

AFTER HARVEY AND IRMA: SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACING IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

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ARYAH SOMERS
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS
GRANTMAKERS CONCERNED WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES



 GRANTMAKERS CONCERNED WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

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THANK YOU

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AGENDA

- Aftermath of Hurricane Harvey: Specific Challenges Facing Immigrants and Refugees
 - Kate Vickery, Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative
 - Amanda Cloud, The Simmons Foundation
 - Betty Balli Torres, Texas Access to Justice Foundation
- Q & A
- Aftermath of Hurricane Irma: Specific Challenges Facing Immigrants and Refugees
 - Luz Corcuera, Unidos Now
- Q&A
- GCIR Recommendations on Funder Strategies and Conclusion

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Kate Vickery is the first Executive Director of the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative. Kate leads the overall strategic vision of the Collaborative, including facilitating meaningful collaboration among members, amplifying funding available to member organizations and leading grant-making processes, building strategic partnerships, and creating creative solutions to issues plaguing immigration legal services providers in Houston. Kate has a diverse professional background that includes leadership positions in the areas of immigration, criminal justice, community development, and environmental conservation.

Before joining the Collaborative, Kate was a Planner in the City of Austin's Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Community Garden Program and the Development and Communications Director at the Texas Land Conservancy. Kate holds a Masters of Public Affairs from the LBJ School of Public Affairs and a Master of Science in Community & Regional Planning from the University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture. All of Kate's work centers around creating organizations and communities that are committed to justice and inclusion.



KATE VICKERY, HOUSTON IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES COLLABORATIVE

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HOUSTON'S FOREIGN-BORN

General demographics (Houston region)

- **>1.4 million** foreign-born individuals
- **25%** of the region's population
- **59%** increase since 2000 (vs. 33% nationally)
 - Guatemalan and Honduran populations growing fastest, recently
- **33%** non-citizens; **350,000** LPR's eligible to naturalize
- **600,000** undocumented
- **70,000** refugees
- Top countries of origin:
 - Mexico, El Salvador, Vietnam, India, Honduras, Philippines, China, Guatemala, Pakistan, Colombia, Nigeria, Korea, Taiwan, Venezuela

HOUSTON IMMIGRATION
LEGAL SERVICES COLLABORATIVE

HOUSTON'S FOREIGN-BORN

Economic impact

- **\$117B** to area GDP & **\$32B** of spending power
- **\$3B** in state and local taxes
- **\$128B** in increased housing value
- Generate **\$2.5B** in business income

Indicators of inequality

- Foreign-born families earn **\$0.74** to every US-born \$1.00
- Incomes lowest among Central American & Mexican families
- Income gap in Houston is greater than in United States
 - **20%** live below the poverty line

HOUSTON IMMIGRATION
LEGAL SERVICES COLLABORATIVE

2017 + UNDOCUMENTED

- Erosion of immigrant trust in local law enforcement forced to do federal immigration enforcement
- The lack of definition of a “sanctuary jurisdiction” and funding
- Decreased availability of asylum for women and children
- Broad expansion of who is prioritized for deportation & raids
- Reduced access to due process for immigrants because of “expedited removal”
- General confusion and fear among the community
- Reduction in refugee resettlement
- End of DACA
- SB4 & racial profiling

HOUSTON IMMIGRATION
LEGAL SERVICES COLLABORATIVE

HARVEY + UNDOCUMENTED

- Staying in flooded homes (fear, CBP presence, ankle monitors, etc)
- Lack of access to emergency relief \$\$ (who qualifies for FEMA?)
- Long-term implications of applying for benefits on behalf of qualified children?
- Language access for emergency relief
- Undocumented labor exploitation during rebuilding
- Where are the resources for undocumented folks – do social services providers know?

HOUSTON IMMIGRATION
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CONTACT

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HOUSTON IMMIGRATION
LEGAL SERVICES COLLABORATIVE

Amanda Cloud is President & CEO of The Simmons Foundation. Along with her work at the Foundation, she is active in the community, serving locally on the board of directors of One Voice Texas and Our Global Village as well as the advisory board for the Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

In addition to being a graduate of Leadership Houston, Amanda serves on committees for regional and national philanthropic associations.

Amanda is a native Houstonian and graduated from The University of Houston with a B.A. in Political Science and a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management through Texas A&M University.



AMANDA CLOUD, PRESIDENT, CEO, THE SIMMONS FOUNDATION

Betty Balli Torres has served as the Executive Director of the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, the largest Texas-based funder for legal services to the poor, since October 2001. Betty has a career dedicated to public interest work. Betty started as a staff attorney at Legal Aid of Central Texas in Austin in 1987 and has held various direct service and administrative public interest positions since that time. Betty is the Immediate Past President of the National Association of IOLTA Programs and has served in many volunteer capacities to programs that support national access to justice efforts.

BETTY BALLI TORRES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TEXAS ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOUNDATION



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Luz Corcuera is Executive Director of Unidos Now. She was born in Peru and moved to Florida from Toronto, Canada in August 2000, where she had practiced family and group therapy; she remains a clinical member of the Ontario Society of Psychotherapists. In addition, she obtained a Master's Degree in Pastoral Ministry in 2003.

Luz has a proven track record of bringing people together and has extensive experience in community-building and engagement. She previously served as Program Director for Healthy Start Manatee and as a Community Health Director for the Florida Department of Health in Manatee County. Luz is passionate about education, health, cultural competency, and understanding the social determinants influencing socio-economic wellbeing. Her significant work includes developing and overseeing diverse community-based initiatives to empower underserved and at-risk communities via prevention and education.

Luz has been recognized with numerous awards for building strong relationships in the Manasota region with private, public, faith-based, and civic organizations to close the education achievement gap, reversing negative health trends, and empowering people to civic integration.

LUZ CORCUERA, UNIDOS NOW



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IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACING IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

- **Unique barriers in accessing disaster relief and public benefits, including increased hostile environment:** In general, FEMA cash assistance is not available to undocumented immigrants. Low income immigrant hurricane survivors may be unable to get accurate information about rights under current law and services available regardless of their immigration status due to mixed messages from government officials, language and cultural barriers, complicated rules about immigrant eligibility for public benefits, and a generalized climate of fear due to harsh enforcement policies towards immigrants and refugees at the federal and state levels (e.g., SB4, Texas lawsuit against Internal Rescue Committee and opt out of the federal refugee program; narrowly defeated push by the Florida legislature last spring to opt out of the federal refugee program)
- **Complications for immigrants who lack or are unable to prove lawful status:** Immigrant hurricane survivors may:
 - Be undocumented or have lost identity documents necessary to prove lawful status
 - Have fallen or are at risk of falling “out of status” because they have lost their jobs, work authorization documentation or cannot attend school in the affected areas (required for some visa holders)
 - Face specific legal and financial hurdles (getting to immigration court, or submitting documentation on time): The most urgent is the situation of **DACAmented** individuals whose permits expire before March 5, 2018 who must meet the fast-approaching **renewal deadline of October 5, 2017**.

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IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACING IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

- **Compromised local service infrastructure:** In the face of mounting need, immigrant-serving organizations may also be experiencing severe challenges because of damage they have incurred to their infrastructure or to their staff and capacity as they seek to also meet the tremendous needs facing their clients and community.
- **Immigrant workers involved in reconstruction are prone to exploitation:** The Katrina hurricane recovery suggests that immigrant workers recruited to work on recovery and rebuilding will likely face exploitation. With “prevailing wage” standards and sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers likely to be suspended, wage-and-hour violations and the health and safety of workers involved in reconstruction will be major long-term concerns. There is the risk of widespread exploitation of immigrant workers who will be recruited to assist with reconstruction.

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GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPIC RESPONSE

- **Follow the lead of local foundations and experts and invest in existing vehicles and structures.** Local foundations have the best information about local needs and how they can be met. If outside the region, channel funds through local community foundations, pooled funds, and multi-agency collaborations. If within the region affected, make direct grants to local organizations to strengthen capacity for leadership, long-term rebuilding, and deepen existing community ties.
- **Be mindful of the capacity constraints of local funders.** Do not overburden local funders with direct inquiries. Rather, rely on affinity groups to field your inquiries and create efficient points of contact with local funders.
- **Invest for the long term.** Even if you are providing rapid response funding, try to tie it to longer term funding objectives to build and sustain local NGO capacity and support coordinated strategies to support the long-term rebuilding process.

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GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPIC RESPONSE

- **Restore and/or enhance the capacity of existing immigrant-serving organizations.** Support existing local immigrant-based organizations that have the community's trust, demonstrated the capacity to respond effectively to the needs of the hurricane survivors, and offer a clear vision for long-term rebuilding. This could include a range from replacing office space and basic operating materials to expanding capacity to address new scale and assist ethnic groups not previously served. Local nonprofits will need to coordinate their work and form effective partnerships with other organizations working toward similar goals.
- **Support the creation of new organizations, networks, and collaborations only where gaps exist.** In certain areas, limited immigrant infrastructure existed prior to the hurricanes and new issues have emerged in the hurricanes' aftermath. In a number of instances, there may not be existing organizations in which foundations can invest. In those circumstances, funding may need to go through national immigrant-based organizations partnering with local affiliates and other local ethnic organizations to create new capacity. Funding may also need to support the formation of new groups to build an infrastructure of immigrant-serving organizations to meet long-term needs.
- **Invest in multi-ethnic, multi-racial organizations to bridge potential divides among affected populations.** Disasters should not inflame existing divides and pit vulnerable communities against one another for scarce resources. Invest in organizations and strategies that will work collaboratively across different affected communities and defuse tensions against the backdrop of divisive national and state-level xenophobic rhetoric and policy.

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GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPIC RESPONSE

- **Support for direct services keeping in mind long-term sustainability:** Local organizations can help identify the gaps, whether basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, and healthcare,) mental-health services (e.g., culturally and linguistically competent), immigration legal services and other civil legal aid needs, housing and employment assistance, and coordination of services to avoid duplication and support complementary efforts.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Local, state, and national policy advocacy will remain critical to ensure that immigrants receive relief assistance, protect their rights and immigration status, and have the opportunity to engage in the rebuilding efforts. In addition, advocacy is critically needed to ensure the traditional separation of disaster relief efforts and immigration enforcement and to push for more humane policies and procedures for immigrant hurricane survivors, including possible extensions to DACA renewal deadlines.
- **Long Term Planning and Oversight:** Long-term oversight of government agencies involved in the relief and rebuilding efforts is crucial to make sure that they address immigrant needs and are accountable to the community. Any future emergency plans developed by local, state, and federal government agencies should also address issues such as linguistic and cultural competency, training of staff to work with immigrants and people of color, outreach and assistance to immigrants regardless of status, as well as plans for local involvement, control, and accountability in the relief and rebuilding efforts.

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Polling Question #1

How do you rate the overall program, with 5 being the highest rating?

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

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