

Timeline

Immigrant and Refugee Policy Developments 1990–2020

Throughout GCIR's 30-year history, immigrants and refugees in the U.S. and across the globe have faced a volatile policy environment that has been alternately welcoming and hostile, reflecting conflicting visions of who we are and want to be as a society.

Philanthropic Response to Immigrants and Refugees 1990–2020

For the past 30 years, GCIR, along with our members and funding partners, has mounted a wide range of efforts to advance immigrant justice and belonging and create a society in which everyone thrives no matter where they were born.



GRANTMAKERS CONCERNED WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

1990

CONGRESS PASSES IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1990

Building on IRCA passed in 1986 under the Reagan administration, this law increases the overall number of immigrants authorized to enter the U.S., creates a more efficient naturalization process, and expands resources for border enforcement.

GCIR FOUNDED TO INFORM AND CATALYZE PHILANTHROPY

Mary McClymont, then at the Ford Foundation, organizes GCIR to increase philanthropic support of immigrant and refugee issues locally and nationally. Ford Foundation, J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation, Joyce Mertz Gilmore Foundation, The New York Community Trust, and Rosenberg Foundation are founding members.

1991

THE HAITIAN REFUGEE CRISIS EMERGES

A military coup forces 200,000 Haitians to flee their country. The U.S. Coast Guard intercepts thousands, and the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay is used to screen Haitian asylum seekers.

FUNDER EDUCATION BEGINS

GCIR holds first conference and influences the Council on Foundations to include immigrant-related sessions at its annual conference.

1992

MEMBERS STEP UP PROGRAMMING

GCIR members organize a funder briefing on the Haitian refugee crisis, produce first newsletter on immigrant-specific grantmaking, and publish first report, "Newcomers in America," informing philanthropy about rapidly changing demographics.

1994

CALIFORNIA VOTERS APPROVE PROP. 187

Driven by anti-immigrant sentiment, this ballot initiative prohibits unauthorized immigrants from accessing publicly funded services and mandates all local law enforcement agencies to report them to federal immigration authorities.

JOYCE FOUNDATION LAUNCHES CITIZENSHIP FUNDING INITIATIVE

The Joyce Foundation, based in Chicago, undertakes a special project to promote naturalization for eligible immigrants.

1995

GCIR PARTNERS ON PROP. 187 REPORT AND EXPANDS PROGRAMMING

GCIR, Hispanics in Philanthropy, and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy co-publish "Reweaving Our Social Fabric: Challenges to Grantmaking after Proposition 187." Programming expands to address immigration backlash, legal needs, and issues facing immigrant and refugee women and girls.

1996

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS CONTINUE TO ERODE

Federal welfare, immigration, and anti-terrorism laws fray the social safety net for immigrants and refugees; toughen immigration enforcement by enlisting cooperation of local police forces; and further expand employment verification procedures.

EMMA LAZARUS FUND CREATED

George Soros creates the Emma Lazarus Fund at the Open Society Institute, committing \$50 million to address the disproportionate impact of welfare reform on immigrants and refugees.

IRVINE FOUNDATION LAUNCHES CENTRAL VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

The James Irvine Foundation would invest more than \$19 million over ten years to promote naturalization and civic engagement among immigrants and refugees in California's Central Valley.

1997

IMMIGRANTS' ADVOCACY FORCES POLICY CHANGE

Congress restores Food Stamps and Supplemental Security Income to certain children, elderly, and disabled immigrants. It also enacts laws protecting immigrant victims of trafficking, violence, and crimes. Many states create substitute health and welfare benefits for immigrants, but the fight to maintain these programs continues today.

LOCAL FUNDERS RESPOND TO WELFARE REFORM

Spurred by Emma Lazarus Fund matching grants, local funders coordinate funding to address welfare reform's impact on immigrants and refugees in New York, Chicago, Northern California, Boston, and other locations.

1999

GCIR RAMPS UP

GCIR hires first staff person, surveys members, launches website, organizes a national civic participation conference with the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation, and highlights asylum issues.

MINNESOTA NICE OR NOT CAMPAIGN

Spearheaded by The Minneapolis Foundation, this communications campaign directly tackles Minnesota's less-than-warm reception of immigrants and refugees, generating lively debate on immigration across the state.

2000

GCIR BROADENS REACH

GCIR programs bring funders to Los Angeles, Miami, and the Arizona border to examine immigration policy challenges, as well as model programs that promote the rights of low-wage workers and the integration of low-income children, youth, and families.

IMMIGRATION GAINS RELEVANCE IN NEW GATEWAYS

The Colorado Trust launches the Supporting Refugees and Immigrant Families Initiative that would grant a total of \$11 million over seven years.

2001

MOMENTUM FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM GAINED...AND LOST

The DREAM Act is first introduced; terms of what would become AgJOBS are agreed on; and President Bush and Mexico's President Fox hold historic talks, reaching an informal agreement on immigration policy. But the 9/11 attacks not only halt all reform efforts, but also result in the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, which greatly expands the government's anti-terrorism and surveillance powers and further erodes civil rights and civil liberties for all, especially Arab and Muslim communities.

GCIR PROGRAMMING BALANCES CRISIS AND LONGSTANDING CONCERNS

Post 9/11 ramifications dominate GCIR programming and member grantmaking, but focus on immigrant and refugee families and low-wage workers continues.

FARMWORKERS GAIN ATTENTION

The California Endowment launches \$50 million Agricultural Worker Initiative. Craig McGarvey, while at The James Irvine Foundation, wins the Robert W. Scrivner Award for the Central Valley Partnership.

2002

9/11 ATTACKS SPUR RESTRICTIVE LAWS

Congress passes Homeland Security Act, creating Department of Homeland Security. Immigrant males 16 and older from mostly Muslim countries are subject to special fingerprinting. Florida signs first local law enforcement agreement to cooperate with federal immigration authorities in detaining immigrants. The Social Security Administration expands its verification program to identify unauthorized workers.

IMMIGRANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS BECOME FOCUS

GCIR's new strategic plan responds to the volatile policy environment and focuses philanthropy on maximizing the contributions of diverse immigrant communities.

2003

GCIR PUBLISHES "NEWCOMERS IN THE AMERICAN WORKPLACE"

GCIR publishes "Newcomers in the American Workplace" and organizes briefings to highlight issues facing low-wage immigrant workers.

ROSENBERG FOUNDATION HONORED; FOUR FREEDOMS FUND ESTABLISHED

Rosenberg Foundation wins Paul Ylvisaker Award for Public Policy in recognition of its longtime support of farmworker issues.

The Four Freedoms Fund (FFF) is founded and would make nearly \$95 million in grants to immigrant organizations across the country between 2003 and 2015. Between 2017 and 2019, FFF would mobilize \$3.4 million in rapid-response funding, in addition to \$45.6 million to advance policy advocacy, increase civic participation, and strengthen organizations challenging enforcement and criminalization.

PHILANTHROPY CONSIDERS COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

GCIR convenes a communications strategy meeting to discuss ongoing concerns over the connections between immigration and terrorism. Programs look at African refugees; Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians; farmworkers; and immigrants in new gateway states.

2004

INCREASED FOCUS ON CIVIC PARTICIPATION

GCIR publishes "Pursuing Democracy's Promise" and organizes programs on civic and electoral participation, youth organizing, worker centers, and education.

In partnership with Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, GCIR releases "Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim and South Asian Communities in the San Francisco Bay Area" to increase funders' awareness and understanding of these communities.

2005

STATE ANTI-IMMIGRANT LEGISLATION SURGES

In the wake of new federal rules on state ID cards and driver's licenses, Arizona passes Prop. 200, instituting restrictive voter ID laws and blocking unauthorized immigrants' access to public benefits. Illinois becomes first state to adopt immigrant integration policy, against the tide of 150 anti-immigrant bills introduced in 30 states.

GCIR RESPONDS TO HURRICANE KATRINA'S IMPACT AND FOCUS ON INTEGRATION

GCIR calls funders' attention to the hurricane's impact on immigrants and refugees. Programs cover immigrant rights, integration, and capacity-building issues; a transatlantic exchange engages funders from seven countries.

MAYTREE FOUNDATION HONORED; AMERICAN DREAM FUND LAUNCHED

The Maytree Foundation wins the Paul Ylvisaker Award for Public Policy for its work to promote immigrant economic integration in Canada.

The American Dream Fund, launched by the Knight Foundation to promote naturalization, would grant more than \$4.7 million in 19 communities.

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2014

RESISTANCE, REFORM, AND ENFORCEMENT

Historic marches of millions of immigrants and their allies across the U.S. renew hope for federal immigration reform, but Congress retreats fearing political backlash. ICE steps up raids and other enforcement, detaining 20,000 per day and deporting 185,000 that year.

IMMIGRATION REFORM STALLS AGAIN; STATES STEP IN

Another major push for federal immigration reform fails, and state legislatures step in to consider a record 1,562 immigrant-related bills. The 240 laws and 50 resolutions that pass restrict access to everything from public benefits to higher education, and codify law enforcement collaboration with federal immigration authorities, among other restrictions.

HEIGHTENED ENFORCEMENT AS FIGHT FOR REFORM CONTINUES

Immigration authorities begin conducting community raids and individual enforcement seeking those with civil immigration violations. Generating widespread fear, Secure Communities enables local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities to share databases, allowing local officials to identify the immigration status of all foreign-born in their custody. Senator Edward Kennedy, a longtime champion of immigration, passes away, and the fight for immigrant reform continues.

ACTIVISTS PROTEST ANTI-IMMIGRANT POLICIES

Grassroots activists organize rallies and marches to protest a record 400,000 deportations and passage of Arizona’s SB1070, which spurs two dozen similar bills across the country that aim to expand local law enforcement of federal immigration laws.

DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (DACA) IS ANNOUNCED

After the DREAM Act fails in Congress, President Obama announces DACA, which grants two-year, renewable work permits and protection from deportation to eligible unauthorized immigrants. More than 713,000 immigrants would secure DACA status by late 2015, improving their earning potential and bringing them into the economic mainstream.

CENTRAL AMERICANS SEEK REFUGE IN THE U.S.

Record numbers of unaccompanied children and families fleeing violence and persecution in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala seek refuge in the U.S. The Obama administration reopens family detention centers, fast tracks processing of asylum cases, and supports Mexican government interdiction efforts.

DEPORTATION HITS 2.3 MILLION; ACA PASSES

Deportations from 2008 through 2014 reach a record 2.3 million. The Affordable Care Act passes, resulting in health coverage for millions but leaving unauthorized immigrants ineligible. Many states propose new legislation to extend health care to unauthorized children.

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION TOOLKIT RELEASED

“The Immigrant Integration Toolkit,” which debuts at GCIR’s national convening in Denver, would become highly influential, shaping and elevating immigrant integration within philanthropy and driving hundreds of millions in grantmaking in the years to come. The toolkit would become the most downloaded GCIR publication a decade after its publication.

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION BECOMES DRIVING FORCE

GCIR programming in Minnesota, Georgia, Arizona, New Hampshire, and Washington focuses on integration. California GCIR members form the California Immigrant Integration Initiative (CIII) to share information and coordinate funding strategies across the state.

Over the next 13 years, CIII would provide the infrastructure for California funders to be on the leading edge of philanthropic responses. Between 2016 and 2019 alone, CIII would help deploy approximately \$323 million to address critical issues in the state with the largest immigrant population.

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION MOMENTUM CONTINUES

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation awards nearly \$2.4 million through its new immigrant integration initiatives and would continue innovative funding in the field in the years to come.

GCIR programs emphasize integration strategies while keeping funders updated on policy developments at the federal, state, and local levels, with a focus on comprehensive immigration reform, immigration enforcement, and workers’ rights.

FOUR FREEDOMS FUND RECOGNIZED

Taryn Higashi of Unbound Philanthropy and Geri Mannion of the Carnegie Corporation of New York receive the Robert W. Scrivner Award for founding the Four Freedoms Fund. With the prize money, they establish the Freedom from Fear Awards.

CALIFORNIA COUNTS!

GCIR members invest more than \$10 million to support 2010 Census outreach in California. GCIR coordinates philanthropic support of this statewide census campaign and releases a companion evaluation report and funders’ guide.

NEW AMERICANS CAMPAIGN (NAC) LAUNCHED

The Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Coulter Foundation, the Grove Foundation, the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, the JBP Foundation, and Knight Foundation—in partnership with 20+ local foundations—invest over \$25 million to support naturalization in 18 sites. In its first five years, NAC would help 193,000 immigrants naturalize and would save low-income immigrants \$172 million in legal services and application fees.

DELIVERING ON THE DREAM (DOTD) FORMED

DOTD forms to support DACA implementation. By the end of 2019, the network would grow to 19 states. More than 160 local, state, and national funders would commit \$78 million to build local capacity for defensive and affirmative legal services; advocacy and organizing; and other key interventions, from meeting health needs to developing leadership. These resources would allow more than 500 grantee organizations to serve nearly 900,000 immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in communities as diverse as Denver, Fort Myers, Houston, Los Angeles, and Nashville. In early 2020, the network would expand to 21 states.

PHILANTHROPY MOUNTS RAPID RESPONSE TO AID CENTRAL AMERICAN CHILDREN

The California Endowment makes a lead grant and partners with Univision on the “Estamos con los Niños” campaign to raise awareness and funding for this humanitarian crisis.

With information, technical assistance, and coordination from GCIR, funders across the country make nearly \$6 million in emergency grants to provide legal, social, health, and mental health services to unaccompanied children seeking refuge in the U.S.

2015

EXPANDED IMMIGRATION RELIEF ANNOUNCED

The Obama administration announces expansion of DACA and a new program, Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA).

U.S. DEEPLY DIVIDED ON IMMIGRATION

Texas and 26 other states sue to prevent implementation of DAPA and DACA+. Twenty states or state university systems have laws or policies that allow eligible unauthorized immigrants to pay in-state tuition. A California judge finds family detention centers housing Central American asylum seekers violate the rights of children and orders their release into community-based settings. Amid concerns over terrorism and rising xenophobia and Islamophobia, presidential debates and public discourse on immigration turn vitriolic.

EMMA LAZARUS II ESTABLISHED

The Open Society Foundations launches the Emma Lazarus II Fund to help eligible immigrants apply for DACA, DACA+, and DAPA, and to building long-term immigration legal services infrastructure. By early 2016, this two-year initiative would deploy \$9 million and leverage approximately \$23 million from state and local funders, including the DOTD funding collaboratives, to support service delivery and build capacity in 16 states.

2016

MILLIONS OF IMMIGRANTS DENIED RELIEF

A divided Supreme Court leaves in place a lower-court ruling blocking DAPA and DACA+, denying millions of immigrants—mostly parents of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents—work authorization and protection from deportation.

DONALD J. TRUMP ELECTED AS PRESIDENT

Donald Trump narrowly wins the election after a campaign marked by hateful and racist anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy proposals.

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT OF IMMIGRATION REMAINS STRONG

Funders discuss strategies for addressing rising xenophobia, Islamophobia, and the growing global refugee crisis. Planning focuses on possible DACA+ and DAPA implementation and how to sustain legal and other services to immigrants and refugees in the long term. GCIR's new strategic plan seeks to advance immigrant rights, economic justice and integration, and civic integration—as well as address unanticipated issues that may emerge.

2017

ANTI-IMMIGRANT ONSLAUGHT BEGINS

In a flurry of executive orders and administrative actions, President Trump issues the Muslim Ban; ramps up interior and border enforcement; institutes “extreme vetting” of refugees and U.S. visitors; and slashes refugee admissions by more than half.

EVERY POLICY LEVER PULLED

The Trump administration also rescinds DAPA and DACA+; terminates DACA; ends Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Sudanese, Nicaraguan, and Haitian immigrants; and threatens to withhold law enforcement grants to 29 “sanctuary jurisdictions.”

GCIR TAKES STRONG PUBLIC POSITIONS

In response to inhumane, anti-immigrant policies and dehumanizing rhetoric, GCIR takes strong public positions, mounts aggressive rapid response, and rallies foundations to assert their public voice and direct significant funding to the field.

200+ SIGN JOINT STATEMENT

200+ foundations and PSOs sign GCIR's joint statement to condemn anti-immigrant executive orders and stand with immigrants and refugees. Dozens of foundations, many new to immigration, allocate millions in new grants to address urgent needs.

GCIR IS FUNDERS' AFFINITY GROUP OF THE YEAR

Inside Philanthropy names GCIR the Funders' Affinity Group of the Year for leading funder pushback to anti-immigrant policies.

2018

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Continuing a racist narrative that dehumanizes, demonizes, and criminalizes immigrants, the Trump administration forcibly separates thousands of asylum-seeking children, including infants and toddlers, from their parents at the border and detain them under inhumane conditions, resulting in multiple deaths. The administration also announces indefinite detention of migrant families.

ATTACKS INTENSIFY

The Trump administration introduces a radically revised “public charge” rule; proposes a citizenship question for the 2020 census; makes naturalization more difficult to attain, including for service members; sharply reduces access to justice within the immigration system; eliminates protections for asylum seekers; further cuts refugee admissions; and takes away TPS from Salvadorians, Hondurans, and Nepalis, among numerous other restrictive policies.

THE FIELD AND THE COMMUNITY PUSH BACK

Immigrant advocates win injunctions on DACA and TPS and mobilize 250,000+ comments against the proposed “public charge” rule. At the ballot box, many anti-immigrant candidates are defeated, and many immigrant and refugee candidates win, including two Muslim women who are the first ever elected to Congress.

\$15 MILLION MOBILIZED FOR IMPACT OF FAMILY SEPARATION

With guidance from GCIR on funding needs and strategies, funders quickly mobilize more than \$15 million to address the impact of the family separation policy.

PHILANTHROPY COMMENTS ON PUBLIC CHARGE

GCIR organizes a national campaign that results in nearly 70 philanthropic institutions submitting comments to the proposed public charge rule. (Big thanks to our partner Northern California Grantmakers.) In total, more than 266,000 public comments are filed, almost all opposing the proposed rule.

CENSUS TABLE LAUNCHES

In partnership with California funders and Philanthropy California, GCIR launches a statewide effort to support a fair and accurate 2020 census count in the Golden State.

2019

ANTI-IMMIGRANT AGENDA MOVES FORWARD

As work begins on the U.S.-Mexico border wall, existing interior enforcement programs are broadened; the largest workplace raid in U.S. history takes place in Mississippi; and immigration officials seek to expand private detention facilities.

SOME MEASURES BLOCKED

The Supreme Court blocks, for now, the addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 census, and circuit courts issue temporary injunctions halting the implementation of the “public charge” rule.

GCIR UPLIFTS OVERLOOKED IMMIGRANTS

GCIR keeps funders informed of major policy developments and uplifts black, API, and MASA immigrants, whose concerns are often overlooked. Urging foundations to divest from immigrant detention becomes part of the strategy.

FUNDING MORE THAN DOUBLES SINCE 2016

In California, total foundation funding for immigrant-related efforts more than doubles from \$39 million in 2016 to an average of \$94.3 million per year between 2017 and 2019. Total philanthropic support for the 2020 census exceeds \$26 million over the same period, the largest investment of any state in the country.

2020

ATTACKS ON ALL FORMS OF IMMIGRATION CONTINUE

The list of countries with entry restrictions grows to 13, with the new additions disproportionately affecting Africa. Continued dismantling of the refugee and asylum systems is expected, as are further attacks on “sanctuary cities” and family-based immigration. The Supreme Court allows “public charge” implementation to proceed during litigation.

DOTD NETWORK EXPANDS

The DOTD network expands to 21 states, welcoming Georgia, Southwest Florida, New Jersey, Southeast Michigan, San Diego, Maine, and Baltimore over the past two years.

GCIR DEVELOPS AFFIRMATIVE IMMIGRANT GRANTMAKING FRAMEWORK

GCIR develops an affirmative immigrant grantmaking framework that seeks to increase the impact of philanthropic funding to address urgent needs and work toward long-term systemic and structural change.

GCIR PREPARES FOR NEW LEADERSHIP

As the country heads into one of the most consequential elections in our lifetimes, the GCIR board and staff prepare the organization for new leadership and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Immigrants



GRANTMAKERS CONCERNED WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES