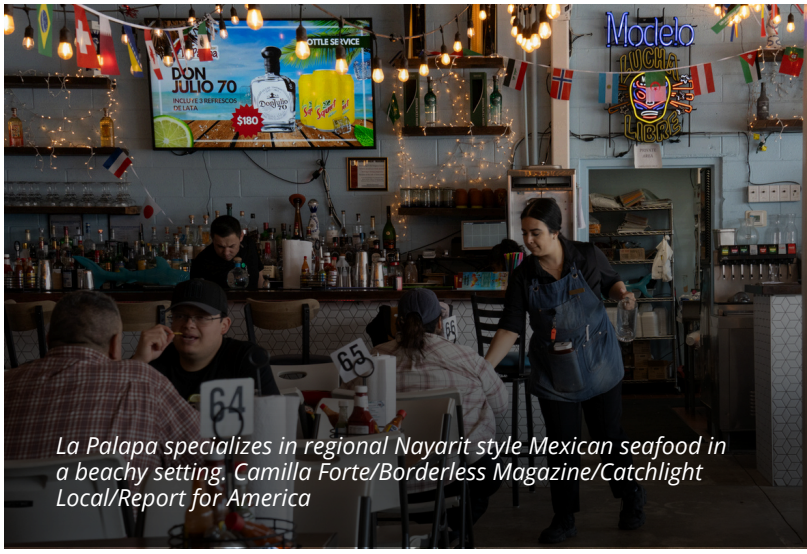
BORDERLESS

McKinley Park

Artist, curator and skateboarder Alejandro Quiroz introduces readers to McKinley Park through the places that have shaped his life and creative community. From independent restaurants and bakeries to skateboarding spaces and local gathering spots, the guide highlights the neighborhood's creative energy and the businesses that bring residents together.



Alejandro Quiroz stands for a portrait in McKinley Park's natural reserve on May 30, 2026.Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America



La Palapa specializes in regional Nayarit style Mexican seafood in a beachy setting. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

West Ridge

Community organizer Bharat Sharma takes readers through West Ridge and Devon Avenue, highlighting the businesses, restaurants and cultural spaces that connect generations of South Asian immigrants. His guide explores how familiar foods, neighborhood institutions and community relationships help residents maintain cultural connections while building a sense of belonging in Chicago.



Sabri Nihiri, a family owned Pakistani restaurant, has been operating in Devon since the 1990s. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America.



Community organizer Baraht Sharma stands for a portrait in West Ridge's Warren Park. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America



Borderless articles have been used in my classes.

— University professor & Borderless reader

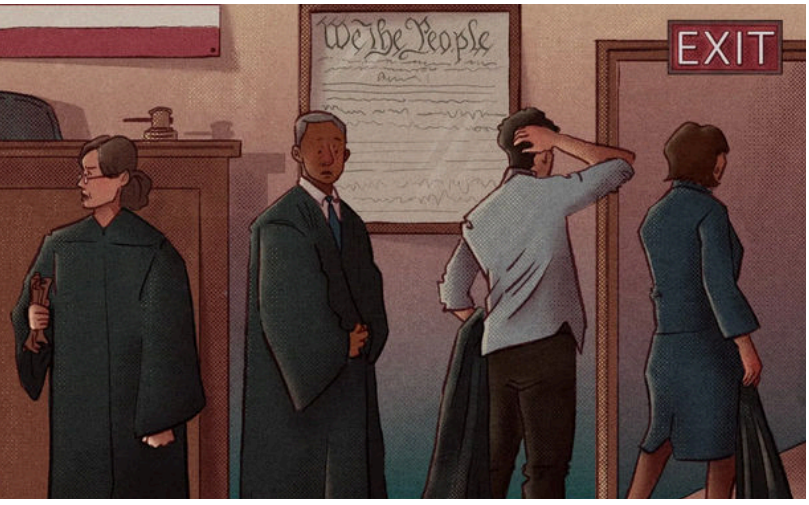
Hijas del Pueblo member Ingrid Alvarenga tends to the community garden the group planted at Silverio Villegas Gonzalez's vigil site on August 27, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

Enforcement & Courts

What happens when immigration enforcement collides with the justice system?

In collaboration with Northwestern University's Medill Investigative Lab-Chicago, Borderless Magazine investigated how the Trump administration's policies were reshaping immigration courts. Through firsthand courtroom observations, student journalists documented fast-tracked asylum hearings, interpretation errors, and language barriers that threatened immigrants' ability to present their cases. Their reporting also examined judicial firings and the growing pressure on immigration attorneys navigating rapidly changing federal policies, raising critical questions about due process and access to justice.

Beyond the courtroom, Borderless documented the lasting impact of immigration enforcement on Chicago communities. One year after Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez was fatally shot by an ICE agent in Franklin Park, reporter Tara Mobasher and photojournalist Camilla Forte captured how residents transformed a roadside memorial into a place of remembrance and solidarity. Our reporting also documented how fear of immigration raids changed daily life at a longtime Chicago day labor hiring corner, where workers and contractors who once gathered regularly were increasingly staying away.





Left: *Illustration by Kailey Ryan for Borderless Magazine*
Right: *Organizers with Hijas del Pueblo, CASA DuPage and The Resurrection Project reveal a painted portrait of Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez outside the Franklin Park Police Department at 9451 W. Belmont Ave. in Franklin Park on Aug. 17, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

Service Journalism

BORDERLESS

When policies change and access to essential services becomes uncertain, reliable information can make a meaningful difference. Borderless Magazine equips readers with practical, accessible guides to help them understand their rights, navigate complicated systems, and connect with trusted community resources.



The reporting

Borderless Magazine published accessible guides to help Chicago residents understand immigration proceedings, food assistance programs, and essential community services. From courtrooms to community resources, our service journalism translated complex policies into practical information readers could use.

Questions we answered

Where can I find mutual aid?

What are "mega master" hearings?

Who qualifies for FRESH assistance?

How can I access mental health crisis support?

Customers browse produce at Los Rodriguez Farms at the Uptown Farmer's Market on May 13, 2026. With the Illinois FRESH benefits, funds can be used at farmers markets, grocery stores and other retailers where Link is accepted. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America



Immigration Policy

Examining how federal immigration policies shape lives and how communities respond to their consequences.

Federal immigration policies continued to reshape the lives of immigrants seeking safety and stability in the United States. Borderless Magazine investigated changes to asylum protections, including efforts to remove asylum seekers to third countries without full hearings and federal funding cuts threatening legal representation for unaccompanied immigrant children.

In original reporting by Tara Mobasher, Borderless examined how communities responded to immigration enforcement on the ground. In Chicago, volunteer rapid responders partnered with tow truck drivers to recover vehicles left behind following ICE arrests, helping families protect their belongings and avoid additional financial hardship.

Sandra Puebla, Commissioner Jessica Vasquez and Stephanie Alejandra Ortega, co-chairs of the Northwest Side Rapid Response Team, collaborated with local tow truck drivers to transport detainees' vehicles back to their families after a person had been picked up by ICE. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine

BORDERLESS

Education

Our reporting examined how education funding, language barriers, and school governance affect immigrant families across Chicago.

Our reporting investigated how proposed federal funding cuts threatened adult education programs, including English language classes, GED preparation and job training. Through the experiences of immigrant learners and local educators, we highlighted how these programs help residents build community, access employment opportunities and navigate everyday life.

As Chicago prepared for its first fully elected school board, Samantha Monje's Beyond the Classroom series amplified the voices of immigrant parents, former students and educators advocating for greater representation and support in Chicago Public Schools. Their stories highlighted the need for bilingual resources, special education services, safer schools, and stronger family engagement.

We also helped readers understand the structure and responsibilities of the Chicago Board of Education, providing accessible information about decisions that affect students and families.



Christine Dussault canvasses in her neighborhood of Albany Park on August 4, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America



First-gen high school graduate Forylan Suarez and his family faced numerous systematic barriers navigating the public school system. Max Herman/Borderless Magazine

Labor & Economics

BORDERLESS

Immigration enforcement also reshapes the local economy.





At a longtime Chicago day labor hiring corner, Borderless examined the economic toll of heightened immigration enforcement. As workers and contractors stayed away, day laborers faced fewer opportunities to find jobs and earn a living, showing how enforcement can disrupt local employment networks.

We also shared reporting on a University of Illinois Chicago analysis estimating $1.2 billion in Cook County business losses associated with 12 months of immigration enforcement. This partner-produced coverage broadened the economic picture, connecting federal enforcement to spending, small businesses and local commercial activity.

A September report on Medicaid eligibility changes for refugees with disabilities also showed how federal decisions can threaten both health coverage and economic stability.

Gualberto Olac waits for work alongside other day laborers on the edge of the Shell gas station on Belmont and Milwaukee Avenues on June 22, 2026. While the corner used to be a bustling hiring site for gig workers, Olac says immigration enforcement has caused it to die down. Both images by Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/ Catchlight Local/ Report for America



Just a note of thanks for all the work you do connect to immigration news in the Chicago area, and to consistently and reliably report on what is happening on the ground, in the neighborhoods and surrounding areas these past few years.

— Borderless reader

The Kimball CTA station, located on the corner of Kimball and Lawrence avenues, is at the heart of the Albany Park neighborhood. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

BORDERLESS

Health is a human right

Access to care, food and a healthy neighborhood is essential.

Changes to federal healthcare policies threatened access to essential services for some of Illinois' most vulnerable residents. Reporter Chelsea Verstegen reported on impending Medicaid eligibility changes affecting refugees with disabilities, highlighting the challenges facing those at risk of losing coverage and the efforts of local advocates working to support them.

Reporter F. Amanda Tugade examined Chicago's Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement (CARE) program, which provides a non-police response to certain mental health emergencies. We explained how the program works, who responds to calls, and how residents can access help through 911. The story highlighted a 51% increase in calls handled by CARE following its citywide expansion, underscoring the growing use of alternative crisis response services.





Beyond healthcare access, we highlighted how a community theater project used puppetry and storytelling to educate residents about the importance of trees and their connection to neighborhood health. Through performances in parks on Chicago's South and West Sides, the project made environmental education engaging and accessible to local families.

Left: *Mustafa Rfat is an assistant professor of social work at the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Grace Abbott School of Social Work. Originally from Iraq, Rfat, who has a form of arthritis, says that access to Medicaid when he arrived in the U.S. enabled him to complete his education. Rebecca Gratz for Borderless Magazine*
Right: *Dr. Melissa Argüelles (left) and EMT Marta Green (right) check that all necessary paperwork is packed in the CARE (Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement) van before heading out for a shift on Sept. 14, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America*

BORDERLESS

The Ripple Effects of Our Work

Expanding the reach of immigrant-centered journalism through partnerships, collaboration, and community engagement.



Reporter Tara Mobasher speaks with CALOR representatives about their mobile testing sites on July 24, 2026. Camilla Forte/Borderless Magazine/Catchlight Local/Report for America

Newsroom Collaborations

Through partnerships with Chalkbeat Chicago, Block Club Chicago and 15 West, Borderless shared reporting that connected readers with additional coverage of immigration enforcement, education and issues affecting Chicago neighborhoods.

Beyond the Byline

Our reporting on Chicago day laborers was shared by Politico and The Forum Daily, while Public Narrative featured our investigation into federal funding cuts affecting unaccompanied immigrant children.

Our reporting on Chicago's CARE mental health response program was also highlighted in a City of Chicago press release, bringing additional attention to the need for accessible crisis services.

Staff

Nancy Villafranca-Guzman
Executive Director

CJ Ortuño
Chief Development Officer

Siriluck Poontong
Director of Finance & Admin

Diane Bou Khalil
Director of Marketing & Partnerships

Hillary Flores
Editorial Director

Max Herman
Visuals Editor

Natalie Giustini
Development Associate

Tara Mobasher
Newsletter Writer and Reporter

Camilla Forte
Photojournalist / CatchLight Local and Report for America

F. Amanda Tugade
Reporter

Board

Maty Ortega Cruz
Chair

Nick Tarasen
Secretary

Shapelle Pisano
Treasurer

Suzanne Franklin
Board Member

Ghazala Irshad
Board Member

Demetrio P. Maguigad
Board Member

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

Borderless Magazine NFP is a registered 501(c)(3) charitable organization, EIN 83-1266434.
© Borderless Magazine NFP, 2026. All rights reserved.

STAND **TOGETHER**, TAKE ACTION **TOGETHER**

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

borderlessmag.org/support-borderless