

ANNUAL REPORT

- 2022 -



Open the borders, close the jails



Summary

In 2022 Free Migration Project focused on internal growth of our organization, while also achieving some big wins in our fight for freedom of movement. With more capacity, this year we solidified our legal services workflow to be able to serve our clients more efficiently. We also boosted our efforts on some of our public-facing campaigns. We continued to follow our strategic plan and look forward to wrapping up the goals we outlined for ourselves in the coming years. Finally, as we celebrated our 6th year of operations, we're grateful to our clients, peers and supporters for believing in our mission and work!

In solidarity,
Adrianna, Alex & Dave

Campaign Work

Shut Down Berks

After a hard-fought, eight-year campaign to permanently shut down the immigrant prison in Berks County, we did it! On November 30, 2022 it was announced that the Biden administration will be canceling the ICE contract with Berks County effective January 31, 2023. This victory shows that when we fight together to demand freedom, nothing is impossible. For decades, the U.S. government has sent people seeking safety - including toddlers and infants - to Berks. The government's decision to close the prison is the result of years of organizing led by community members impacted by ICE raids and jails, including parents who were incarcerated at Berks with their children. As a core member of the Shut Down Berks Coalition we celebrate this victory while continuing to fight so that everyone who is currently incarcerated at Berks walks free and the site is never used as a prison again.



August 26, 2022: FMP Board President, Jasmine Rivera addresses a crowd in front of the White House at a protest organized by the Shut Down Berks Coalition.

Photo Credit: John Cheng



October 28, 2022: Deputy Director, Adrianna Torres-García & Executive Director, David Bennion speak to press at SDBC rapid response action.

Photo Credit: Andy Kang



End Medical Deportation Campaign

In June 2020, Jefferson Torresdale Hospital attempted to deport A.V., a member of the Philadelphia community, after he suffered catastrophic brain injuries as a pedestrian in a motorcycle accident a month before. His family reached out to Free Migration Project, and we quickly mobilized community members, advocates, medical students and even city council members to stop the deportation. Once the deportation was successfully halted, A.V.'s family asked FMP staff to continue organizing against this awful practice, because they "hope no one else has to go through something like this again."

Free Migration Project continues to lead the coalition that formed in regular meetings to organize against medical deportations. We have produced a comprehensive report about medical deportation, launched a research project to better understand people's knowledge about medical deportations and created an End Medical Deportation hotline. We have also been laying the groundwork to engage Philadelphia City Council in establishing local policies that protect immigrants in medical deportation cases. We hope that this campaign brings together many sectors of the community to put a stop to this heinous practice. Hospitals should not be deporting immigrants, and immigrants should not have to fear deportation when they are seeking medical treatment.



November 30, 2022: Members of the End Medical Deportation Campaign held an information session with Jefferson University medical students on the role of students in organizing against medical deportations.

Photo Credit: Jordan Atkins

ICE Civil Fines on Sanctuary Leaders

In 2018 ICE targeted a small number of other outspoken immigrant leaders living in sanctuary churches with exorbitant civil fines of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Free Migration Project coordinated with other organizations and the targeted leaders to sue ICE for violating their constitutional rights. In April of 2021, after sustained litigation and advocacy, ICE rescinded its policy of issuing retaliatory civil fines against immigrant leaders. In September 2022, a federal judge ordered ICE to turn over additional records it had likely withheld about the civil fines program. The targeted sanctuary leaders continue to fight for permanent status in the U.S.

Sanctuary Leader Suyapa and her children walk to freedom.

Photo Credit: Adrianna Torres-García



Legal Services & Community-Supported Deportation Defense Campaigns

Free Migration Project provides immigration legal representation to low-income clients, with a focus on cases involving asylum, unaccompanied minors, DACA, family petitions, and victims of trafficking or domestic violence. We strive to integrate abolitionist principles into our legal work to achieve favorable outcomes for our clients. **We believe that through community support and strategic lawyering, there is a path to freedom for every client.**

Support for Stateless Community Leaders

Free Migration Project continues to build a collaborative relationship with United Stateless, an organization that advocates for the rights of stateless people in the U.S. We now represent two of United Stateless's founding members in their immigration cases, Karina and Miliyon. Stateless people face unique challenges since they do not hold the citizenship of any country in the world.

Karina Ambartsoumian-Clough came to the U.S. as a child with her family seeking asylum. She became stateless after her country of birth, the Soviet Union, dissolved.



Miliyon, stateless community member represented by FMP in his efforts to obtain legal protections in the U.S. and become a citizen.

Photo credit: Miliyon



Through collaborative work between Free Migration Project and United Stateless, Karina's deportation order was lifted by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) this year and she was granted parole-in-place so she can apply for her green card.

Miliyon was made stateless and tortured by the government in his country of origin many years ago. He fled to the U.S. and applied for asylum, but his case was wrongly denied. Along with another organization, Free Migration Project represents Miliyon in his efforts to reopen his case and obtain legal protections in the U.S. in his long-term struggle to become a citizen.

“I'm very grateful to have Free Migration Project in my life. **Free Migration Project cares about stateless people and human rights.** It is a life changing organization!”

- Miliyon

Justice for Denis & Julio

Denis Calderon and Julio Maldonado are cousins born in Peru, who were raised in the U.S. since they were children. In 1996, when they were in their early 30's, a mob of young white men attacked them as they walked to Denis' neighborhood bar around the corner from his home in Northeast Philadelphia. The group first assaulted them with racist slurs, then with beer bottles, fists, and knives. When the police arrived at the scene, they zeroed in on Denis and Julio, the two non-white men, despite the fact that they were the ones surrounded by a hostile group.

Denis and Julio were unjustly charged and eventually wrongfully convicted of aggravated assault by a judge in a bench trial. Despite both men having longtime

permanent resident status and Denis being married to an U.S. citizen, when they were wrongly convicted, their legal immigration status was revoked. After they had already served their prison sentence, Denis and Julio were sentenced once again to exile, and separation from their home and families through deportation.

This year Denis's case was approved to be heard by the Pennsylvania Board of Pardons. A pardon would get Denis one step closer to reuniting with his children in the U.S. However, we recently received the unfortunate news that his case will not be heard this year. We continue to advocate for a fair and efficient clemency process for families facing separation by borders or prison walls.



Denis Calderón joins protest via videocall from Perú. Jesenia Calerón, Denis's daughter, holds up a sign in support of her father.

Photo Credit: Nigel Charles

December 8, 2022: María Calderón, Denis's sister addresses news crews and protesters in Philadelphia.

Photo Credit: Nigel Charles



Pardons Project

Free Migration Project partners with VietLead, a grassroots community organization serving the Southeast Asian community in Philadelphia, to help Cambodian and Vietnamese people who were deported due to harsh immigration penalties for criminal convictions return to their communities in the U.S. Through collaboration with peer organizations like VietLead, we have been able to tackle these complex cases creatively. We filed pardon applications for community members and are exploring options to prevent deportation for some at-risk people still in the U.S. Through this work, we are advocating for reforms to the system that punishes immigrants convicted of crimes twice: first through prison, and then again through deportations and exile.



Vietlead leaders embrace as they are reunited with their community.

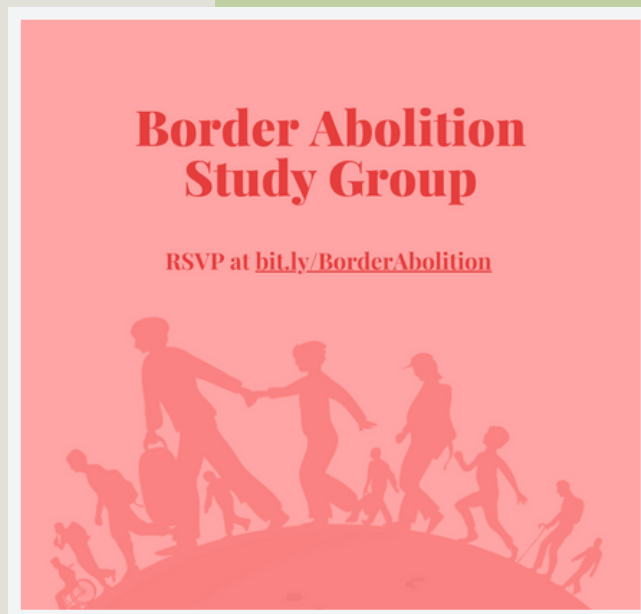
Photo Credit: The Philadelphia Inquirer

Education & Outreach

Border Abolition Study Group

This year we have focused on education, both internally and externally. One of our latest initiatives, co-hosted with Tsuru for Solidarity and Detention Watch Network, is the Border Abolition Study Group. This is a free, bilingual, six-session space where we will cover topics like Border Abolition 101, Carceral Economies, and Decolonization. **We believe in creating spaces to deepen our understanding of abolition and draw the connections between immigrant rights and prison abolition.** The Border Abolition Study Group's first session was on November 17, 2022, and sessions will continue through the spring of 2023. This project has truly been a labor of love and dedication reflecting our organizational commitments to abolitionist values. We hope to receive support that will help us create facilitation guides and materials for other groups looking to self-organize study groups of their own.

Through the Border Abolition Study Group we are able to fulfill our mission to "promote freedom of movement as a basic human right"



Infrastructure

Professional Development, Organizational Equity, and Capacity-Building

Free Migration Project staff and board are currently working with racial equity professionals at Leaders of Change to evaluate and ensure race equity is centered in organizational policies and culture. Earlier in 2022, staff and board completed a fundraising training program facilitated by Cause Effective to help Free Migration Project build individual giving to increase organizational capacity. Staff has continued to build key skills and knowledge through ongoing professional development, including training on fundraising, and communications. and legal training on trafficking visas.

*Left to right:
Jasmine Rivera, Board President
Adrianna Torres-García, Deputy Director
David Bennion, Executive Director
Alexandra Santos Boheciamp, Staff Attorney
Katia Pérez, Board Secretary*



December 21, 2022: FMP at the "All We Want for Christmas... is Freedom for All!" caroling mobilization in the ICE Field Office, Philadelphia, organized by the Shut Down Berks Coalition.

Internship Program

Since 2016 Free Migration Project has been building what is now a robust internship program. Legal Interns, and Communications & Social Media Interns are integral to our work, they bring new ideas and curiosity that pushes our mission forward. Interns expand our capacity as an organization by doing research, creating content and even strategizing on complex issues. FMP interns have the opportunity to join us in rallies, protests and campaign work, giving them a unique hands-on experience. Our interns are funded through each of their institutions, some choose FMP as their practicum site and obtain course credits for their time with us.

"Through this internship, I learned more about the great lengths the U.S. goes to remove migrants in their most vulnerable of times. It is disgusting. I was given an opportunity to learn the ropes of social media management by using multiple programs and by operating multiple platforms. This experience was invaluable."

Jordan Atkins

Temple University, Film and Media Arts Major w. a Minor in Content Creation, Spring 2024



July 9, 2022: FMP interns and staff at a mobilization organized by the Shut Down Berks Coalition in front of the Berks immigrant prison.

Left to right:

Adrianna Torres-García, Deputy Director

Hector Brandt, J.D. Candidate, Temple University, 2024

Susana Hernández, J.D. Candidate, Temple University, 2024

David Bennion, Executive Director

We host interns for every term, but during the summer we offer a seven-week, abolitionist curriculum where as a team we grapple with and learn about abolitionist ideas. While we mostly follow the Abolitionist Futures curriculum, we add a session where we explore what abolition looks like in the immigration context. Each week a staff member or an intern takes turns facilitating the discussion and guiding the group through the readings. We are fortunate to have hosted excellent students from several institutions in and outside of Philadelphia over the years. **We look forward to seeing all of our interns succeed in all their endeavors!**



“I am so grateful to FMP for giving me the opportunity to be an intern. The immigration system is so very complex and I learned a lot during my time as an intern that I will take with me moving forward. It was a privilege to work with Dave as well as some of the clients. FMP as an organization is doing important work for the immigrant community in Philadelphia.”

Nafissatou Dicko

J.D. Candidate, Widener University, 2023

Past Communications & Social Media Interns

Kathy Piperno, Temple U., Film & Media Arts Major and Advertising Major; **Eddie Burgos**, Oberlin College, Environmental Studies and Africana Studies; **Catherine Howard**, Duke U., Public Policy Studies and International Comparative Studies; **Julia Donohe**, Temple U., Communication and Social Influence Major, Spanish Major, and Criminal Justice Minor; **Asha Mir-Young**, Psychology Major; **Jordan Atkins**, Temple U., Film and Media Arts Major, Content Creation Minor

Past Law Interns

Leonard Olsen, NYU; **Thomas Chapman**, Temple U.; **Deborah Osborn**, Pennsylvania State U.; **Adalberto Rosado**, Temple U.; **Angie Stoltzfus**, Temple U.; **Emma Bally**, Oberlin College; **Hector Brandt**, Temple U.; **Susana Hernández**, Temple U.; **Nafissatou Dicko**, Widener U.; **Carolyn Messer**, Temple U.



December 21, 2022: FMP's first ever intern, Leonard Olsen & Executive Director, David Bennion at SDBC mobilization.



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