

THE IMMIGRANT ADVOCATE

TEACHING, INTERPRETING, AND CHANGING LAW SINCE 1979



MESSAGE FROM THE ILRC


By Professor Bill Ong Hing | ILRC Founder



The ouster of Donald Trump from the White House is certainly a cause for great celebration among immigrant rights advocates. His blatantly anti-immigrant, racist agenda will finally be brought to halt. However, the framework within which he operated continues.

The structure of U.S. immigration laws has institutionalized a set of policies that dehumanize, demonize, and criminalize immigrants of color. The result is that while Trump and his core supporters are specific in their racism, for others these victims stop being Mexican, El Salvadoran, or Chinese and become “illegal immigrants.” Those enablers are aware of race or ethnicity, but they believe that ICE or the Border Patrol is acting against noncitizens because of their status, not because of their race. This institutionalized racism made the Trump ICE raids and border closure to asylum seekers natural and acceptable in the minds of much of the general public. Institutionalized racism allows the public to think ICE raids are freeing up jobs for native workers without recognizing the racial ramifications. They do not dispute the national security allegations directed at migrants who are actually fleeing violence. Objections to ICE raids, arrests of so-called “criminal aliens,” and border closures are debated in non-racial terms. However, not viewing these operations from an institutionalized racial perspective and their anti-democratic effects inhibits the total revamping of our immigration system that needs to take place.

Through a process of demonizing and commodification of immigrant workers, the public has been conditioned not only to ignore the racial implications, but also the anti-democratic effects of Trump’s efforts. Raids, ICE arrests, and closing off asylum are the manifestation of Trump’s assault on democracy that is epitomized by ignoring past practices of discretion, legal precedent, court orders, and standards of decency.

Now the challenge begins to restore hope for the millions of noncitizens in the United States and their friends and relatives. The Biden-Harris administration will certainly be better than the Trump administration. But that’s a low bar. Much can be done quickly to undue Trump’s evil actions through Biden’s own executive actions. But we need more. We need legalization for all, the reformatting of immigration enforcement, recognition that even noncitizens convicted of crimes deserve a second chance, and a human rights approach to asylum seekers that gives them the benefit of the doubt. Comprehensive immigration reform will only come about if we put consistent pressure on the White House and Congress. That pressure will come from the advocacy of the ILRC and its allies. And those allies will include immigrants themselves, many of whom have become U.S. citizens through naturalization—a cornerstone of the immigrant rights movement. 



HETAP: REACHING IMMIGRANT STUDENTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

For undocumented students, the normal stresses of higher education are compounded by the complicated, ever-present challenges having no immigration status presents to getting a job, accessing federal finance aid, and living without fear of deportation or separation from family members. Fortunately, some students have found immigration relief, including tens of thousands of California college students with protection under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and thousands more who may be eligible for other immigration protections. The ILRC is fortunate to be part of an effort to reach and assist those California students. Thanks to a grant from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) is proud to be part of a statewide effort to reach these immigrant students on college campuses by providing reliable, legally accurate, and easily accessible immigration information to students as well as the

faculty, staff, and legal experts who work with them on over 80 California campuses.

Since receiving a grant from the CDSS's Immigration Services Bureau in 2019, the ILRC has developed community-facing resources as a part of the Higher Education Technical Assistance Project (HETAP). HETAP is a collaborative of the ILRC, nonprofit legal services organizations, and college campuses designed to supplement the pro bono legal services currently offered to students by providing dozens of resources to help students and their families navigate complicated immigration issues.

Working with our partners, the ILRC has been able to respond quickly to emerging issues in the immigration space, including changes to the DACA program, public charge, and the intersection of the COVID-19 public health crisis and immigration. These resources are then shared with liaisons from the college campuses and legal service providers in a new resource-sharing listserv, and directly on ILRC social media platforms.

The HETAP grant has had lasting effects on the ILRC as well. The design and approachability of these resources as well as hiring a Media Manager, the ILRC has been able to update our strategy for community-facing messaging allowing us to reinterpret decades of legal expertise for a new audience.



FIELD OFFICE RUNDOWN

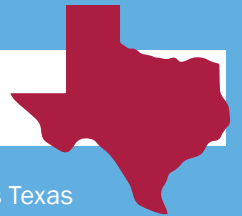
CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY



Sometimes called “a red state within a blue state”, the Central Valley faces unique issues. Vulnerable immigrants who are denied access to public services must navigate a system rife with fraudulent actors while under-resourced organizations struggle to keep up with the community’s needs. Throughout 2020, the ILRC’s small but mighty Central Valley team worked hard to improve the immigration-service landscape throughout the region by engaging in numerous activities including:

- 1 Convening educational institutions, media, policy makers and legal-service providers to create a region-wide cohort supporting DACA recipients, and undocumented students. The cohort hopes to create consistent, accurate, and accessible services across the Central Valley.
- 2 Creating a rapid-response COVID-19 relief fund. Thanks to a grant from the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund, and a strong relationship to the local community, the team provided \$250-\$500 gift cards to over 120 families who were excluded from stimulus and enhanced unemployment payments.

TEXAS



Throughout 2020, immigration advocates continued to face hostility. Despite these challenges, the ILRC’s Texas team worked closely with local community-based organizations and coalitions of advocates to create positive change at the local level. The Texas team moved the needle towards inclusive justice by promoting immigrant rights and criminal justice reform through many campaigns and activities, including:

- 1 Authoring the first cite and release municipal ordinance in Texas. The ordinance reduces arrests, which disproportionately affect Black and Brown communities, by requiring police officers in San Marcos, Texas to issue citations, tickets, or warnings, instead of making arrests, for certain low-level offenses. Reducing arrests also mitigates the harmful immigration consequences that flow from arrests and jail bookings.
- 2 Advocating for an Immigration Legal Services Fund for Harris County. Working closely with our community partners, the Texas team successfully advocated for the creation of a deportation defense fund, which will help ensure that low-income immigrant residents have access to legal counsel in immigration proceedings. In November, the county approved an allocation of \$2 million for the fund and an additional \$500,000 to fund legal services for survivors of crime. Harris County is home to Houston and 1.6 million immigrants.

WASHINGTON, D.C.



In the midst of a turbulent election season, the DC team continued to build support for the ILRC’s policy priorities among policy makers, immigration advocacy organizations, and partners in the criminal justice movement by engaging in several policy initiatives including:

- 1 Building support for federal legislation to dismantle laws that criminalize Black immigrants and immigrants of color through the New Way Forward Campaign. This visionary legislation has been adopted as a part of the Movement for Black Lives’ legislative proposal, the BREATHE Act, slated for introduction in 2021.
- 2 Welcoming the ILRC’s first Director of Communications, increasing the organization’s capacity to communicate our mission.
- 3 Developing the ILRC’s Blueprint for the Next Administration, identifying the steps the Biden administration must take to not only restore our immigration system, but to ensure dignity and justice for all immigrants.



ORGANIZING: THE HEART OF THE MOVEMENT

The immigrant rights movement is powered by people – immigrants seeking to better their circumstances or that of their community, immigrant rights nonprofits seeking to represent and amplify the voices of coalitions of immigrants and immigrant rights advocates, and the immigration legal field. Mobilizing the vast strata of stakeholders within the movement is no easy task, but it is one that is embraced by organizers.

Organizing is a critical component to how community-led change happens in social justice movements. Remember the power of the grassroots organizing during the Civil Rights Movement. In a time when standing up for civil rights was controversial, entire communities convened to resist oppression. Strides were made and icons within the movement are celebrated, but the fight continues to this day.

A new generation of organizers and resisters have awakened amidst continued overt suppression and subjugation by our government. Since 2016, immigrant rights activists have prepared for an onslaught of attacks on immigrant rights – the volume of which few could have foreseen. At the ILRC, it became apparent that in order to maximize our effectiveness and impact on the immigrant rights movement, we needed to have organizers on staff to help us build capacity and foster relationships with people and organizations on the ground.

The ILRC has several staff members who work as organizers and strategists. Carolina Canizales is the ILRC's Senior Campaign Strategist. Carolina's drive for this work is personal. An immigrant herself, she sees herself and her family in the community she calls home, San Antonio. She described her draw to this work as a calling. Carolina has been organizing with undocumented youth and against mass deportations for over a decade, she believes a strong movement can ultimately win systemic change, especially in places like Texas. A conversation with Carolina is

one that will leave you feeling empowered and ready to join the movement. Her greatest talent is her facility to build relationships with leaders and partners in Texas and across the nation. Even in the most stressful times within the movement, Carolina sees the light of hope and possibilities when others can only see darkness. A conversation with her is a balm for the weary.

Texas tops the nation in the number of deportations and incarceration of Black people, immigrants, and other people of color. Texas has a callous anti-immigrant state law, SB4, that has led the many lawsuits against DACA and DAPA, Deferred Action for Parents of Americans. If positive change happens in Texas, you can begin to turn the tide in the rest of the nation. Carolina understands this and now she works with over 40 coalitions and partner organizations in the state. She invites anyone interested in learning how to make a difference in the movement to first understand what the partners on the ground are fighting for. She will be the first to tell you that organizing is not a new concept for the ILRC because we have worked with many to help influence policy. Organizing creates the necessary pressure to lead to change. She and the other organizers and strategists at the ILRC – Sandy Valenciano, Abraham Bedoy, Oliver Merino, and Naiyolis Palomo – focus on building the capacity of the partners because the ILRC's role is not to lead, but to support; help research concepts with the wealth of legal expertise on our staff; and help with campaign strategy, planning, and developing projects that value human dignity.

The pandemic has changed the landscape for organizers across the country. Everything is done virtually now. It is more challenging to create accessible ways to keep people engaged and motivated. There has also been a pivot to helping community members to stay afloat during unprecedented






economic shutdowns where housing and food insecurity have hit communities of color hard.

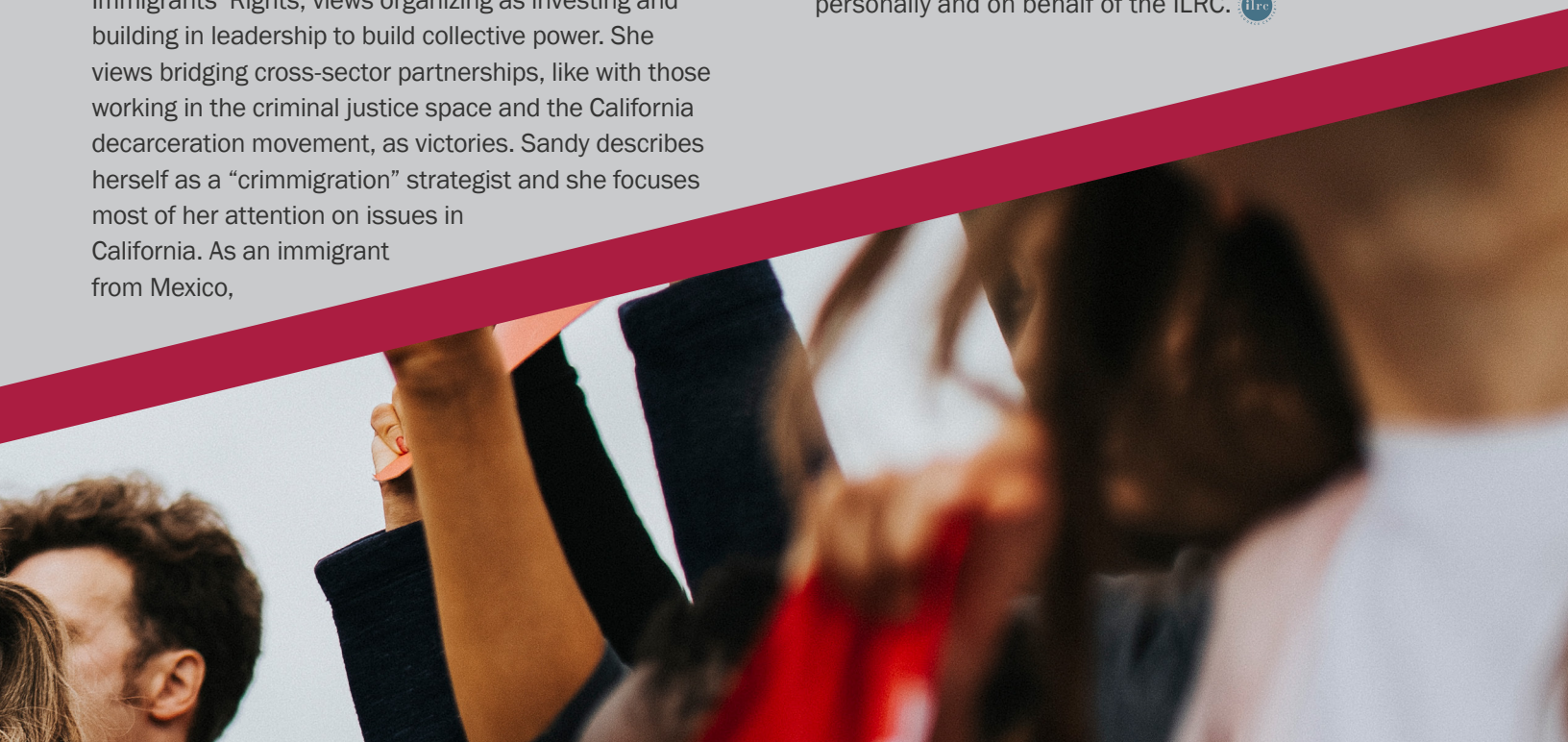
Carolina is proud of the successes that she, the community, and our partner organizations have had. Among the successes (you can read more about some of them in this issue's Office Roundup) is the approval of enhanced library cards in San Antonio. Carolina worked closely with partners at SA Stands immigration coalition to advocate for Enhanced Library Cards. These cards contain the name, date of birth, and address of the cardholder and are accepted as an alternative form of identification by local law enforcement in San Antonio. This is especially impactful for segments of the community who may have challenges getting more traditional forms of ID – undocumented community members, the young and elderly, homeless community members, and the formerly incarcerated. Organizers, like Carolina, hope that the Enhanced Library Card program will serve as a model for communities across the country, but winning positive outcomes for immigrants in an anti-immigrant state is extremely difficult. There is no safe way to fight for driver's licenses or municipal IDs because the information will be shared with immigration authorities, and without a valid ID people will never have the freedom to move or get access to basic human services.

Sandy Valenciano, the ILRC's Andy Grove Fellow for Immigrants' Rights, views organizing as investing and building in leadership to build collective power. She views bridging cross-sector partnerships, like with those working in the criminal justice space and the California decarceration movement, as victories. Sandy describes herself as a "cimmigration" strategist and she focuses most of her attention on issues in California. As an immigrant from Mexico,

her drive for this work is born from a deep connection to people and issues. She says that she felt the pull to organizing work early on in her career. She acknowledged that people who do this work have likely been organizing much longer than they realize that they have been.

When asked to reflect on her work, Sandy says that her early organizing and strategy work starkly contrasts to her work with the ILRC now. In 2016, a hard pivot was required when the current administration was elected. Instead of working with communities to advocate for fairer immigrant rights, the movement was forced to push back against wave after wave of inhumane policy changes. It has changed even more in 2020 due to the pandemic. Sandy says, for example, that creating resources and building connections to people has always been challenging but is even more so now. It is especially difficult because of the inaccessibility to technology for communities with whom she works. There are a lot of structural challenges, she said, and she is hoping that some of the challenges will be mitigated with a new administration in January. No matter what, Sandy will continue to build strategy to shift criminalizing narratives in the state of California and nationally.

The consistent thread among organizers at the ILRC is their passion for the work, their capacity for empathy, and their relentless hunger to support change for immigrants and their communities. They each measure success by many metrics, but one of the most important is the relationships within the movement that they hold personally and on behalf of the ILRC. 





Thank You!

Each year, I get the distinct pleasure of thanking you—our donors and supporters—for investing in the work of the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. I scarcely have the words to express my gratitude for your support.

In my over 20 years of fundraising, I have never seen a year like 2020. This year has challenged everyone like never before. Amidst a deadly pandemic that upended our idea of normalcy, many of us have had to make sacrifices to keep our families and communities safe. The pandemic highlighted the incredible sacrifices made by immigrants, who worked to keep our food supply chains operating, who provided medical care, and everything in between. Many did not have a choice to stay home because their roles were integral to keeping supply chains operating or working in essential service industry roles, to name a few. This is why the ILRC was so proud to honor Immigrant Essential Workers with the 2020 Phillip Burton Award for Advocacy during our first-ever virtual Phillip Burton Immigration & Civil Rights Awards in June. Thanks to your support, the ILRC was able to raise a net of over \$257,000 for our Burton Awards—a record-breaking sum for us.

As the health crisis raged, so did attacks on immigrant rights. The ILRC was at the forefront of litigation challenging the administration on the proposed elimination of fee waivers and proposed

fee increases for certain immigration applications. Because of our efforts, and the efforts of those of joining us by filing amicus briefs in support of the case: states, local governments, and non-profits, the fee rule was enjoined in the case of . As partners and investors of the ILRC, this is your victory, too.

Trying times tend to reveal the true character of people. Throughout the year, I have seen that characteristics of an ILRC donor include resilience, compassion, activism, and generosity. You have helped the ILRC innovate how we deliver the much-needed trainings, manuals, and analysis of complex legal issues and deliver them to a community that has been relentlessly attacked for years. With your continued support, we can work to reimagine an immigration system that values the diversity immigrants contribute to make our country the best it can be. If you have not already made a gift to the ILRC, I invite you to use the envelope in this newsletter or to visit ilrc.org/donate to make your gift today. Together, we can move the needle towards fairer and more just immigrant rights.

FOLLOW AND CONNECT WITH US!

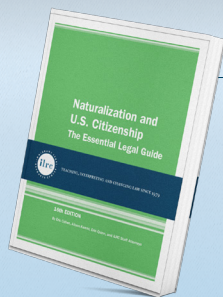
Find the ILRC on social media for all the latest news, updates about special projects, and more.



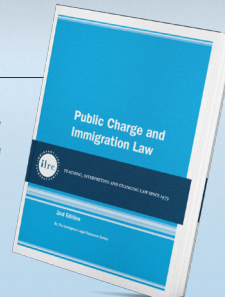
UPDATED PUBLICATIONS

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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ALMOST

487,000

citizenship applications completed since July 2011

OVER

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saved for aspiring citizens and their families in legal and application fees

OVER

165,000

fee waivers and reduced fee requests completed since July 2011

OVER

8,500

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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- Organizing: The Heart of the Movement
- Office Roundups
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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.

Make your gift today by:

- Using the envelope provided in this newsletter
- Visiting www.ilrc.org/donate to make a donation online
- Visiting our [More Ways to Give](#) page to learn about additional ways to support the ILRC

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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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