



AMERICAN GATEWAYS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

June 2023

From the Desk of Rebecca Lightsey, Co-Executive Director

June is Immigrant Heritage Month, a time for celebrating and honoring the immigrants who have shaped this country, and this state's, progress. Today, Texas is home to some of the most diverse communities in the country. According to the U.S. Census, Texas is the 6th most diverse state in the country; Houston is the most diverse city in U.S. and Dallas is the fourth most diverse. Numerous studies have shown that diversity helps lead to innovation, creativity and social cohesion. We celebrate that diversity here at American Gateways!

Last Friday, we celebrated Immigrant Heritage with our annual June Fiesta in Austin. It was great to connect with so many clients, former clients, volunteers, and supporters. At the Fiesta, we recognized one of our stellar volunteers - Nick Dauster. Nick is a fluent translator, compassionate advocate for our clients, and very generous with his talent and time. He has been volunteering with us for years; in the last two years alone, he has donated over 100 hours! Below are a few photos from the evening. Thanks to everyone who came & celebrated with us.

Unfortunately, not everyone in Texas shares our view that diversity and welcoming immigrants is positive for our state. Just last month, there was yet another court hearing on the legality of DACA. A lawsuit brought in 2018 by a coalition of nine states, led by Texas' currently suspended Attorney General Ken Paxton, alleges that DACA is illegal because it provides benefits to DACA recipients through federal regulations that only Congress can approve. The lawsuit has been in courts for years, keeping current DACA recipients and their families in limbo and prohibiting new individuals who qualify for this protection from applying for initial DACA status. The hearing last month was the latest legal maneuvering on the case. It is very likely the lower court will rule DACA is illegal, and that decision will be appealed. This will continue to keep those with DACA status in a vulnerable, unstable legal status.

To hear first-hand how that is affecting the lives of DACA recipients, see this [Texas Tribune](#)

[story](#), which features two American Gateways clients. As one DACA recipient, Eliana Fernandez, the immigrant justice director for Faith in Action, a national immigrant rights advocacy group said in the article, “I am tired of having to continue to hold my breath as DACA continues to be under threat,” Fernandez said. “Every time there is a hearing or as we await a verdict, I not only have to prepare myself but also my children, my parents, my brother, and the rest of my family. This is exhausting and terrifying.”

As we’ve pointed out repeatedly, what is needed is comprehensive immigration reform.



Staff Anniversaries

Join us in celebrating our staff in their work anniversaries!

[Elizabeth Almanza](#), Immigration Court Help Desk Coordinator &
Senior Department of Justice Fully Accredited Representative - 8 years

[Naveen Flores-Dixit](#), Staff Attorney - 2 years

[Jonathan Levy](#), Senior Staff Attorney - 6 years

[Valentin Padilla](#), Legal Caseworker - 1 year

[Ingrid Olarte](#), Legal Caseworker - 6 years

Upcoming Events

We invite you or anyone you know to our **Virtual Immigrant Justice 101 events**, which take place quarterly. Our next event will be on September 8, 2023. You can register [here](#).

Fall Luncheon: Stay tuned for details of this year's Fall Luncheon in October. More information in our following newsletter!

Want to donate?

Donate today to provide access to justice to immigrants. Your partnership allows us to provide critical legal services to individuals and families seeking safety, hope, and freedom.

Give Today

