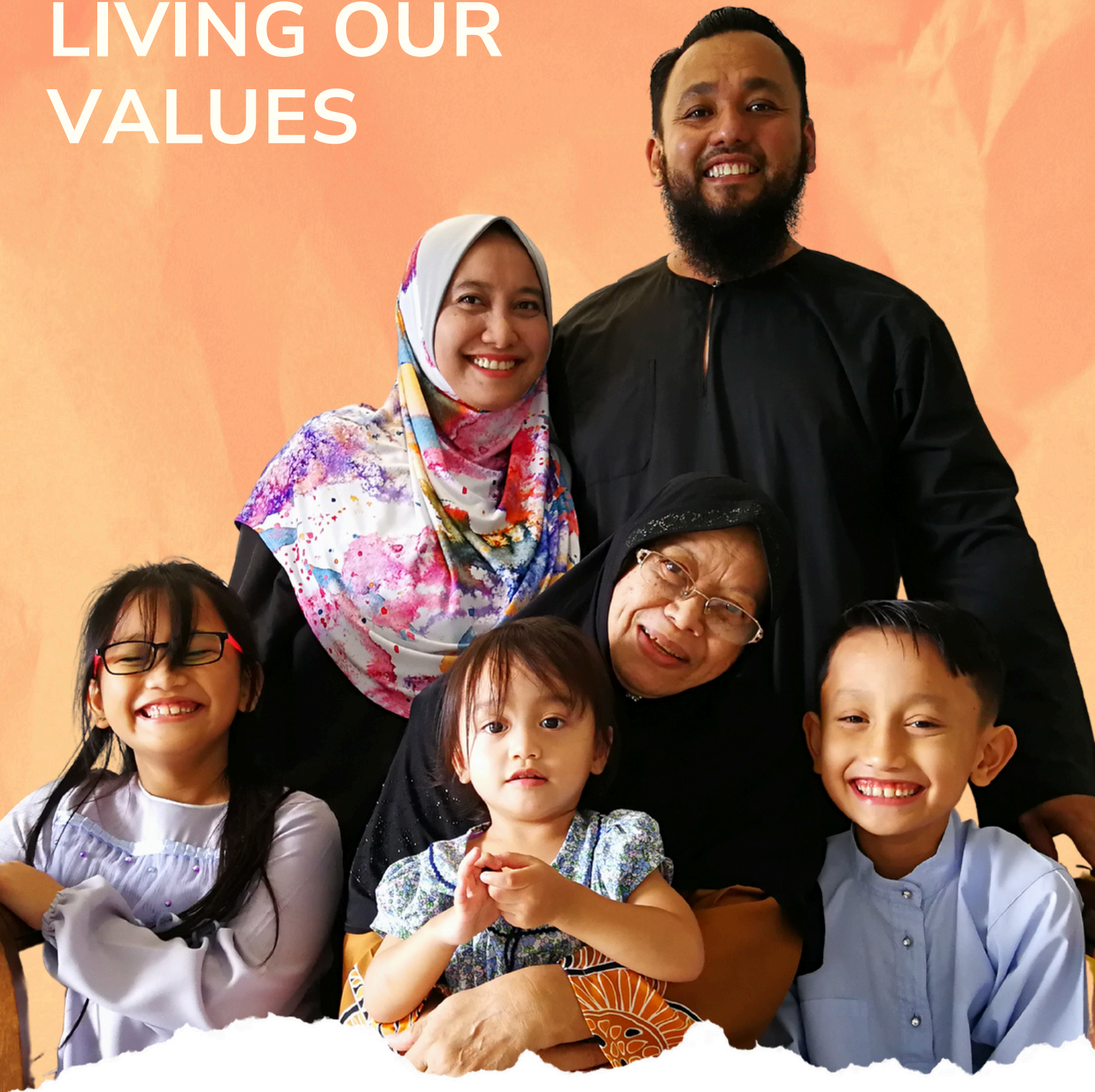


LIVING OUR VALUES



ANNUAL REPORT
2024



Immigration
Law & Justice
Network

A WORD FROM OUR CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Dear Friend,

On behalf of the ILJ Network staff and board of directors, we are pleased to present our 2024 Annual Report, Living Our Values. This past year we worked hard to live into our values of justice, community, and being brave leaders in our field. These values reverberated into every corner of our work.

We doubled down on our commitment to center impacted immigrants. Our office established a mental health assessment fund for asylum seekers at our sites. This fund covers the costly psychological screening that is needed for a successful asylum case in court. We continued to support language access for Black and Indigenous clients across the network by covering the costs of interpretation and translation through our Rev. Lupita Alonso-Redondo fund. Last but certainly not least, we centered the voices of impacted immigrants and migrants in our national advocacy work through our “Migrants Speak” series. Along with key partners, we held four national webinars to uplift the voices and experiences of immigrants directly impacted by harmful immigration policies.

We hosted legal staff, executive directors, and board chairs from all of our sites at our national conference in Omaha, Nebraska. There, we focused on learning to strengthen our organizational development in ways that align with our values. We took a hard look at management techniques, workplace culture, working with intergenerational teams, and conflict resolution. Our programming addressed the fact that we need strong ground beneath us to do the critical and complex work required now.

Because this is a historical moment.

In our 25 years of serving immigrant communities, we have never experienced a legal and political environment this heedlessly cruel and violent towards immigrants. The challenges and threats we face in this new Trump era are unprecedented.

As we write this letter, ICE agents are carrying out thousands of raids and separating immigrant families. Politicians from both major political parties continue to unjustly criminalize and marginalize immigrants. There is a staggering backlog of 3.8 million cases in immigration court, pathways for immigration relief are being extinguished by the Trump Administration, the border is essentially closed, and 120,000+ unaccompanied children are without counsel.

This moment requires safe, trustworthy, and expert immigration counsel. It requires a bold voice to speak truth to power. It requires a serious challenge to the violation of our rights.

And we are rising to meet this moment.

Collectively, our sites have served nearly 7,000 low-income immigrants this year. Almost 2,000 of these clients are children who are not automatically afforded a lawyer in immigration court. Just about half of our clients are seeking immigration relief to escape violence. We are often the only service provider in our communities willing to provide full representation to unaccompanied children, to those in removal proceedings in court, or to see a case to its conclusion.

Thanks to our supporters’ unwavering belief in ILJ Network’s mission, we are ready to face the next four years. Together we will continue living our values by placing immigrants at the center of our work, bolstering our phenomenal network of immigration nonprofit legal services providers, and providing a central and unified voice in defense of immigrant communities.



Melissa Bowe

MELISSA BOWE

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

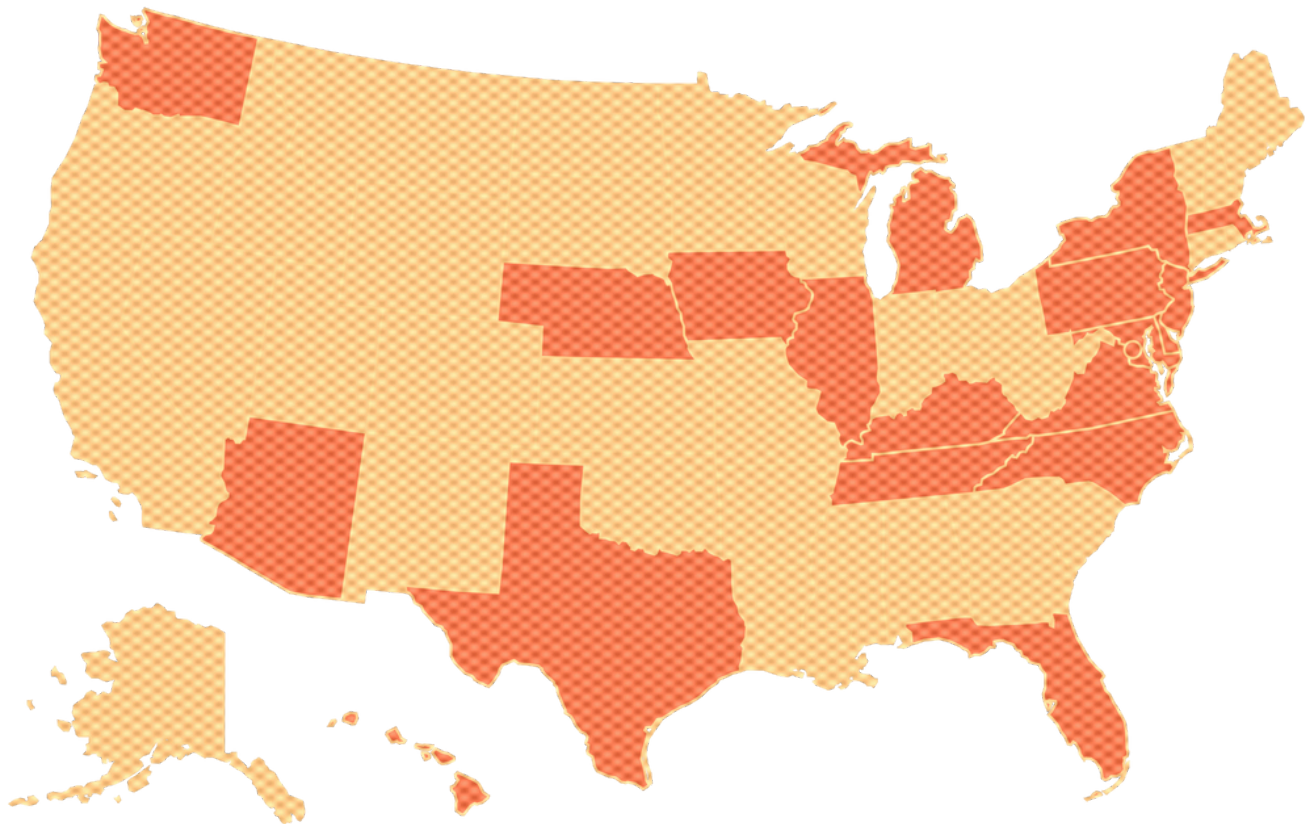


Alba Jaramillo

ALBA JARAMILLO

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our Footprint



“We will fight for our clients across the country and we will fight for the kind of America we believe in.”

- Co-Executive Director, Melissa Bowe



Vision

A nation where every immigrant has access to justice in an anti-racist immigration system that honors the dignity of all people.

Mission

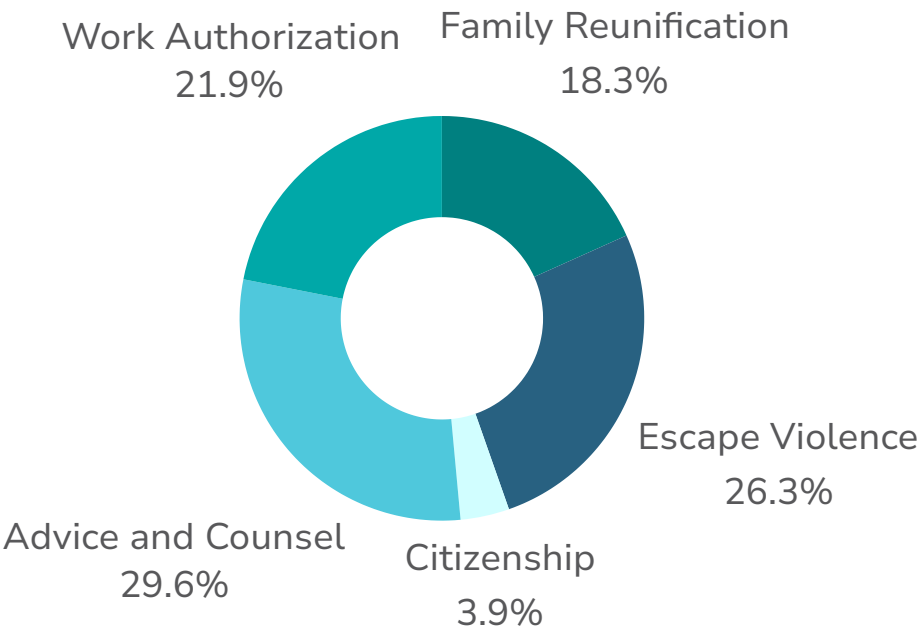
Immigration Law and Justice Network is passionately engaged in serving immigrants as they seek legal status in the United States, by providing free or low-cost expert legal counsel, advocacy, and support services. Through 19 affiliated sites across the country, we pursue justice for all those we serve, while offering a sense of safety, trust, and belonging.

ACROSS OUR NETWORK

142 LEGAL STAFF
6,582 CLIENTS
22,434 CASES



Case Types Across the Network



Family Reunification
4,102 Cases



Work Authorization
4,915 Cases



Escaping Violence
5,909 Cases



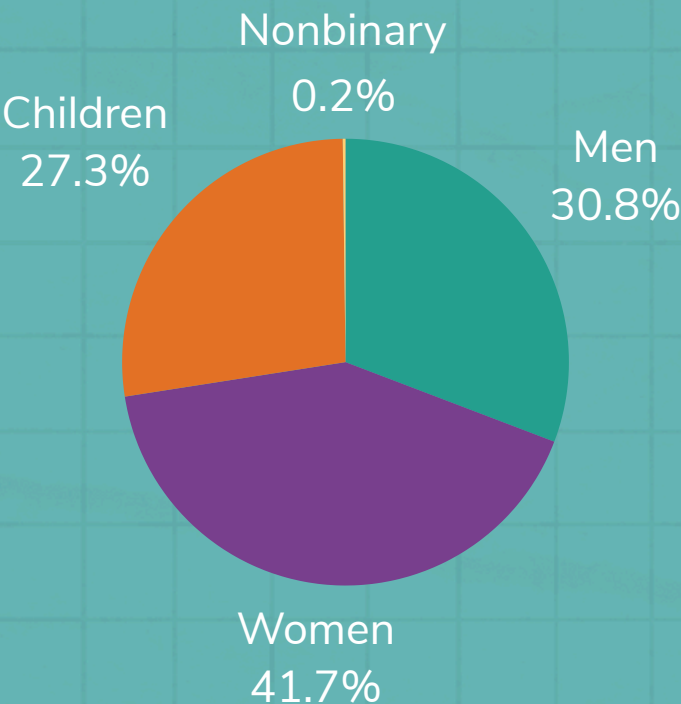
Citizenship
876 Cases



Advice & Counsel
6,632 Cases

22,434 Total Cases

GENDER



TOP 20 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

129 Total Countries of Origin

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Mexico | 11. Congo (DRC) |
| 2. Honduras | 12. Ecuador |
| 3. Afghanistan | 13. Peru |
| 4. Guatemala | 14. Myanmar |
| 5. El Salvador | 15. Haiti |
| 6. Venezuela | 16. Dominican R. |
| 7. Ukraine | 17. Sudan |
| 8. Colombia | 18. Jamaica |
| 9. Cuba | 19. Thailand |
| 10. Nicaragua | 20. Eritrea |

Stories & Programs



Surviving Labor Trafficking

Trafficking survivors on the path to new lives in Nebraska

They were indigenous farmers from Guatemala, where years of drought and crop failure had forced them to seek work on other men’s farms. A trafficker enticed them to Nebraska with promises of steady jobs and good pay.

But in this rural corner of the state, the men labored in unsafe and unsanitary conditions for ten hours a day, seven days a week. Temperatures soared up to 120 degrees, but they were denied sufficient water breaks. They were shouted at and threatened if they didn’t work fast enough.

As for pay, it was infrequent and far less than promised. The owner forced them to cash their checks at his hotel in town —after first taking “his cut.” They were required to buy their personal items at the “company store.” The men saw their debt spiraling, with no hope of sending money home to their families.

But complaining—or leaving—was out of the question. The owner appeared to control the entire area. The men were kept isolated. They spoke no English and very little Spanish. And no one on the outside noticed what was going on.

The men continued working—months, even years—before the owner was finally caught, charged, and sentenced to prison.

Some of his victims went elsewhere to find similar jobs in less harsh conditions, unaware that they could be eligible for a T Visa, specifically designated for survivors of human trafficking. Many others became clients of Astrid Munn, attorney for CIRA (Center for Immigrant and Refugee Advancement, our ILJ affiliate in Nebraska).

“The harm the trafficker caused them—the verbal abuse, the manipulation, the threats, the inhuman conditions—it doesn’t leave them,” Astrid says. “I don’t know that it ever will.”

SPEAKING UP FOR CHANGE

OUR ADVOCACY

Migrants Speak Series

In 2024, we hosted a series of impactful webinars that highlighted the lived experiences of migrants and underscored the urgent need for systemic reform, reaching nearly 1,000 attendees.

- **Stop the War on the Border:** This webinar revealed the human impact of restrictive asylum and humanitarian parole policies, featuring voices from the northern Mexican border and the U.S. interior.
- **CBP One App:** Through testimony and art, including a scene from *Dos Nogales* by Hugo Salcedo, migrants at the Southern border highlighted the struggles of accessing the asylum system and the dangers faced while waiting for entry.
- **Climate Change, Displacement, & Conflict:** Environmental defenders, Indigenous leaders, and frontline communities spoke about the intersection of climate crises, displacement, and extractive industries, emphasizing the human cost of environmental degradation and the need for justice.
- **Immigration Detention and Incarceration:** Migrants shared personal accounts of the challenges faced in detention facilities, shedding light on a system that detains over 40,000 immigrants daily and its devastating effects on families.

Advocacy Calls

Through monthly advocacy calls, we provide a space for staff and board members across the network to discuss federal immigration policy changes, local advocacy initiatives, resources, and opportunities to collaborate.



"STOP THE WAR ON THE BORDER: MIGRANTS SPEAK"
WEBINAR



FEB. 15, 2024
3-4 PM EST

Climate Change, Displacement, & Conflict:

3 PM ET



MIGRANTS SPEAK

Webinar

CBP ONE™ APP: MIGRANTS SPEAK WEBINAR

FRI. APRIL 19TH, 2024 - 4 PM EST

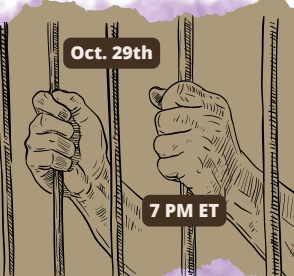
A PLAY READING OF A SCENE FROM *DOS NOGALES* BY HUGO SALCEDO AND FIRSTHAND MIGRANT TESTIMONIES



IMMIGRATION DETENTION & INCARCERATION: MIGRANTS SPEAK

Oct. 29th

7 PM ET



In Our Kentucky Home

Nati escaped a life of abuse to find a safe home with her sister. But will she be allowed to stay or deported back to danger?

The two sisters sat closely together, Nati tightly grasping Dayana's hand. "I need to keep Nati here with me so I can protect her," Dayana told Katie Taylor, legal director for Neighbors Immigration Clinic (NIC). "Because nobody else will."

When Dayana found out that her little sister—just 13 years old—was being sexually abused by family members in her own parent's house, she knew she had to bring Nati to her home in Kentucky. Her parents wouldn't lift a finger to stop the abuse. And the police would do even less.

The sisters had come to NIC—one of the few nonprofits providing expert immigration legal counsel in the entire state—for help.

Children like Nati, who cannot be reunited with their parents due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment, are eligible for SIJ (Special Immigrant Juvenile) status. There is a long backlog of these cases throughout the United States, but SIJ status can lead to a green card (permanent residency) for these minors and provide safety and stability to their lives.

However, pursuing SIJ status is more difficult in Kentucky than in other states. Many of the judges in the state's juvenile court—like the one who presided over Nati's case—do not understand or are uncomfortable with the process. Dayana fought very hard to keep her sister safe. Her attorney—and the entire NIC office—fought right alongside her. It took months of hearings, providing documentation, and arguing the relevant points of law before the judge finally ruled in Nati's favor.

The ruling came just in time for their first Christmas together at home in Kentucky.

MEETING THE MOMENT OUR FUNDS

Rev. Lupita Language Access Fund

The Rev. Lupita Alonso-Redondo Language Access Fund was established in 2023 to help meet the cost of expert interpretation and translation services for hard-to-reach languages primarily spoken by Black and Indigenous clients across the ILJ Network.

In 2024, we were able to fund 58 cases for interpretation and translation, offering language access for clients speaking languages including Haitian Creole, K'iche', Lingala, Mixteco, and more.

"This fund was necessary in being able to provide the language access some of our clients needed to move their case forward."
- Nanor Wong | Staff Attorney | The Legal Clinic

Mental Health Assessment Fund

Immigrant survivors of cartel violence, government torture, femicide, LGBTQIA+ persecution, and ethnic cleansing flee their homelands, desperately seeking safety in the United States. Immigration attorneys in our network need psychological affidavits to substantiate the trauma suffered by their asylum clients and the validity of their petitions in immigration court.

In 2024, we launched the Mental Health Assessment Fund to support our asylum-seeking clients. These assessments can be costly and burdensome, so we are proud to provide access to this new fund to help strengthen asylum applications across our network.

"We represented an asylum seeker from Cuba who had experienced threats on account of her anti-government political opinion. Due to numerous health issues, the client suffered from memory loss and was very anxious about her immigration court hearing. I requested financial assistance from ILJ's Mental Health Assessment Fund for cognitive testing to document the client's impairments. Without ILJ's support, this client would not have been able to afford the forensic testing that was key to protecting her against deportation."
- Tori Andrea Babington | Managing Attorney of Rural Programs | Just Neighbors



Roundtable

Our annual in-person conference offers trainings and workshops for attorneys, executive directors, and board members from all ILJ sites. Sessions address a wide array of topics such as conducting a removal hearing, psychological safety in the workplace, and managing federal funding. Beyond education, the conference fosters connections, celebrates our host city, and aims to be a source of joy and encouragement.

Trauma-Informed Programming

We hosted Collective Care Circles that create a safe space for ILJ attorneys to share their experiences and receive support from a trained professional. We believe that meaningful rest is essential to sustaining this work and provided a training on the benefits of implementing a renewal leave policy, which allows employees to take several weeks of paid leave every 5-7 years of employment. We also offered an Employee Assistance Program to ensure access to free therapeutic counseling.

Consulting Attorney Model

We drew upon our community of experts to provide a unique and comprehensive legal support model for attorneys and Department of Justice representatives throughout our network. Four consulting attorneys led efforts to build the capacity of ILJ attorneys by providing case strategy, legal updates, one-on-one mentoring, and guidance on building an effective law practice. Consulting attorneys also conduct in-person site visits to audit cases, assist site leadership with various aspects of running a legal program, and undertake projects beneficial to the network as a whole.



Attorneys from across our network attending the 2024 AILA Conference in Chicago

Our Staff & Board



Alba Jaramillo, J.D.
Co-Executive Director



Melissa Bowe, J.D.
Co-Executive Director



Carlos Reyes Rodríguez
Culture & Outreach Manager



Farah Ashurova
Program Development Specialist



Genesis Lazo Walker
Network Manager



Laura Sonnenmark
Communications & Events Manager

Rev. Dr. Chris Pierson, Chair
Senior Pastor
Gary United Methodist Church
Wheaton, Illinois

Vidal Cordova, Secretary
Physician Assistant
Attorney at Law
San Diego, California

Michele Fantt Harris
CEO & Managing Partner
MFH Associates
Washington, D.C.

Myrna Orozco Gallos
Social Justice Leader & Philanthropic Strategist
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
Houston, Texas

Diana Pliego, Vice-Chair
Senior Strategist
National Immigration Law Center
Washington, D.C.

Rev. Hannah Bonner
Senior Paston
Hollywood United Methodist Church
Los Angeles, California

Rev. Joseph Kim
Lead Pastor
Bethell United Methodist Church
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Executive for Economic and Environmental Justice
United Women in Faith
New York, New York



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