

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022 - 2023

*Eliminating Barriers to Justice for Immigrants*

**GHIRP**

Galveston-Houston Immigrant  
Representation Project

6001 Savoy Drive, Ste. 400  
Houston, Texas 77036

2228 Mechanic Street, Ste. 302  
Galveston, Texas 77550



## DEAR GHIRP FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS,

**Welcome to our second Annual Report!** This year can only be summarized as one with incredible growth, advocacy, and perseverance for the GHIRP team and clients. As you read this report, I hope you know that GHIRP's increased legal services and financial stability are because of you and your generosity.

Since opening our doors in 2020, GHIRP has expanded tremendously. Today, our team totals 32 staff members, including 16 attorneys, 11 legal assistants, 1 DOJ accredited representative, 2 administrative staff, and 2 social services coordinators. As we have grown, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that our commitment to fighting for immigrant justice is unwavering. In the last year, our team has provided legal services to 1,421 people from over 33 countries, represented 391 new and existing clients, and filed 297 applications for humanitarian relief for clients seeking protection in the United States. Each one of these services creates a ripple effect, positively impacting our clients, their families, and our community.

We are excited that the Galveston office is now staffed with a full-time attorney and legal assistant representing immigrants with a broad spectrum of legal needs. Our newly added Federal Litigation Program is getting off the ground in fiscal year 2024, protecting our clients' legal rights and holding authorities accountable for unlawful enforcement activities. Additionally, GHIRP was approved by the U.S. Department of Justice to represent clients through qualified representatives, expanding the reach of services for our community.

Our clients have shown resilience in the face of challenging policies, and their families remain hopeful that unity and safety can be achieved through our immigration justice system. This year, we represented a youth who was kidnapped and survived human trafficking, a transgender man who was persecuted in his home country, an Afghan family who was evacuated by the U.S. military, two longtime Galvestonians who became U.S. citizens, and a mother of five children escaping domestic violence—along with many others. Each client has their own story, but each one no longer fears deportation thanks to GHIRP.

Thank you for staying energized and hopeful with GHIRP in the fight for dignity and equality in our immigration justice system. Over the past year, we have seen Texas and U.S. immigration policies become extraordinarily targeted toward children and families seeking safety, forcing them into harm's way. Global unrest has forced people to seek refuge in the United States. Nonetheless, our local community (you!) has welcomed individuals fleeing violence from all over the world, including Central America, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Ukraine, and Russia.

As I look ahead, I know that immigrant defense is more vital now than ever. Let's unite our voices to advocate for a humane immigration system where access to basic human rights is seen as a necessity rather than a luxury.

*Thank you for your support!*



CHIQUI SANCHEZ KENNEDY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chiqui Sanchez Kennedy".

# WHO WE ARE

We are a group of dedicated lawyers and legal professionals committed to providing high-quality legal services to low-income immigrants in the Galveston-Houston area. GHIRP provides zealous advocacy at every level, from Know Your Rights presentations to federal litigation. As a local organization, we focus on local issues, using education, representation, and outreach to serve and advocate for immigrants to build a more resilient, diverse community. This same spirit drives the GHIRP mission to ensure that all individuals within our borders have equal access to our justice system and its protections.

GHIRP eliminates barriers immigrants face in obtaining legal counsel and expands direct representation in the Galveston-Houston area. Legal advocates are critical now, more than ever, in assisting immigrants with navigating our complex immigration system. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) apprehension and detention authority is exponentially more expansive than in the past, yet the resources dedicated to preserving immigrant rights remain stagnant. Recent changes to immigration policies and laws have eroded due process protections for immigrants, mainly eliminating access to safety and stability in the United States for many vulnerable immigrants.



## OUR MISSION

GHIRP's mission is to build a resilient, diverse community by providing comprehensive representation and holistic legal services to immigrants in need.



## OUR VALUES

- Every immigrant should have a voice in their legal process.
- Safety and autonomy are fundamental to achieving one's potential.
- Diverse and inclusive communities make us stronger.



# OUR TEAM

## LEADERSHIP



**Chiqui Sanchez Kennedy**  
Executive Director, Co-Founder



**Liz Hoefler**  
Managing Attorney, Co-Founder



**Vanessa Perez**  
Managing Attorney, Co-Founder



**Alexa Sendukas**  
Managing Attorney

## PROGRAM STAFF

Karen Aceval, Sara Aguila, Rebecca Chavez, Samantha Davis, Katy De La O, Raquel Mora-Ojeda, Myah Fuqua, Abigail Gonsoulin, Heidi Guerra Castellanos, Andréia Hart, Gabriela Hernandez, Abigail Jimenez, Sharonda Johnson, Holly Kuchera, Dante Lendechy, Sandra Lopez, Guadalupe Navarrete, Alejandra Paramo, Sylvia Ramirez, Jessica Razo, Anapaula Rincon, Elizabeth Riordan, Enzo Rivas, Marissa Rivera, Alexandra Villalón, Diana Wakasugi-Arriola, Ashley Winford, Austra Zapata

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Dalia Castillo-Granados**  
Board Member



**Alfredo R. Gutierrez**  
Board Member



**Billy Roberts**  
Board Member

## OUR PARTNERS



# OUR PROGRAMS



As representatives of immigrant survivors in Galveston and Houston, our model relies on person-centered representation and case management services to effectively advocate for vulnerable clients. Our team provides Know Your Rights presentations in the community and local shelters to inform survivors about their rights and legal options and facilitate self-identification. We represent survivors throughout their immigration cases so that they can achieve safety and stability. Additionally, we collaborate with partner organizations to ensure that immigrant survivors' needs are met.

We represent adults in the four Houston-area immigrant detention facilities. Our cases range from seeking release for immigrants to reuniting with their families to representing asylum seekers and federal litigation. Our team participates in the area's first publicly funded program to represent low-income Houstonians. This program operates under a "universal representation" model, where we are assigned to represent individuals on a first-come, first-served basis, regardless of the strength of the case. Additionally, we represent detained adults who are found incompetent to proceed in Immigration Court without an attorney.



Our team serves unaccompanied children who are placed into Immigration Court proceedings without the right to a free attorney. We provide Know Your Rights presentations, legal screenings, social services, pro se assistance, and direct legal representation to detained and released immigrant children and youth in the Galveston-Houston area. Many of these services are conducted through a universal representation model, meaning we assist clients in navigating the complexities of the immigration process without regard to the strength of their case. We offer holistic services, from fighting their deportation in court to securing permanent legal status in the United States.

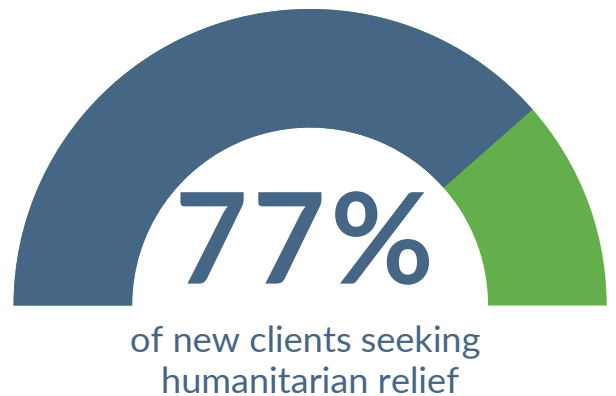
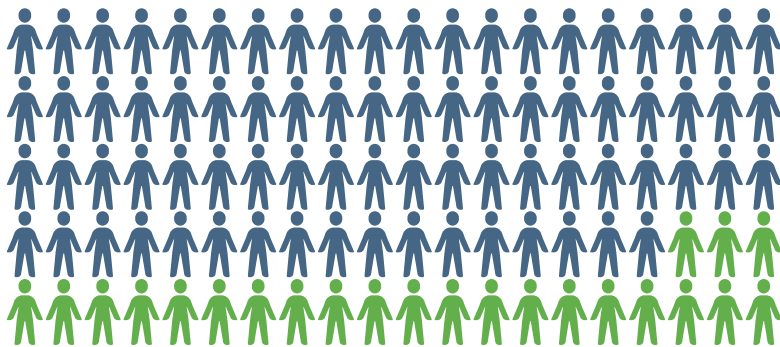


We represent immigrants seeking family unity, freedom from abuse and persecution, protection from deportation, and citizenship in Galveston and Houston. This program is the most responsive to the community, as we offer free legal clinics and limited legal services to immigrants who walk through our doors. In Galveston, we partner with St. Vincent's House and Clinic to provide free monthly Know Your Rights presentations and consultations to immigrants on the Island. In both Galveston and Houston, we provide pro bono representation to individuals who do not otherwise qualify for grant-funded services.



# YEAR BY THE NUMBERS

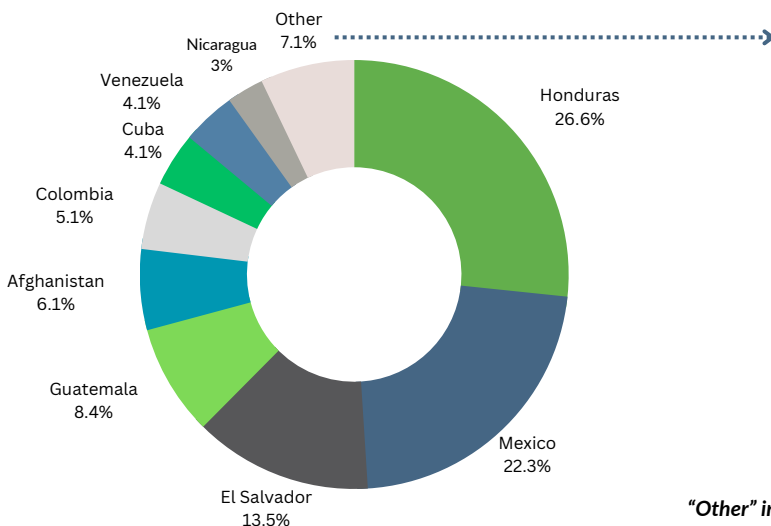
From **July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023**, GHIRP provided legal services to **1,421 individuals** and filed **480 applications** for new and existing clients. An application is a legal request for action filed with an immigration agency on behalf of a client. Of the individuals served, we represented **177 new clients from 33 different countries**. This year, **77%** of GHIRP's new clients applied for **humanitarian relief**, meaning they sought protection from violence, threats, persecution, torture, human trafficking, or other harm.



# 1,421

**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND CONSULTATIONS PROVIDED**

## 33 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED



**"Other" includes:** Nigeria, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Germany, Argentina, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, India, Italy, Jamaica, Pakistan, Romania, Russia, Spain, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Haiti, South Sudan, Cuba

# PROGRAM IMPACT

## Survivors of Crime & Human Trafficking Program

This team represents individuals who have survived domestic violence, sexual assault, violent crimes, and human trafficking. Survivors often remain for too long in abusive homes because of their immigration status. Our services assist clients in gaining independence and autonomy.



**172** Consultations Provided

**251%** Increase in consultations from the previous year

**40** Clients Represented

**23** Clients Connected to Social Services

**21** Community Legal Clinics

## Immigrant Children & Youth (ICY) Program



This team serves detained and released immigrant children and youth who have been placed in Immigration Court proceedings. No matter their age, these young clients have no right to a free attorney, and the ICY team represents them in fighting against deportation and securing permanent legal status.

**1,089** Kids Received Know Your Rights & Screenings

**287** Kids Received Direct Legal Services

**175** Applications Filed for Clients

**65** Kids Connected to Social Services

## Detained Adults Program

This program represents immigrants detained by ICE in the four Houston-area detention facilities. Many of our clients are represented under a universal representation model, which is a public defender-style system. Our cases range from newly arriving asylum seekers to long-term residents of the Galveston-Houston area.

**44** Consultations Provided

**34** Clients Represented

**22** Clients Represented Under Universal Representation Model



## General Immigration Program



Team members of this program represent immigrants seeking family unity, freedom from abuse and persecution, protection from deportation, lawful permanent residence, and citizenship in Galveston and Houston.

### HOUSTON

*This program serves walk-in clients, such as aged-out youth and asylum seekers, through individual contributions and unrestricted donations/grants. Thank you for making this work possible!*

**35** Consultations Provided

**35** Clients Represented

### GALVESTON

**158** Household Members Impacted

**81** Participants Received Know Your Rights & Consultations

**15** Clients Represented

# CLIENT IMPACT



**ALESSANDRO** is a transgender man from Nicaragua who came to the U.S. fleeing violence and persecution based on his sexual orientation and gender identity. After a lifetime of suffering in Nicaragua, Alessandro wanted the freedom to be himself. At entry, ICE detained him and placed him in a female unit, where he continued to experience harassment, discrimination, and misgendering from facility staff and fellow detainees. His attorney, Liz Hoefler, successfully advocated for improved detention conditions and ultimately secured his release. GHIRP continued to represent Alessandro when he was released, and in November 2022, he was granted asylum. He now lives in Detroit, Michigan, and looks forward to applying for his residency this year.

*Meeting you all was like a light on the path, the hope that I had almost lost. Truly, you did magnificent work helping me not only with the immigration process but also you offered me psychological support and have made me feel that everything was worth the pain in this difficult process. — ALESSANDRO*

*As a young kid from a different country, I had no idea what to do, I had no idea where I was going, and I had nothing. The only thing I am sure of is that I would not have legal status in this country without the help of GHIRP. — RAFAEL*

**RAFAEL** is a Honduran youth who fled extensive abuse in his home country at age 16. After a long journey through Mexico, he arrived in the U.S. and was released to a distant relative in Houston. He was immediately forced to work grueling hours in a dangerous job for no pay. When he refused or tried to leave, his trafficker threatened him. GHIRP's Immigrant Children & Youth program represented him in seeking protection and the right to remain in the U.S. He was recently granted his lawful permanent residence status, has a great job in Galveston, and is thriving!

**MR. M** is an Afghan evacuee who arrived in the U.S. immediately after the fall of Kabul in 2021. He worked for American and foreign entities for nearly 20 years, carrying out the U.S. mission of democracy, human rights, eradication of the Taliban, and institution of a new Afghan government in Afghanistan.

In 2004, he worked for the American Special Forces and several international humanitarian organizations as an interpreter and caseworker in Kabul. His life's work makes Mr. M and his family a Taliban target. Furthermore, Mr. M belongs to an ethnic minority group that the Taliban has attacked in the past and conducted a village-wide massacre against in 2021.

Mr. M and his family safely landed in Houston at the end of 2021 and faced the daunting task of seeking asylum protection in the US. A pro bono attorney from Locke Lord eagerly took on the lion's share of the work as co-counsel and did a fantastic job representing the family.

Mr. M, his wife, and their two young daughters (6 and 12) won their asylum case this summer! They can start building their new life in Houston, knowing they will always be safe.

*Through a friend of mine I was connected to GHIRP. That was one of my happiest days.*

— MR. M



# CLIENT IMPACT

**CASSANDRA** and her family fled Guatemala when she was three years old after an armed group killed her father. They settled in the US, and she was later adopted by her stepfather, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran. Cassandra's stepfather suffered a severe accident, leaving him permanently disabled. At 15 years old, Cassandra began to work to support her household.

After residing in the U.S. for more than 37 years, Cassandra was detained by ICE and faced an imminent threat of deportation. As the primary financial provider, her family was distraught and on the verge of homelessness due to her detention. Her stepfather's health deteriorated rapidly. GHIRP filed an emergency request with ICE to stop her deportation, which was ultimately granted. Cassandra was released from detention, allowing her to remain in the U.S. with her family.

*When I thought it was all over for me in the United States, Rebecca worked so hard to let me stay in the country that I have called home since I was 3 years old. – CASSANDRA*

*I am deeply grateful for the GHIRP non-profit organization, whose unwavering support has been a lifeline for women like me, helping us navigate every aspect of the immigration system with compassion and dedication. They've made an immeasurable difference in our lives, and I can't thank them enough. – ALINA*

**ALINA** is a young, single mother from Ukraine who was severely emotionally and sexually abused by her husband in Houston. GHIRP helped her file for immigration status independent of her abusive husband under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Immigration authorities determined that she was preliminarily eligible for VAWA, which puts her on the path to permanent lawful status in the U.S. She also received a work permit and Temporary Protected Status, ensuring that she will not be deported back to her home country. GHIRP's social services program connected her to medical services, food, and diapers, which were critical for her and her new baby.

**GLENDA** is a long-time Galveston resident, and she and her daughter **MARITZA** became citizens with the assistance of GHIRP's legal team. Glenda is a single mother of 5 and has many grandchildren. Our legal assistant spent significant time preparing her for the civics examination, which she passed. Glenda was invited to a special Juneteenth Naturalization Oath Ceremony at the Rosenberg Library. Maritza's ceremony occurred in Houston, and we couldn't be happier for these two new U.S. citizens!



# CLIENT IMPACT

*“I felt tremendous joy because that was one of my most desired dreams, to be able to work legally in the United States” – ANA MARIA*

**ANA MARIA** was born in Honduras and has lived in the U.S. for over 20 years. At 60, she began caring for her five granddaughters and later adopted them. During this process, Ana Maria’s lawful permanent residence partner became abusive towards her. He threatened her immigration status to maintain control over her. Seeking independence, Ana Maria came to our office in 2022 for legal representation. GHIRP filed her application for protection and status as an abused spouse in the immigration office. After a couple of months of working so hard to support her daughters, she finally obtained a work permit. Ana Maria was overjoyed when we gave her that notice. She is a true example of love and hard work.

**MATEO** is a youth who came to the United States fleeing threats and attacks in El Salvador. He arrived at the southern border seeking asylum and was placed in the “Remain in Mexico” program, which required him to wait in Mexico for his Immigration Court hearing. While in Mexico, he was kidnapped at gunpoint and held for almost a month. While in captivity, he was beaten, witnessed horrific violence, and was trafficked and forced to work for a cartel. GHIRP successfully represented Mateo in his immigration case, securing him permanent legal protection and the right to remain safely in the United States.

Now, he lives and works in Houston and is on the pathway to U.S. citizenship. Further, Mateo is petitioning for his mother and brother, who are still living in danger in El Salvador, to join him in the U.S. He has dreams of one day owning his own business.



*“People told me my case was complicated and I needed to find an attorney, so I started knocking on doors. Without Ms. Alexa, I would be living on the streets. – MATEO*



# 2022-2023 FINANCIALS

## FUNDING SOURCES

Government Grants, State and Local .....	<b>\$565,484</b>
National Organization Funding.....	<b>\$913,592</b>
Unrestricted Federal Litigation Program Funding (starts FY '24 through FY '28) .....	<b>\$1,154,901</b>
Foundation Contributions and Grants.....	<b>\$263,000</b>
Individual Contributions.....	<b>\$121,354</b>
Other.....	<b>\$10,466</b>
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$3,028,797</b>

### FOUNDATION & DIRECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

- Houston Endowment: \$100,000
- Cynthia & George Mitchell Foundation: \$52,000
- Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative: \$51,000
- Whalley Foundation: \$50,000
- Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund: \$30,000
- Texas Bar Foundation: \$20,000
- Ippolito Charitable Foundation of Galveston: \$10,000
- Trini & OC Mendenhall Foundation: \$5,000

# 155

## INDIVIDUALS DONATED TO GHIRP THIS YEAR

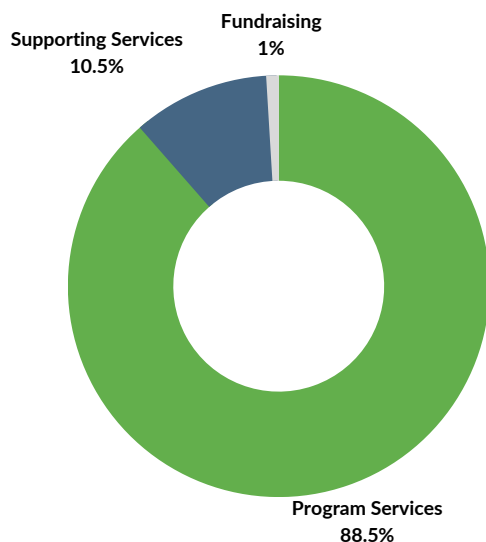
### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Individual donations allow the GHIRP team to take cases of clients who walk in our doors and do not qualify for grant funding, which only covers specific cases. With your contributions and general operating support, we have represented asylum seekers, Afghan evacuees, aged-out youth, and survivors of domestic violence, violent crimes, and human trafficking. Additionally, GHIRP has provided mental health support for our staff and clients and emergency financial assistance to needy families. None of this would be possible without unrestricted donations and grants.

### THANK YOU MONTHLY DONORS

- Rosemarie Philip (since January '21)
- Michelle & Daniel DeSalvo (since December '21)
- Mary Hoefer (since January '21)
- Becky & Keith Habersberger (since December '20)
- Anne Wallace (since May '21)
- Simone Gabara (since December '22)
- Patty & Don Habersberger (since January '21)

## OPERATING EXPENSES



Through the diverse funding sources noted above, the GHIRP team can carry out the organization's mission through various programs, legal services, and fundraising events that help spread awareness about our efforts throughout the Houston and Galveston communities.

Program Services .....	<b>\$1,574,992</b>
Supporting Services .....	<b>\$186,742</b>
Fundraising .....	<b>\$16,978</b>
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$1,778,712</b>

# Thank You!

FROM OUR CLIENTS IN  
THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGES



**GHIRP**

Galveston-Houston Immigrant  
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