

THE IMMIGRANT ADVOCATE

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← WINTER

2021

MESSAGE FROM THE ILRC

By Sally Kinoshita | ILRC Deputy Director



My grandmother's

identity was always a bit of a mystery. Not because she lived a life of espionage or intrigue. On the contrary, as an immigrant woman in Hawaii who had only two years of education and never learned to speak English, she didn't wander far from the familiar routine and surroundings of her home in Honolulu's Chinatown. Nevertheless, she veiled her name and date of birth in secrecy because, like many "paper son and daughter" immigrants of her generation, she had used a fake name and fraudulent papers to circumvent the Chinese Exclusion Act, and never shed the fear that she could be discovered and deported. Only upon her death did she reveal her real name to her children when they saw it etched on the headstone at her gravesite.

As Congress once again considers proposals to grant undocumented immigrants a pathway to citizenship, I reflect upon how our immigration laws can erode a person's identity, humanity, and self-worth and what the enduring threat of deportation meant for my grandmother and for the millions of others like her who continue to live in the United States without immigration status. The political discourse about immigration is so often about what immigrants do to the United States—fueling the economy, industry, innovation, and culture. But what about what the United States does to the millions of immigrants that we rely on but do not welcome?

This country asks immigrants to prove their worth with dollar amounts, good grades, awards earned, produce picked, or spotless background checks. We ask them to wait—sometimes for decades and generations—while we decide if they are deserving of a stable future, family, or home in this country. And, in questioning these things and casting doubt on their basic humanity, this nation sends immigrants the message that they should walk with heads bowed, voices low, expectations even lower.



At the ILRC, we instead support immigrants to raise their voices to push for the policies that most impact and benefit them and their families. Whether it's promoting immigrant leaders and organizers in setting a vision for the future, advocating for the most meaningful policies at the federal level, or training our legal services and community-based partners to provide high quality, accessible services, the ILRC is committed to ensuring the greatest number of immigrants benefit from the most inclusive legalization program possible.

My grandmother was not a CEO, a Nobel Prize winner, an investor, or an artist. She didn't contribute greatly to the economy, propel innovation, or promote cultural diversity. She just was the cultural diversity because her traditions, language, food, and superstitions were all she knew. Instead, like many undocumented immigrants, one of the greatest gifts she brought to this country was resilience and resourcefulness.

I'm proud to be at an organization with a 40+ year track record fighting for immigration laws and policies that would allow millions of undocumented immigrants to become permanent residents—not because they have high paying jobs, a college STEM degree, a lucrative business, a squeaky-clean criminal record, or an exceptional skill or talent—but because we value and welcome them for the humanity and culture they bring just by being themselves. 

Photo: Yuk Kwai Chun (aka Kwei Fong Wong)

THE FIGHT FOR A PERMANENT INCLUSIVE LEGISLATIVE SOLUTION: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CONGRESS

BY SAMEERA HAFIZ, POLICY DIRECTOR

Things in Congress are changing fast. What follows below are ILRC's perspectives based on what we know as of December 1, 2021.

2021 began with pervasive optimism that this could be the year the multi-decade quest for a permanent inclusive legislative solution for our country's undocumented members could be realized. Democrats in control of both houses of Congress as well as the White House—and with many campaign promises to keep—strategized that using the reconciliation process would be an effective tactic to advance its broad agenda. The process of reconciliation would allow Democrats to pass a bill without Republican support. This strategy birthed the Build Back Better (BBB) bill which passed the House of Representatives in November and is now before the Senate for consideration. BBB is a massive piece of legislation that addresses among other things COVID relief, social safety net

programs, and climate change. Nestled among the pages of BBB are immigration provisions that attempt to respond to the calls of the immigrant rights movement for immigration relief.

Originally, as a result of the fierce advocacy of the immigrant rights movement, BBB included provisions that would have granted a pathway to citizenship for certain members of the undocumented community. Unfortunately, the Senate parliamentarian twice opined that a pathway to citizenship falls outside what is acceptable for the reconciliation process and Democrats removed these provisions from the bill. At this current stage, the immigration provisions of BBB no longer provide a pathway to citizenship. Rather, BBB's provisions provide a temporary parole status that would allow recipients to obtain a five-year work permit and permission to travel. To be eligible, an individual must have entered the US before January 1, 2011 and meet a multitude of other eligibility requirements. It is estimated that 6.5 million undocumented individuals could be eligible under this program. Under the BBB, this parole protection could be renewed one time but would end by September 30, 2031.

The ILRC has been actively advocating for a permanent and inclusive legislative solution. We have been fighting for immigration relief that would not treat individuals who have had contact with the criminal legal system as disposable and which would create a pathway to citizenship. Though the provisions of BBB fall significantly short of our vision for immigrant justice, the ILRC is gearing up to educate the immigration field, including community members, practitioners and advocates, if a program is enacted. We are committed to ensuring that our community members—including low-income immigrants of color—can access all available relief.





Thank You!

BY CYNTHIA TIRADO HOUSEL

Growing up, I thought I would become an immigration attorney. I remember the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 bringing hope to the Echo Park community in L.A.—as well as to thousands across the country—who had a chance to gain immigration status. As a US citizen child of immigrant parents, I was not privy to the pressures, fear, or stresses of not having status, but I could still feel an energy and excitement wherever I went.

While this was an opportunity for many, there were still many others who were left behind due to a lack of accessible legal resources. I remember hearing stories that broke my heart. The one about the neighbor who had enlisted the services of a “notario” to help them complete their paperwork only to get swindled of thousands of dollars and still have no application to submit. Their hopes were dashed because they could not afford to try again. I wondered how people could be so cruel to other people just looking for a chance to call this country their home. If only they had been able to engage an immigration attorney, their story may have had a different ending.

I was in awe of the work that immigration attorneys did — helping people achieve their dreams of lawful permanent status or citizenship. As a young person, this is what I thought immigration attorneys did and I wanted so badly to help people achieve that dream, too, but life got in my way.

When I joined the ILRC almost five years ago, it felt like a chance to fulfill my youthful dream of helping people be able to stay in this country and thrive. I also learned that the breath and scope of immigration legal work extends beyond what immigration attorneys do. The ILRC does so much more. The expertise, compassion, and experience that all of our staff has —immigration

attorneys, organizers, policy advocates, grant writers, fundraisers, and administrative staff—is unparalleled. The ILRC’s commitment to helping immigrants and their families navigate the system by training, educating, and advising scores of immigration legal professionals on the complexities of the ever-changing immigration laws builds the capacity of the legal field across the country. Our work influences the outcomes and stories of thousands of immigrants each year. I am a fundraiser, not an attorney, but I get to fight alongside them toward a common goal of envisioning a better immigration system, one that centers the humanity of all immigrants. One that leaves no one behind and does not pit “good” versus “bad” or “deserving” versus “undeserving.”

The ILRC can only do this because of you—our donors and supporters. Your financial support helps us to help families hold onto hope. You support helps us to empower directly impacted people to advocate for their needs and wants. And, thanks to your support, we can continue to serve as a reliable, accessible resource so that no one is left behind.

Thank you for believing in our work, in our team, and in our mission. Thank you for investing in a vision that celebrates the contributions immigrants make to this country every day. Thank you for choosing to make a difference with your philanthropy through the ILRC. We truly could not do the work that we do without you as our partner and advocate.

Happy holidays!

Cynthia Tirado Housel
Director of Leadership Giving

FIELD OFFICE RUNDOWN

As a national immigration legal organization, the ILRC has offices in Washington DC, California's Central Valley, three offices in Texas—Austin, Houston, and San Antonio, and in San Francisco.

Below are some highlights of the work of the ILRC, in partnership with local community members and organizations.

CENTRAL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA



- 1** We continue to gather local community groups for immigration round tables in Merced and Stanislaus counties to provide important updates on immigration policy and share resources to help keep the immigrant community informed and maximize the coordination of services.
- 2** ILRC staff coordinate three Domestic Violence-Immigration Working Groups in the counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Fresno. The three groups will come together for a Domestic Violence-Immigration Regional Convening during October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month, to increase collaboration and resource sharing in the region to support immigrant survivors.
- 3** Through a partnership with the Fresno Unified School District, the ILRC collaborates with other legal service providers in the Fresno area to offer free legal services through monthly virtual legal clinics for families and community members.
- 4** The Fresno County Legal Defense Fund, which the ILRC staff serve on the steering committee, secured an historic investment of \$200,000 from the City of Fresno to support legal representation in removal proceedings for immigrant families in the region.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



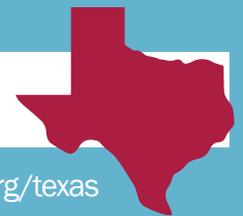
- 1** In August, we were excited to welcome Carla Gomez to our team. Carla has over two decades of experience as a public defender and has spent the last five years dedicated to the intersection of criminal and immigration law, and post-conviction relief in particular. She will help provide technical assistance and capacity building expertise about post-conviction relief and the immigration consequences of crimes.
- 2** The ILRC is a proud co-sponsor of AB 1259, authored by Assemblymember Chiu, which expands post-conviction relief to all people, including those convicted by trial. This law allows people to erase old convictions, eliminating the immigration damage they cause. AB 1259 was approved by the Governor on September 30 and goes into effect January 1, 2022.
- 3** In May, the California Supreme Court issued a precedent-setting opinion in a post-conviction relief case, *People v. Vivar*, allowing a long-time green card holder to vacate a decades-old controlled substances conviction. As a result of the decision, in November, Mr. Vivar finally reentered the United States and reunited with his family. The case marked the first time the California Supreme Court has ruled on PC 1473.7, a law drafted by ILRC Senior Attorney Rose Cahn. Mr. Vivar was represented by pro bono counsel from Munger, Tolles & Olson, who received case placement and case mentorship from ILRC's pro bono Immigrant Post-Conviction Relief Project.

WASHINGTON, DC



- 1** In September, the DC Team moved into a new office to welcome ILRC's growing DC staff. (Welcome Liz and Donna.)
- 2** The ILRC continued to advocate for regulatory and policy changes that make immigration benefits more equitable and accessible for low-income immigrants, especially low-income immigrant of color, including submitting a comprehensive comment on the proposed DACA regulation and creating a template for the field focusing on expanding access to DACA for immigrant youth who have been criminalized.
- 3** The ILRC continues to pursue its work of dismantling the immigration enforcement system by advocating with Biden administration officials for more expansive use of discretion to ensure individuals are not funneled into deportation.
- 4** The ILRC continues to work with partner organizations and members of Congress to fight for a permanent and inclusive legislative solution for all undocumented community members.

TEXAS



To learn more about Texas work, please visit www.ilrc.org/texas

- 1** The ILRC has been heavily involved in efforts to combat ongoing racist and anti-immigrant attacks in Texas, such as Governor Abbott's illegal and inhumane Operation Lone Star, which criminalizes migrants seeking safety and refuge in our country by charging and jailing them for alleged state offenses, like trespassing. Through our work leading weekly Texas immigration advocates calls, we have built the framework and infrastructure for statewide rapid response and taking coordinated action, which we have utilized to collectively fight back against Operation Lone Star from all angles. Together, with our partners, we sent a national sign-on letter to the Biden administration and supported our grassroots partners as they fight to release people from jail, and we will be launching a statewide petition demanding that the participating counties stop aiding Operation Lone Star. We also co-coordinate a weekly meeting which serves as an intersectional space to strategize and share information about Operation Lone Star. Additionally, ILRC staff attorneys are helping to coordinate legal representation for individuals arrested under Operation Lone Star, and our communications team is developing responsive messaging.
- 2** In August, we released our latest report, Justice For All? Unfair Outcomes in Harris County Criminal Courts, which raises awareness about how non-citizens are unjustly treated in Harris County. This report highlights stark disparities between US citizens and non-citizens in criminal case outcomes before Harris County courts and includes key policy recommendations for stakeholders to take immediate action.
- 3** In September, we held a statewide communications training in partnership with the Comm/Unity Network. Texas Governor Abbott's actions have fueled narratives that criminalize entire communities and divide the field. During the training, we focused on inclusive messaging, responding to tough questions from reporters, and identifying shared values that can persuade new audiences to support the community's issues. We received tremendous positive feedback from attendees and held a similar training for Spanish-speakers in October.
- 4** As a result of our expertise on federal immigration enforcement issues and our facilitation of the local Houston Leads coalition, we responded to Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez's nomination as the next director of ICE. Together, with partners, we issued a press release highlighting Sheriff Gonzalez's ongoing and harmful entanglement with ICE and debunking false narratives, and responded to his Senate confirmation hearing while simultaneously holding a "people's hearing" via social media, where we demanded commitments to the most pressing issues in the immigrant community.
- 5** In March, we will hold a two-day, comprehensive removal defense training for Houston-area practitioners, and we will continue to provide all of our webinar trainings (approximately 40 per year) to Texas non-profit organizations and public defenders for free.
- 6** In San Antonio, we are working with the SA Stands coalition to push County Commissioners to utilize American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to invest \$2 million in a countywide immigrant legal defense fund. The fund will increase access to legal representation for low-income immigrants facing deportation in San Antonio and surrounding areas.



We did it together!

51 Donors
\$32,550.75 Raised
#GivingTuesday



Together we're fighting for immigrant rights!

Thanks to the support of our generous donors, the ILRC had our most successful #GivingTuesday ever. Together we exceeded our original goal to raise a total of \$32,550.75 in 24 hours. Supporters took to social media to tell us why they fight for a better immigration legal system using the hashtag #whyifight. We're excited to continue exploring how technology can help us connect with our supporters and spread our mission to new audiences.



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MESSAGE FROM THE NEW AMERICANS CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

LUCIA MARTEL DOW



I was first introduced to the New Americans Campaign (NAC) several years ago when I worked at my previous organization, Canal Alliance. I had the opportunity to become a NAC site leader for Marin County, CA, and saw firsthand the impact of this collaboration and its innovative work. I also partnered with the ILRC through other projects and benefitted from their capacity building, advocacy, and technical assistance. I can't imagine building a successful immigration program without the ILRC, so I am thrilled to join this leading national organization.

In my new role as NAC director, I look forward to working with organizations and funders across the United States who care so deeply about helping permanent residents navigate the complexities of our immigration system. I experienced the naturalization process myself, and I still remember the sense of freedom and belonging after my oath ceremony. I also had the privilege of representing people who went through this journey and now call the United States "home." I am excited about the possibility of having a broader impact within the immigrant community.

I look forward to leading this initiative into the future alongside the rest of the NAC team: Associate Director Medha Chandra, Innovations and Learnings Manager Jannet Esparza, ILRC's administrative coordinator Amber McChesney-Young, and our NAC consultants.

I am inspired by how the organizations within our NAC network are overcoming the many significant challenges posed by the pandemic and showing passion and commitment for the work. I am ready to work alongside many of you to lead the NAC into its next decade.



USING DIGITAL & SOCIAL MEDIA

TO BROADEN THE ILRC'S REACH

The ILRC has a well-earned reputation for thorough and accurate analysis of immigration laws and policies, as well as being the go-to resource for materials readily available for communities to help them in their immigration journey. The ILRC's expertise remains sought after by community groups, allies, educators, lawyers, journalists, and others. The Communications Team highlights the ILRC's work to various audiences using digital and social media.

The Comms team has developed plans to leverage digital and social media to benefit the entire organization. Digital media encompasses short message service (SMS,) emails, radio, TV, search engine optimization, and advertising. Social media encompasses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and blogs. For example, our organizers and strategists use SMS to quickly alert the communities we serve if there is a change in an immigration policy that affects them. Those alerts can also be used to let the public know about an event or action we are supporting with other partners.

Our social media plan ensures that our messaging is consistent across all our platforms. The ILRC can benefit from the opportunities offered on social media by building a presence on platforms like Twitter or Instagram to educate, motivate, and capture a wider audience of legal professionals, advocates, and community members to continue fighting for immigrants' rights.

The Comms team's priorities for social media include:

- **Building Community:** sustained audience growth, community impact, reinforcing the ILRC's reputation for trustworthy and accurate legal analyses.
- **Educational Storytelling:** creation of new and innovative ways to educate, putting quality over quantity.
- **Brand Recognition:** become as recognizable as we are in the movement on social media.

This work, coupled with traditional outreach such as press releases, op-eds, and newsletters, strengthens the Comms team's ability to shine a light on the great work of the ILRC staff. And we use digital and social media to uplift and support the work of our partners and coalitions.

If you don't already, be sure to follow the ILRC on whichever social media channel you use and help us amplify our messages.



Valerie Ann Zukin

A Rememberance.



On September 25, the immigrant rights field lost a fierce and passionate attorney and advocate, Valerie Anne Zukin, after a long battle with cancer. Valerie joined the ILRC in June 2020 as a Special Projects Attorney. Many staff members were excited to work with Valerie after years of collaborating with her in the Bay Area immigrant rights field. Valerie was uniquely talented to lead the California Immigration Legal Fellowship, the nation's first-ever state-funded immigration legal fellowship program. The two-year fellowship program, launched in January 2021, trained a cohort of ten new attorneys committed to providing immigration legal services and then placed them at non-profit organizations in two underserved areas of California. The project includes a top-notch curriculum of intensive legal training, which Valerie designed, as well as offers close supervision and mentorship to fellows as they provide removal defense legal services to immigrants in the Central Valley and Central Coast. Valerie established an incredible foundation for this project that is being carried on by members of the ILRC team.

Prior to joining the ILRC, Valerie served as the Legal Director for the California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice (CCIJ), a regional collaborative for legal representation of detained immigrants comprised of legal advocates providing pro bono representation in Northern and Central California. She practiced at Van Der Hout, Brigagliano & Nightingale from 2011 to 2017, and the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project from 2007 to 2011, where she represented clients in complex immigration matters before the immigration agencies and federal courts.

Those who knew Valerie remember her deep love for her husband, Josh, and their dogs. She was an avid hiker and had an unapologetic sense of humor. The ILRC mourns the loss of our dear friend and colleague.

For those interested, a memorial fellowship has been established in Valerie's name. To learn more and donate, please visit https://www.flipcause.com/secure/cause_pdetails/MTMwNzky.

JOINING THE ILRC FAMILY



Carla Gomez | Senior Staff Attorney

Carla Gomez is a Senior Staff Attorney in San Francisco where she focuses on the intersection of criminal and immigration law, including post-conviction relief. Carla has over twenty years of criminal defense experience as both a federal and county public defender and has extensive experience as an immigration defense attorney.

*Prior to coming to the ILRC, Carla started her career as a Federal Public Defender in San Diego where she tried over 15 federal felony trials, argued several times before the Ninth Circuit resulting in published opinions including *U.S. v. Ramirez*, 273 F.3d 903, (9th Cir. 2001). Carla then became a San Francisco Public Defender where she practiced for over 15 years as a felony attorney, and, in 2017, she was part of the team that spearheaded the Immigration Unit.*

Carla has successfully defended the most challenging cases in immigration court where her clients with serious felonies have won asylum, withholding, the Convention Against Torture and readjustment of status. Her successful post-conviction relief practice throughout California including Monterey, San Mateo, San Joaquin, Sonoma, Kern, Fresno, Sacramento, and Pasadena has saved lawful permanent residents with aggravated felonies from deportation and allowed immigrants to adjust their status.

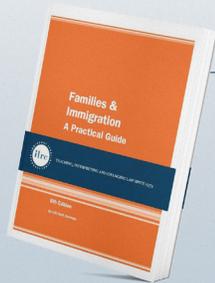
Carla earned her undergraduate degree from U.C. Berkeley and her J.D. from the University of San Francisco where she participated in the United Nations Working Group on Migrant Farm Workers in Geneva. Carla is fluent in Spanish and conversant in French.



UPDATED PUBLICATIONS

In 1984, the ILRC published its first manual. Since then, the ILRC has been providing essential practical guides for legal practitioners. All publications are produced by the ILRC's expert immigration attorneys. Revenue from the ILRC publications helps support critical programs in the community.

To learn about these titles and view our entire catalog, visit www.ilrc.org/store



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OVER
9,000

naturalization events held since July 2011, including naturalization information sessions, volunteer trainings, and group application workshops

Led by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, the New Americans Campaign is a diverse nonpartisan national network of respected immigration organizations, legal services providers, faith-based organizations, immigrant rights groups, foundations, and community leaders. The Campaign transforms the way aspiring citizens navigate the path to becoming new Americans. It is committed to connecting lawful permanent residents to trusted legal assistance and critical information that simplifies the naturalization process.



WWW.NEWAMERICANSCAMPAIGN.ORG

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Join a community of funders who are committed to the ILRC's mission to work with and educate immigrants, community organizations, and the legal sector to continue to build a democratic society that values diversity and the rights of all people.

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Your gift will support the ILRC and the immigrant community.

Questions? Contact Cynthia Tirado Housel, Director of Leadership Giving, at (415) 321-8570.

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