



Galveston-Houston Immigrant
Representation Project

Here to Stay: GHIRP's Commitment to Immigrant Justice

Galveston-Houston Immigrant Representation Project (GHIRP)

January 21, 2026

Dear GHIRP friends and family,

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2026. At GHIRP, the start of each year is a time for reflection and reinvigoration. It is an opportunity to build on what worked well, learn from what did not, and set an ambitious course forward with purpose and hope. As we enter 2026, I find myself holding competing emotions: sadness, optimism, uncertainty, determination, dismay and resilience. Reading the national news and witnessing first-hand local impact of this administration's oppressive immigration policies has clarified what I believe must be our continued response – to STAND UP. To stand up for human rights and immigrant rights, for inclusivity, for freedom of speech and for meaningful access to justice.

The Trump Administration's aggressive immigration enforcement has unleashed fear and distress into our communities. Immigration officers are using ruses, deception, and aggression to carry out a ruthless, unforgiving, and chaotic mass deportation operation. Masked and unidentified immigration officers are arresting people in the streets, during daily commutes, and even as parents drop their children off at school. ICE agents are luring parents into their offices with promises of reunification with a detained child, only to detain the parent and force their children to linger in custody indefinitely. Immigration officers are terrifying children and families - zip-tying children in their pajamas in the middle of the night, forcing detained children onto planes, physically assaulting individuals during routine encounters, and even [killing people](#) on the [streets](#). These escalations show no signs of abating, as the administration continues to defend and [enable](#) ICE practices.

ICE is arresting and detaining parents and primary caregivers, individuals with [no criminal history](#), and those with pending applications or lawful status, including fully vetted [refugees](#). Even U.S. citizens are being racially profiled and [detained for hours](#) without lawful authority, despite asserting their citizenship. Detention facilities are exceeding capacity, leading to overcrowded and [deteriorating conditions](#) that exacerbate detention fatigue and [serious mental](#) and [physical health](#) concerns. Recent legal developments have made release from detention increasingly unattainable without time-intensive federal court litigation. At the same time, access to counsel is diminishing precisely when the need for representation has grown exponentially.

As a result, an unprecedented number of people are turning to GHIRP for legal representation and reliable information. They come to us seeking safety and fighting to keep their families together. Our team has responded to this new reality with compassion, fierce advocacy and unwavering



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focus. Each time a federal judge rules in our client's favor and declares their ICE detention unlawful, or when a client is granted lawful protections, my hope and optimism soars above the chaos and harm. We secured asylum for a transgender woman from Honduras, a child from Nicaragua who survived years of violent abuse, and a politically active youth from Cuba (among many other successes). These victories fuel us and propel us forward, even in the face of overwhelming barriers.

As we enter 2026, we do so knowing that the challenges ahead will be even greater than those of last year. Several of GHIRP's most critical programs are vulnerable to being partially or completely defunded, threatening access to justice for the thousands of people we serve each year. Our impacted services include the following:

- GHIRP's **Detained Adult Program** represents adults in the four Houston-area ICE detention facilities. These detained services are essential, particularly after the administration defunded longstanding programs in 2025 that once offered free, accessible immigration information and assistance to detained individuals facing deportation. Although we remain hopeful, [litigation](#) initiated by the Texas Attorney General could shut down this program imminently, leaving detained individuals without access to free legal representation.
- The **Community Immigration Program** holds monthly walk-in clinics where people line up at our door starting at 6:00am for the chance to speak with an attorney or accredited representative. Our team delivers critical Know Your Rights presentations, legal consultations, and representation to individuals. On a single clinic day, we serve between 40 and 80 people, and we reached approximately 535 individuals in 2025. Funding for this program is set to expire in September 2026.
- GHIRP's **Friend of Court Program** serves as an attorney-of-the-day program in Immigration Court, assisting unrepresented individuals navigate an extraordinarily complex legal process. Last year, we served 990 individuals through this program.
- Our **Immigrant Children and Youth** program provides child-friendly, trauma-informed legal representation to children who are facing deportation—some as young as 2 years old. Without GHIRP's representation, many of these children would be required to defend themselves alone in court, standing before a judge and against an ICE attorney. Yet, the federal funding we depend on to provide these services, along with more than eighty other nonprofits nationwide, has been a target of the Administration's cuts since the beginning, and due to [recent developments](#) we now face an uncertain future.

Despite all of this, we are not deterred by these challenges. **We are here to stay.** We will stand up for communal values and for fundamental, inalienable rights. The year ahead will be filled with **resilience and relentless determination.** In 2026, GHIRP will:



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- Overcome new barriers to continue providing representation and to reinstate *pro se* legal services for unrepresented individuals detained in Houston-area detention facilities. Despite significant headwinds, we will help clients obtain legal relief, work to reunify families, and hold ICE accountable for their unlawful practices.
- Reinforce existing partnerships, and build new ones, to continue providing high-quality, holistic representation to unaccompanied children held in ORR detention facilities and those in our community. Together, we will push back on the comprehensive [attack](#) on children's rights by amplifying their voices, safeguarding due process, and centering their health and well-being.
- GHIRP will keep our doors open for walk-in clinics and court-based services at least once each month to meet the urgent needs of unrepresented immigrants facing deportation.

We need your support to help us meet and exceed our 2026 goals. As we actively seek new funding sources and partnerships, every dollar you give strengthens the durability of our legal services, and every message you share expands our collective capacity to create change.

On April 25, 2026, we invite you to Dan Electro's for our 2026 Spring Festival Fundraiser, where we will celebrate GHIRP's 5th anniversary, honor how far we've come together, and help power the advocacy and impact still ahead.

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

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