

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022



Human  
Rights  
Initiative

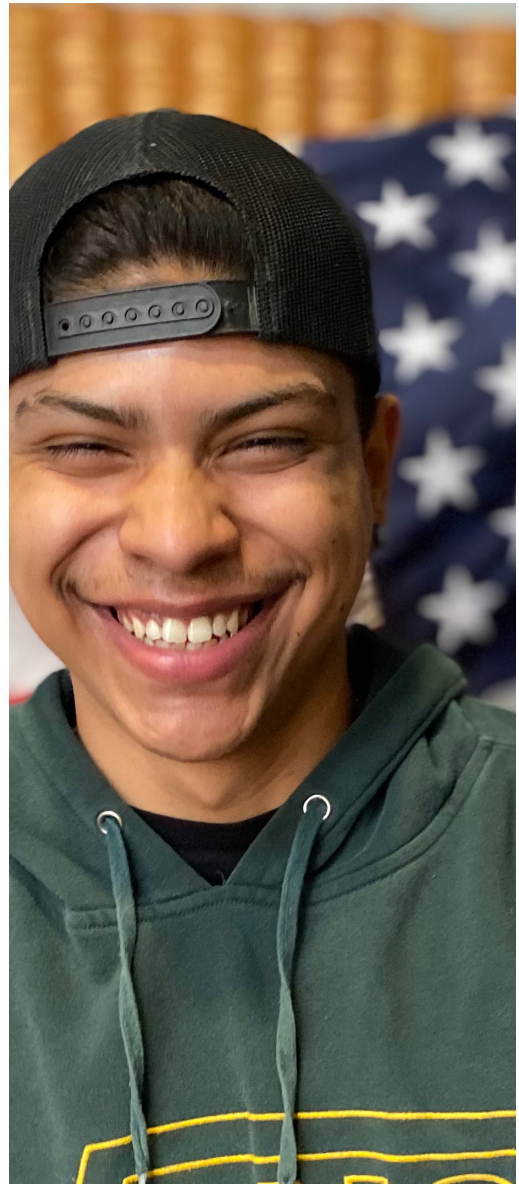


# HRI ANNUAL REPORT 22

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# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME

**BILL HOLSTON**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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Greetings,

It has been an extremely productive year at HRI. This Annual Report contains some important and impressive statistics about our 2022 fiscal year.

For instance, our legal staff worked on 578 Legal Cases. Our capable all-female social services team served approximately 3,000 clients and distributed over \$74,000 in direct client aid. And as a staff, we conducted numerous outreach activities.

We tried Asylum cases in immigration Court, went to asylum interviews, prepared Green card applications and DACA renewals. We worked on SO many work authorizations for our hard-working clients. We went to family court and obtained Court Orders. And we kept you informed on the changes in immigration work through townhalls and social media posts.

These are critical data points for us as we evaluate our work and strive to grow and improve our services to clients. But they don't tell our whole story. For that you need to see the faces of the people whose lives have been changed.

Over and over again this year our team met with individuals, groups, and families who came into the office to pick up their green cards! In some cases, we had been working six or seven years for the case to conclude. We have been there when a Judge granted asylum to a client.





# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME

BILL HOLSTON

Letter (cont.)

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We see the looks not only of relief -- but joy -- because they know they are now safe here in the United States from threatened prison, torture, or death. We hear the expressions of gratitude as individuals come to pick up emergency aid. This may be something as simple as a bag of groceries, some extra toothpaste or shampoo or as life changing as a month of rental assistance to avoid eviction.

These changed lives are what we all work for, and they are a constant reminder of why this work is so critical. We know our clients are brave, hardworking, and powerful individuals who are facing things most of us cannot comprehend. It is why we always approach the work in an attitude of profound respect.

And you are a vital part of all that! You might be a pro bono lawyer, a mentor, a translator or one of our donors who provide the resources to accomplish this critical mission. You might not be in the room to see those faces, but you are there! When you write a check, translate a document, mentor or represent a client, or volunteer to do office labor - you are an integral part of those changed lives.

This report is the best way we know to relate to you how precious this work is to those of us who are here every single day. Thank you for changing lives and futures with your presence, your counsel, and your financial support. Were it not for you, we could not do the wonderful things you will read about in this report.

Warmly,

**bill holston**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



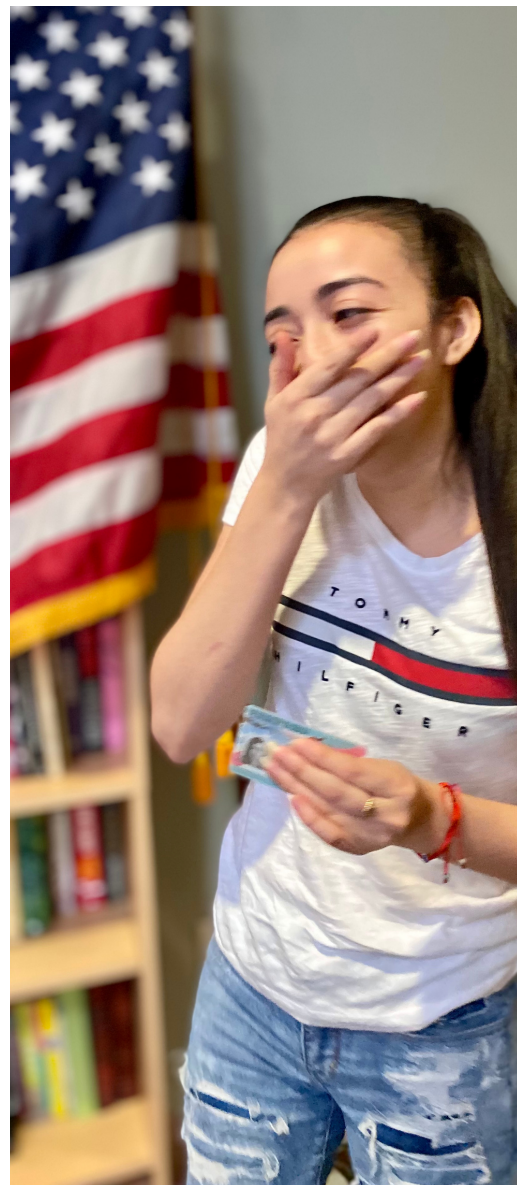
# WHO WE ARE

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## ABOUT HRI

**Mission:** Human Rights Initiative exists to serve immigrant survivors of human rights abuses by providing free legal and social services.

**Vision:** We believe human rights should be guaranteed and human dignity diligently protected. We envision a country that empowers and welcomes immigrants.



# WHO WE ARE

## BACKGROUND

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### HISTORY

Founded 22 years ago by social worker Serena Simmons Connelly and lawyer Elizabeth Healy, Dallas-based Human Rights Initiative of North Texas has grown into an award-winning agency serving immigrant survivors of human rights abuses from all over the world. Our courageous, resilient clients are eligible to apply for legal status under the humanitarian provisions of United States immigration laws and policies. They are

- asylum seekers fleeing persecution;
- children who have been abandoned, abused, or neglected; and
- survivors of family violence and violent crimes eligible under provisions of the Violence Against Women Act or U-Visa statute.

HRI's Legal team partners with our network of pro bono attorneys to help clients access the U.S. Immigration System to gain legal status and employment authorization. HRI Social Services offers transitional support, case management, and referrals. Our Advocacy program exists to make systemic change in a way that is accountable and transparent to the people and communities we serve directly into the fights and wins.

At HRI, all services are free, and all are designed to help forge a path to safety, freedom, and opportunity. For more information, visit [www.hrionline.org](http://www.hrionline.org).

### MODEL:

Human Rights Initiative is proud of our innovative and efficient model: to provide the highest quality services at no cost to clients, HRI pairs in-house expertise with an extensive volunteer network. HRI recruits, trains, and supports pro bono attorneys, translators, mentors, interns, office and event volunteers, and others.

# OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

KALI COHN + BRENDA TODWONG  
ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM

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This fiscal year began with great promise of a change to our immigration system: a recognition that this broken, racist system causing pain to so many does not reflect the America we imagine that we are. The promise was the Build Back Better Act, which would have created a pathway to citizenship to so many disenfranchised. To Dreamers. To Farmworkers. To Essential Workers. To Temporary Protected Status holders.



As the bill gained momentum, we continued our day-to-day work. Our team continued to represent our clients in immigration court, to file applications and renewals, to help problem-solve through life challenges, and—most of all—to support and wait alongside our clients mired in the backlog as they endured the unimaginable anguish of limbo

But we also put our hope into action. Leaders in our client-led advocacy group, HRI Connect, went on record with KERA/NPR to talk about the backlog's effect on them. Supporters like you lit up the phones of our representatives demanding change. Together, HRI Connect leaders and HRI supporters met with elected officials. We helped them reverberate the thunder that immigrants are essential.

Unfortunately, that great change was held hostage by the political process. And along the way, the Biden Administration failed to realize many immigration changes in its purview. In some ways, that means that the fiscal year has ended much the way it began.



# OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

letter (cont.)

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Asylum seekers continue to struggle to make it into the United States to make their bid for safety. Title 42 and the Remain in Mexico policy—vestiges of a white supremacist agenda advanced by Trump’s adviser, Stephen Miller—remain. Although the Biden Administration at last agreed with public health officials that Title 42’s expulsions were both unnecessary and cruel, its end has been stopped by courts. As of June 30, 2022, the Remain in Mexico policy also remains mired in litigation. The effect: people at the border—but especially Black immigrants—face record levels of violence and danger in their attempts to flee to safety.

The immigration backlog continues to take a toll. We hoped that additional funding to the main immigration agency—USCIS—in last year’s federal budget would ease some of the burden. But this year, we were forced to watch helplessly as the backlog on work permit renewals forced people out of jobs, just because USCIS couldn’t review their applications fast enough. We were grateful when the Administration finally extended the automatic renewal period, but not before the backlog had already caused irreparable harm.

And millions of people, who have raised families in the United States, who have worked their lives to build this country, who are Americans in all but their passport, are still without relief.

We should not be required to defend the reality that we are all living, breathing people that are the same, on a planet that none of us created. But we are here.

And so, we will keep raising our voices, and hold the people in power accountable for what is happening under their watch. And we look forward to next fiscal year, believing in an America that sees its own abundance, that recognizes we are all freer when we can cross these imaginary lines, and that realizes its vision that we all are created equal.

kali cohn and  
brenda todwong

ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO MAKE CHANGE

## OVERVIEW OF OUR PROGRAMS

HRI PROVIDES FREE LEGAL SERVICES TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE SUFFERED HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, INCLUDING

- Asylum seekers fleeing persecution based on religion, race, ethnicity, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group
- Those protected under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Victims of Trafficking and the Violence Protection Act
- Immigrants abused by a U.S. Citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident (Green Card holder) spouse
- Immigrant children who are victims of violent crimes, neglect, abuse, or abandonment

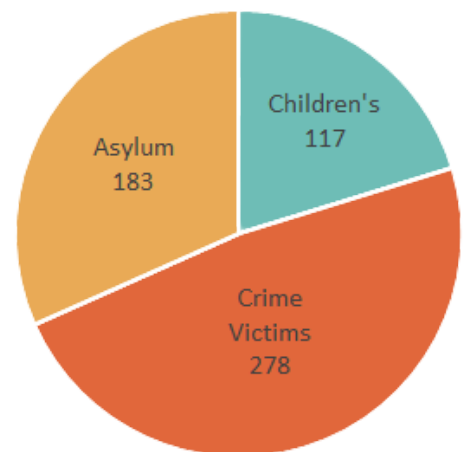
### APPROVALS

78% Asylum Program

100% Children's Program

98% Crime Victims Program

### 578 LEGAL CLIENTS



### RESULTS

57 Green Cards

59 Work Permits

87 Cases Closed

# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO MAKE CHANGE

## OVERVIEW OF OUR PROGRAMS (cont.)

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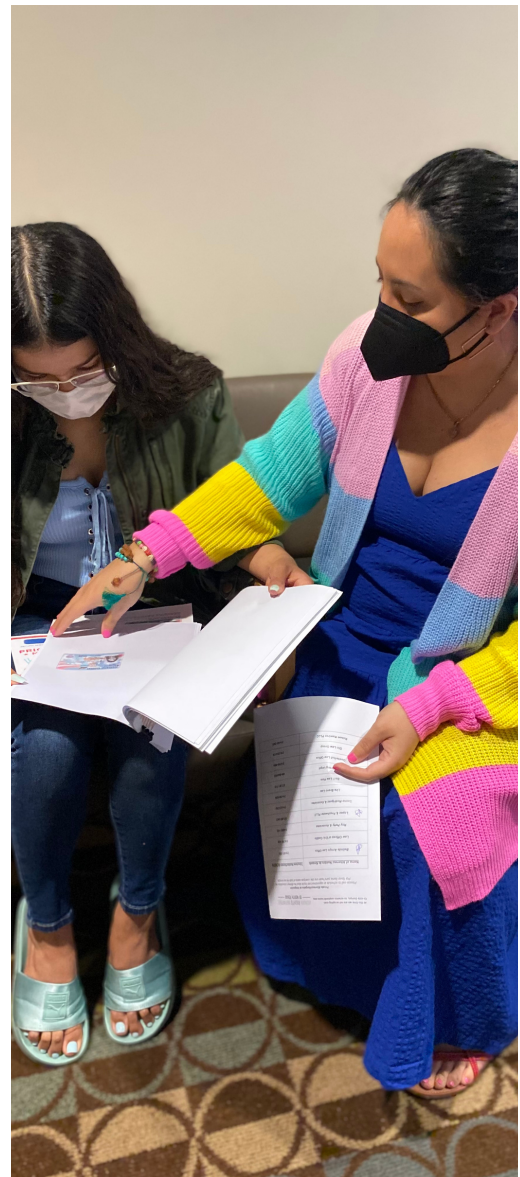
### HRI ALSO PROVIDES SOCIAL SERVICES TO ITS LEGAL CLIENTS, INCLUDING:

- Community referrals to appropriate area service providers
- Job search assistance
- Workshops and group activities, including programs for youth
- Direct advocacy
- Guidance on obtaining documents and accessing benefits programs

HRI's primary legal services are separated into three programs: Asylum, Crime Victims, and Children's Program.

Advocacy, Social Services, Development, and Volunteer programs round out the rest of our organization.

HRI clients are eligible to receive critical support through our Social Services Program. They and their loved ones can participate in peer empowerment advocacy programs to address systemic barriers to achieving safety and stability.





# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO MAKE CHANGE

## LEGAL PROGRAMS

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**ASYLUM PROGRAM:** Asylum is protection for people who are afraid to return to their home country because they believe they will be harmed or will endure suffering because of their identity.

**CHILDREN'S PROGRAM:** Special protections in our immigration laws exist for undocumented kids who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by one of their parents.

**CRIME VICTIMS PROGRAM:** There are some special protections in our immigration laws for undocumented people who have survived or witnessed some serious crimes or domestic violence, and who have helped law enforcement investigate or prosecute those crimes.

HRI's clients must live in North Texas, and we can only provide free services to clients whose incomes are at or below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines.



# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO MAKE CHANGE

## LEGAL PROGRAM CHALLENGES

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Asylum clients are struggling with their applications falling into backlogs and prolonged wait times in the immigration systems- USCIS and EOIR, and embassies/consulates abroad.

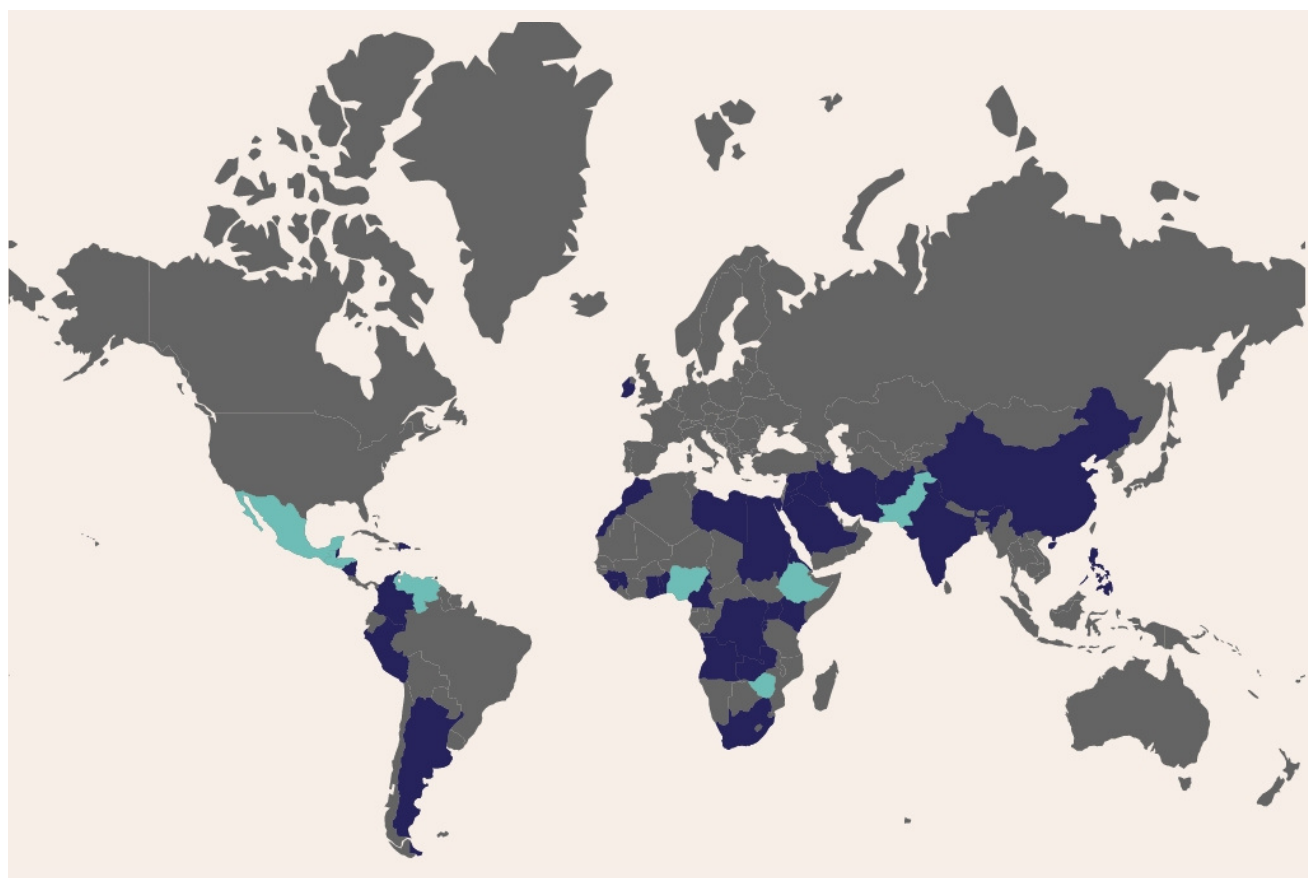
Backlogs and long wait times have resulted in clients dealing with expired employment authorization as they wait for their renewal applications to be adjudicated. This leads to instability in their jobs and with renewing driver licenses and TX identification cards. Thankfully, this has been improved for some clients with an automatic extension of time to 540 days by the USCIS!

The limit on the number of U-Visas that may be granted to principal petitioners each year is 10,000. This cap has been reached every year since fiscal year 2011, and the visa backlog as of the end of FY 2021 stands over 170,000, growing on average by over 16,000 applications annually between FY 2011 and FY 2021. It currently takes up to 10 years for USCIS to fully process U visa applications.



# HRI: LEGAL SNAPSHOT

The monumental triumph of escaping abusive environments often demands everything from survivors. By the time they reach American soil, they may possess little more than the will to build a new life. Even the most fortunate among them may be ill-equipped to navigate the difficult legal process that awaits, let alone provide for themselves and their loved ones.



Our clients' top countries of origin are:

Mexico	35%
Honduras	16%
El Salvador	13%
Venezuela	5%
Zimbabwe	4%
D.R. Congo	3%
Guatemala	2%
Nicaragua	2%

HRI's clients  
come from  
every corner  
of the globe.



# HRI: LEGAL SNAPSHOT

They have the will. They have the ability. But not the resources. They don't want a handout. They need a helping hand. Without it, choices and opportunities dwindle, and we all suffer the loss of the potential each person holds.

We choose to extend the safety, liberty, and hope America has given us to those who desperately need it.

## County of Residence

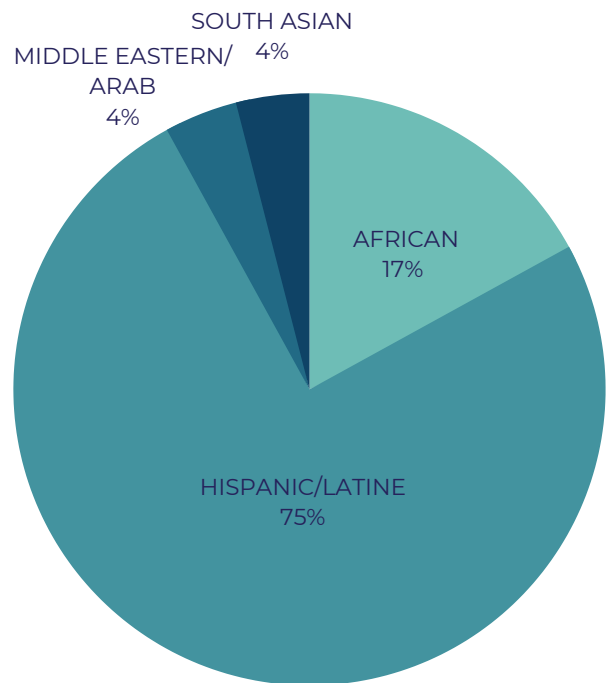


- Dallas County
- Tarrant County
- Collin County
- Denton County



**18%** ages 0-18      **71%** ages 18-50      **11%** ages 50+

## FY 2022 CLIENTS:



- Hispanic/Latine
- African
- Middle Eastern/Arab
- South Asian

# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO SERVE

## SOCIAL SERVICES



The Social Services department provides supportive services to clients awaiting resolution of their legal cases. This includes identifying a family's most urgent needs, linking them to our community partners, and providing advocacy and guidance when they encounter challenges and barriers to obtaining documents and services.

In addition, in individual case management and crisis intervention, typical Social Services programs include:

- ESL classes
- Youth Empowerment Program (YEP), an educational program offering guidance for immigrant youth
- Holiday Wish, which provides free gifts and grocery cards to our families in need during the holiday season
- Essentials for Life, offering toiletries, baby care items, and other supplies throughout the year



Financial Assistance:  
\$74,726



313 grocery gift cards  
(\$50/ea)



Essentials bundles:  
235 food, 205  
toiletries/hygiene, 106  
diapers & wipes



Holiday Wish served 47  
households, 199  
individuals



In all, HRI Social  
Services benefited  
approximately 3,000  
individuals

# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO SERVE

## SOCIAL SERVICES (cont.)

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### Direct Advocacy and Guidance

HRI staff members are expert advocates in helping our clients obtain government documents, educating clients on what benefits they are eligible for, assisting clients to apply for government programs, and helping clients accessing community services. They assist clients in learning what they need to do, how to do it, and answer any questions along the way. With this individualized guidance, clients are not improperly turned away or denied services that they may have had trouble accessing on their own.

### Direct Aid

In FY 2021, HRI distributed around \$50,000 in rental assistance and an additional \$20,000 in microgrants that clients often used to alleviate their rental burden or to avoid a





# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO SERVE

## SOCIAL SERVICES (cont.)

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disconnection of utilities. Additionally, 313 grocery cards (\$50 each), 205 bags of toiletries, 235 bags of food, and 106 bags of diapers and wipes were given out to HRI families, along with many other items such as kitchen equipment, bedding, and clothing.

### Referrals and Community Partnerships

HRI's Social Services Department has partnerships with several community agencies, including direct partnerships with Agape Clinic, The Giving Fridge, North Texas Food Bank, Momentous Institute, Therapy Works, and Mosaic Family Services. HRI Social Services maintains collaborative relationships with these agencies to address gaps in social services that HRI does not provide including medical care, dental care, food, job assistance, ESL and GED classes, and mental health services.



# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO SERVE

## SOCIAL SERVICES (cont.)

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The Social Services Department is communicating with existing and new community agencies to ensure our clients' needs are met.

### Group Programming

Every year, HRI staff plan social services programs and events to keep clients engaged with our agency and build connections with others outside of their legal case. This year, the Social Services department focused on the Youth Empowerment Program, designed to support youth who are high school students, recent high school graduates, or students completing their GED to achieve their education and career goals.

### Holiday Wish

The Holiday Wish program at HRI brings the joy of the season to our clients,





# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO SERVE

## SOCIAL SERVICES (cont.)

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many of whom are struggling and dealing with the worries and anxiety surrounding their legal cases. Thanks to the generosity of people like you, the Holiday Wish program can lend a hand to our neediest clients and their children through the purchase of gifts, in addition to grocery gift cards to purchase food for the holidays.

### Essentials for Life Program

This program offers the opportunity for volunteers and donors to organize or participate in supply drives. We provide our clients with blankets and warm winter clothing items, as well as hygiene items such as shampoo, conditioner, body wash, soap, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, sanitary pads, personal razors; and other essential supplies such as baby items.



# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO BUILD COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

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HRI's Advocacy Program develops leaders and builds power to bring about systemic change. We believe that change must be led by and accountable to the people it will impact. We also believe that change must be part of the broader movement for social, racial, and economic justice.

The Advocacy Program's foundation is in our client-led advocacy group, HRI Connect/Conexión. Connect is a group of immigrants and refugees who believe that community is power. Connect fights for a future with a just immigration system, affordable healthcare for all, and equal rights regardless of race or immigration status. While fighting for that future, Connect builds its ranks by offering community programs, health information sessions, and membership benefits like a medical emergency fund and legal consultations.





# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO BUILD COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY EDUCATION & ADVOCACY (cont.)

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Among the year's highlights:

- Hiring HRI's first-ever community organizer, **Brenda Todwong**
- **Hosting 30 Connect meetings** or programs, including 6 health-related sessions open to the public, 3 meetings with reporters, and a meeting with a Federal Congressperson
- **Expanding Connect programming** from bilingual (English/Spanish) to trilingual (English/Spanish/French)
- **Launching Connect social programming** for members and the community, which began with a potluck picnic and culminated in a trauma-healing yoga series
- **Launching Connect Preventative Care programming**, designed to get trusted healthcare information to our communities in the languages they need
- **Supporting Connect members** who spoke out about the harms of the immigration backlog on KERA and the Dallas Morning News



# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO ASSIST

## VOLUNTEERS

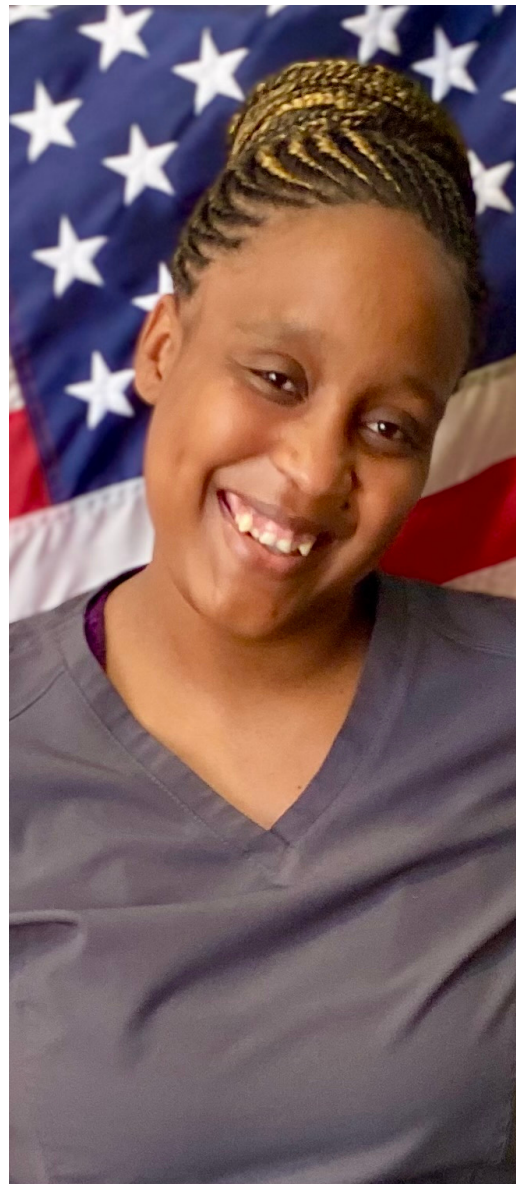
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Partnership is at the heart of everything we do at HRI.

Our dedicated Volunteer Director recruits and cultivates volunteers, oversees the matching of clients with pro bono attorneys, and supervises interns. In addition, our Volunteer Director also works with community volunteers in a non-legal capacity.

**Non-legal volunteers range from** professionals who provide medical assistance, mental health workers, volunteer translation and interpretation, and much more.

**Once matched, pro bono attorneys are** trained, supported, and supervised by Legal Department Directors. To support these efforts, HRI offers regular Continuing Legal Education programs and monthly volunteer trainings. All volunteers must pass a background check and sign a confidentiality agreement.



# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO ASSIST

## VOLUNTEERS (cont.)

### PRO BONO ATTORNEYS AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS

We actively recruit and train volunteers to help fulfill our mission: providing excellent, responsive, and always free legal and social services to immigrant survivors of human rights abuses. Pro Bono attorneys are recruited by work with our Pro Bono Association, networking with our active volunteers, speaking at Dallas Bar events, and advertising on our website and social media. We provide both regular quarterly and additional occasional Continued Legal Education (CLE) programs. These presentations describe our programs, offer foundational information on immigration, and outline the basics of client representation.

## PROFILE



# PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

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HRI leadership is actively involved in the North Texas Immigration Coalition, Force for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment Coalition (FIRE), ASISTA, and a number of local, statewide, and national coalitions and working groups that collectively strategize and exchange information regularly. We sustain regular outreach to faith communities and have spoken to Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Unitarian churches as well as synagogues.

HRI's Social Services Director has developed collaborative relationships with over 140 North Texas nonprofit agencies. Some of our strongest relationships include: Catholic Charities in Dallas and Fort Worth, Mosaic Family Services, DASH Network, Agape Clinic, Genesis Women's Shelter, Hope's Door, and Momentous Institute. More recently, HRI has begun working more closely with Family Compass, Jewish Family Services, New Life New Friends, youth and Family Centers within DISD, and the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center.



# HRI BOARD

## LIST OF MEMBERS

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HRI's board members bring a wealth of legal, business, and nonprofit management expertise to the organization. They are executives at national and multinational corporations, lawyers at corporate and specialty law firms, and leaders in the nonprofit and philanthropic community.

Each year, current Board members identify the skills and perspectives needed and generate prospective members. The Pro Bono Association is another significant source of potential leadership, as are members of our coalition partners.

Carolyn Ruiz | Chair  
Office of Civil Rights, US Department of  
Education

Betsy Healy | Co-Founder and Director  
Associate Director, Harold Simmons  
Foundation

Betty Yang | Secretary  
Of Counsel, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher

Anita Kelley | Director  
Vice President, Morgan Stanley

Kelly Rogers | Treasurer  
Executive Director, JP Morgan

Richard Lakpassa | Director  
Financial Consultant

Ashlie Alaman | Director  
Senior Corporate Counsel,  
Sammons Industrial

Eric Renner | Director  
Director of Mergers & Acquisitions Tax,  
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

Justin Banta | Director  
Callier Center for Communications  
Disorders

David Sillers | Director  
Attorney, Clare Locke

Jonathan Lin Davis | Director  
Consultative, Project Management and  
Finance professional

Ruth Villalonga | Director  
Vice President, DE&I Communications,  
H&K Strategies

# HRI WARRIORS

## HRI's CLIENTS

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*The entire village had gathered. My mother was crying. The village elder came towards me, with a jagged piece of glass. They had done this to a girl the year before. I remembered her screams. (SR, an FGM-related client, granted her Green Card through HRI in 2022.)*

*I want to be a nurse and my brother wants to be a firefighter. We have seen how helpers at HRI saved our lives. We want to save lives too! (SB, a SIJS client who received her Green Card, along with her brother, through HRI in 2022.)*

*I haven't seen my children and wife for 7 years now. The only reason we hold onto hope is because now I have my safety. I just want to make them safe. (JW, an asylum client who received his Green Card through HRI in 2022.)*



# HRI WARRIORS

## THE STAFF

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Bill Holston (he/him/his)  
Executive Director

Margarita Alarcón (she/her/ella)  
Spanish Language Fellow

Maryam Baig (she/her/hers)  
Marketing & Special Events Director

Ruth Brasier (she/her/hers)  
Assistant Development Director

Kali Cohn (she/her/hers)  
Community Education & Advocacy Director

Layne Faulkner (she/her/hers)  
Volunteer Director

Naschaly N. Gonzalez Montalvo (she/her)  
Case Management Coordinator & Legal Assistant

Veronica Gonzalez (she/her/hers)  
Children's Program Case Manager

Zeyla Gonzalez (she/her/hers)  
DOJ Accredited Representative



# HRI WARRIORS

## THE STAFF

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Sierra Houck (she/her/hers)  
Social Services Director

Tom Martin (he/him/his)  
Development Director

Elean Martinez (she/her/hers)  
Client Intake Manager

Kristina Morales (she/her/ella)  
DOJ Accredited Representative

Carolina Pina (she/her/hers)  
Case Management Coordinator & Legal Assistant

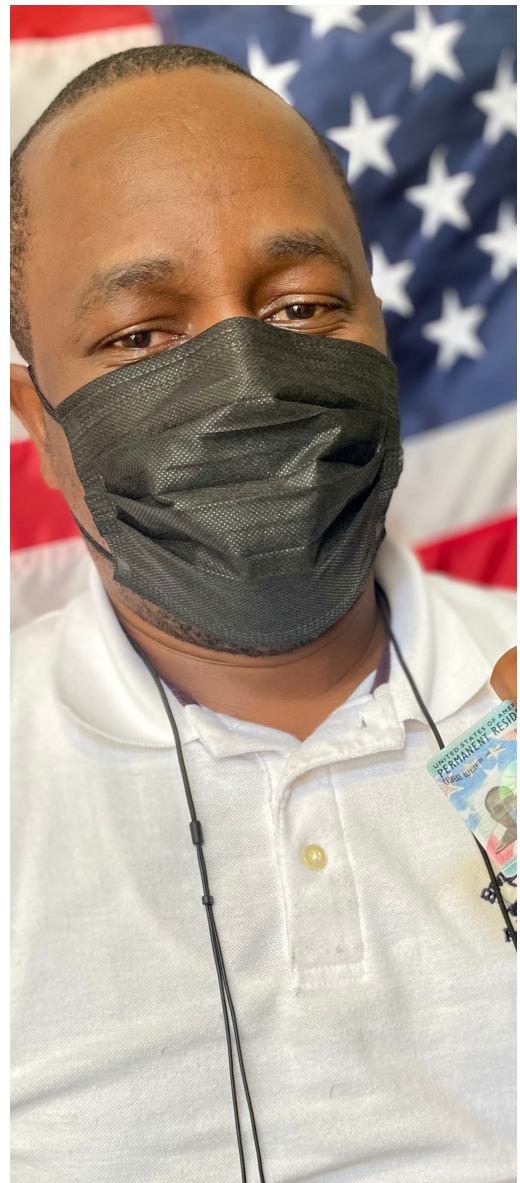
Antonio Reyes (he/him/his)  
G. Rollie White Trust Asylum Legal Fellow

Naomi Rios (she/her/ella)  
Crime Victims Program Case Manager

Cory Sagduyu (she/her/hers)  
G. Rollie White Trust Supervising Attorney

Jessica Thackway (she/her/hers)  
Staff Attorney

Brenda Todwong (she/her/hers)  
Advocacy Organizer





# THE FIGHT OF A LIFETIME TO SUSTAIN

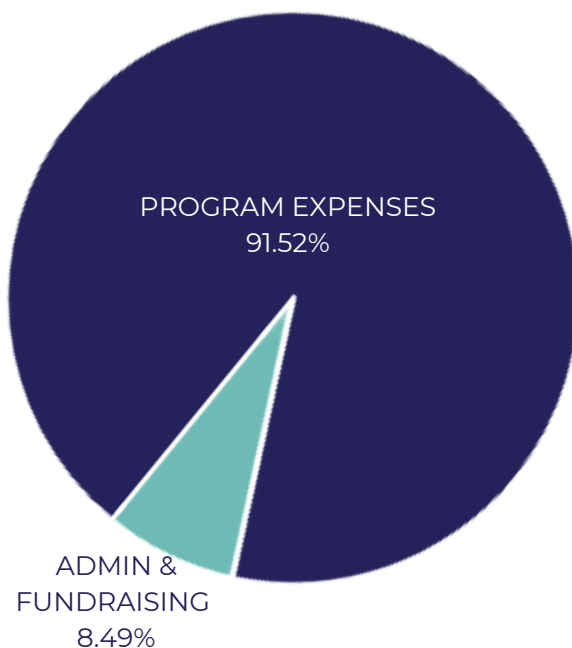
## DEVELOPMENT

TOTAL INCOME  
\$1,132,169.96

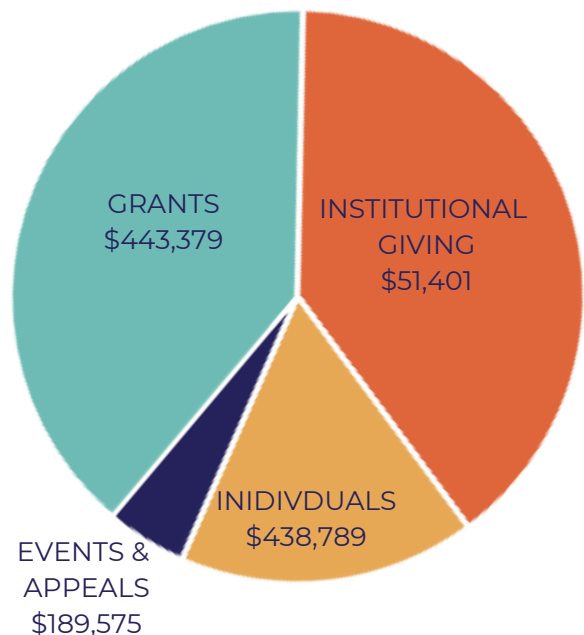
TOTAL EXPENSES  
\$1,528,378.47

NET ORDINARY INCOME  
-\$396,208.51

### EXPENSES



### INCOME



# HRI STORYTELLERS

## Stories From the HeART: Rock Your HeART Out



HRI believes that to truly understand the resilient spirit and incredible journey of our brave clients, we must invest in their Voice - their Triumph - their Stories. Our annual storytelling event, Stories from the HeART: Rock Your HeART Out (RYHO), is a humble effort by which we invite our community to look beyond the statistics and into the eyes of Humanity.

At RYHO we also honor the prestigious Angel of Freedom award winners. HRI's annual Angel of Freedom award, celebrates the unsung heroes of human rights work in Dallas. The honorees are organizations, individuals, and entities like pro bono lawyers, interns, volunteers, law firms, foundations, other non-profits, and mentors.

RYHO22 is scheduled for Friday, 12/2/22. If you would like to learn more, please contact [MBaig@HRIonline.org](mailto:MBaig@HRIonline.org).



# EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

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HRI provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants without regard to race, color, religious creed, sex, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, pregnancy, childbirth, physical disability, mental disability, age, military status or status as a Vietnam-era or special disabled veteran, marital status, registered domestic partner or civil union status, gender (including sex stereotyping and gender identity or expression), medical condition (including, but not limited to, cancer related or HIV/AIDS related), genetic information, or sexual orientation in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws. In addition, HRI complies with applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in employment in every location which HRI has facilities.