



IILA VOICES

NOVEMBER 2017

Dear IILA Board Members, Co-workers, Volunteers:

Nearly two years ago we re-initiated *IILA Voices* to share some illustrations of the many ways IILA changes lives for the better. In the past year we have seen historic changes in our nation's policies toward immigrants – documented and not, and toward refugees.

Not since before World War II have some of these new provisions we now face been true. Typically, the Congress proposes and the President disposes. We have instead seen new unilateral *Executive Orders*, many of which mimic the effect of legislation, but which have not been the product of our typical legislative practice. The number of refugee admissions federally for Fiscal Year 16/17 has been reduced from 110,000 to 45,000. That lower quota was already nearly met a few months ago. The policy of *Temporary Protected Status*, which has for decades temporarily protected from deportation persons whose deportation would return them to significant risk, has been terminated. The “*Unaccompanied Minors*” program, to protect youth coming here from gang threats and other perils back home, has been closed. The “*Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals*,” (DACA) instituted years ago by President Obama to protect youth from deportation and provide work authorization, has also been rescinded. Youth having grown up here now may face deportation. Travel bans on persons from predominantly Muslim-majority countries were adopted, and have survived various court challenges. Construction of a multi-billion dollar wall has begun, intended to exclude migrants along the U.S. southern border. None of these efforts was done with Congressional approval. Since January 2017, arrests of the undocumented have increased from about 9,000/month to about 14,000/ month; also casting a wider net, arresting people who have no criminal records and are integrated into the fabric of communities across the country.

Clearly all of this illustrates the viewpoint of the President that his supporters demand stricter measures on immigration. On the contrary, IILA has stepped up - locally and nationally - its efforts to counter these and other changes. One such effort circulates new communiques from national and state agencies to a list of recipients who wish to be kept abreast of changes affecting IILA's clients. They then decide whether to personally take action on any given issue.

These many changes pose a real affront to our constituents, and to IILA in carrying out our mission established over 100 years ago. We and kindred spirits across the U.S. – and across the world - remain hyper-vigilant in countering actions that harm our clients. Have you weighed in?

Yours,

Steve Voss

President/CEO

Child Development: IILA early childhood development services transform lives. Typically, those transformations are found both in the success a child enjoys in school thanks to her preparation in our classrooms, but also in the lives of their parents, who typically face numerous problems related to poverty and limited opportunities. We do all of this in multiple ways. One is “*Alternative Payment,*” where our job is to help parents who have selected childcare centers and schools or ask their loved ones to extend care. We apply the rules, approve, certify them, evaluate the hours of attendance and the circumstances of the parents, and reimburse those centers for childcare.

Another program we operate supports a “cottage industry” of sorts - our FECCHN program affords ongoing training and resources to small in-home childcare providers. They not only enhance the children’s skills and abilities, but we enable parents to work outside the home, as well as empowering licensed, small business operators to work within their homes.

We operate direct services such as State Pre-School and Center-Based childcare. While one may not always assume that teachers’ work is chiefly that of changing lives, that is nonetheless exactly what we do. Moreover, we provide parent support, which builds their knowledge, parenting skills, and links them to vital resources. Just one example of how we change lives ... Ms. Garcia (not her real name) was on our waiting list for quite a while. She had felt overwhelmed with her many life challenges. When her son (let’s call him Gabriel) first came to us, he was frightened. He cried quite a bit and stayed to himself. Then Gabriel enrolled in our *Amistad* program. At *Amistad*, we consider all staff and clients as one big family, embracing all families and especially their children. Thanks to our broad support, Gabriel has mastered useful school material, his self-confidence is enhanced, and he feels much more comfortable interacting with the other students. He now embraces school and the crying has disappeared. Ms. Garcia enrolled in a nursing program and she feels great about herself and more optimistic about her future.

Refugee Services (“LIFE” division)

Despite the many reductions in services for refugees (see above), IILA’s *Anti-Human Trafficking Program* has in powerful ways transformed lives. An example - “Carlos,” (not his real name) came to us after suffering at the hands of human traffickers. When he attempted to enter the U.S., he was conscripted against his will to be a “drug mule.” He was kept in isolation against his will, beaten, deprived of food, water and basic freedoms. When IILA admitted him for service he had been traumatized – he was very angry, quite reticent, and not comfortable interacting with others. His marriage had dissolved and he was not engaging of others. He feared that his sons back home in Central America would fall prey to aggressive recruitment efforts by local gangs to join those gangs and become drug runners. IILA helped secure the admission of Carlos’ sons to the U.S., and referred him to doctors who attended to his trauma. Carlos suffered from numerous physical ailments caused by beatings at the hands of his oppressors. We secured treatment for those injuries. Despite his initial skepticism, we steadily built trust and Carlos slowly entered into a therapeutic relationship with IILA’s social worker. He progressively released some of his fear, apprehensions and defenses. He even recuperated sufficiently to secure and to hold down a job – real progress from where he had started. His sons enrolled in school here, attained gainful employment, and they as a unit grew ever more cohesive. Today we have discharged Carlos, who has overcome numerous barriers, secured work, and functions independently, and yet who on rare occasions checks back in with his IILA social worker for continued support.

One vital aspect of our service delivery relies on synergies across disparate services. That means that while funders define narrow “silos” for their grants, we transcend those boundaries by helping needy clients avail themselves to various services they need, with the aim of a deeper and more effective outcome. Our Refugee Resettlement ‘*Reception and Placement*’ service, *Match Grant (MG)* and *Family Strengthening Programs (FSP)* have been working together. In the past two months, we have orchestrated these programs so that clients receive comprehensive, “seamless” services - from initial resettlement, to employment and family integration by teaching families healthy communication skills. An example - we have a group of Central American refugees between the ages of 18 and 20 who were resettled late September. Shortly after their arrival, they expressed interest in employment services through our MG program and FSP. These refugees are now about to complete our job club sessions, and have already participated in a couple of FSP workshops. The IILA program facilitator has reported how well refugees are doing in the workshops and she can already see the difference in how they express themselves and their feelings. Our staffer is also working on a separate session with the refugees' parents.

Immigration Legal Services (ILS) - Our ILS has accomplished what many of us feared might never happen. After 100 years, through repeated successful proposals, we have secured over \$1million in annual funding from the State of California to pay for a wide array of Immigration Legal Services. We were even asked to support the work of other non-profits – a rare indication of the high level of trust and esteem in which the State holds our Immigration Services. Another very noteworthy aspect was the State’s decision to reimburse agencies, e.g. IILA (and we in turn reimburse clients) for the roughly \$500 filing fee for extensions of DACA cases. All of these changes taken together illustrate a “sea-change” in our external funding for ILS. For decades, the government has provided the bulk of the revenues we require for our costs of childcare, refugee services, nutrition, consumer education, transportation, services to survivors of human trafficking, seniors, and all other programs. Yet we have always struggled with the fact that our legal services clients have had to shoulder from their own meager earnings the great bulk of our costs for legal services. Thanks to the new State contracts, that is no longer true, aligning our legal services financing with that of all of the other services we provide to low-income folks. We are deeply indebted to the electorate of the State of California for stepping up in this huge way to support those left behind by changes to our federal policies. One life we helped to change involved a United States Citizen “petitioner” – we shall call him Jose Sanchez – who had been seeking resolution of the legal immigration status of his family since 2002. One major, thorny legal barrier to attaining that goal was his need for a “waiver of inadmissibility for unlawful presence.” To you and me, that means his spouse - originally from Mexico- entered the U.S. without authorization, and in order for their case to advance, they first needed expert legal advice. In addition, they had to first scale the legal hurdle of an “I-601” legal waiver filing.

We recognized that this was a multiple-problem family, and in addition to the legal help they needed, other problems needed attention. “Mr. Sanchez” had injured his back, and thus even as sole breadwinner for his family he has significant limitations to working, and to their family income. His spouse has not had work authorization. Moreover, their growing family limped along in small, Spartan-conditions in a rudimentary apartment.

Our attorneys and paralegals took up the case of Mr. Sanchez. They secured expert psychological professionals for treatment and as witnesses to testify to help bolster our legal argument showing hardship on the family. Indeed, we won the waiver, and later the legal visas needed by the family members to work and reside lawfully in the United States. Since these “victories” which have transformed their lives, they have kept in touch. They now report they can lawfully access more and better health treatment for their various afflictions. Since Ms. Sanchez can now legally work, they are so pleased that they are planning to move into a small house of their own.

INTP: - Our Immediate Needs Transportation Program was first funded in 1993 by the County Metropolitan Transit Authority immediately in the aftermath of the civil unrest in Los Angeles. Concerned taxicab owners observed that the streets of Los Angeles had become too dangerous for frail and vulnerable people to negotiate. They volunteered their services, and the County then formalized a rides program for the county's vulnerable – the INTP - and awarded its management to IILA and to *First African Methodist Episcopal church*.

Earlier this year we transferred management of the INTP from our *ILS* Division to our *LIFE* Division. INTP provides a network of hundreds of human service providers to which IILA distributes bus tokens and taxi vouchers. Those human service agencies utilize the transportation resources we provide to extend rides for the most vulnerable in our midst. Indeed, we fund tens of thousands of rides each year for folks who suffer from life-threatening diseases, or need to flee danger to access a domestic violence shelter, secure urgent medical treatment, or avail themselves to supportive services critical to their abilities to live independent of institutions. Since technically our “clients” in INTP are the recipients of service provided by IILA and by outside agencies which we empower with transportation resources, we thought it would be good to describe how a client of *City of Hope* (COH) – an INTP distributing agency - was aided using our INTP. Members of INTP since 1995, COH was seeing a 24-year-old patient for on-going cancer treatment. She had been admitted for an extended period and for the most part is not able to walk on most days. On days when she is able, she has been able to access the METRO to get to their 3-hour treatment, and returns home, which itself typically takes 3 hours (to the South Bay.) INTP allows travel home after exhausting treatment in less than one hour. For a person facing such major life crises, the INTP ride actually affords her a bit of comfort and a little “quality of life.” To make things worse, she is a very low-income person residing in Section 8 housing. None of her caregivers can work due to administering to her many needs. Ms. Sanchez’ – not her real name – finds that dependency on her caregivers constitutes a lifeline. COH has served this patient in many ways, providing links to food stamps and to other resources. A real trooper, Ms. S even waits until she “really needs it” to preserve scarce availability of rides. Her mom is diabetic; INTP also helps her see a Dr. for that. When she must stay late the INTP rides are a real life-saver, especially since other transportation supports all have their guidelines – (read *restrictions*) – INTP has been vital to helping these folks get their travel needs met, which affords medical treatment and so many more COH interventions. One glimmering light is that City of Hope has worked hard and succeeded in getting insurance to also help defray costs for alternative services. One INTP-enrolled cab company has been especially responsive to the unique and “steep” needs of cancer patients providing evening and off-hour rides.

Kitchen/Nutrition: like the INTP, our goal in our nutrition program is to empower IILA and other non-profits, which then assist low-income folks. We supply affordable, top-quality childcare meals to IILA sites, and we sell such meals to outside sites whose missions reflect ours. Thus, we focus on community-wide service delivery and better arm our colleagues with affordable and healthy meals to support the children they serve. The U.S Department of Agriculture and the California State Department of Education authorize our provision of meals compliant with strict government standards. Thanks to our meals, children start school better equipped to study, learn and excel. Some children receive their only daily, hot, nutritious meal through our kitchen. One example - we all know how the American diet for kids has degenerated over the years. Cookies, candy, and other sweet/salty/fatty snacks have supplanted healthier choices. Thanks to IILA's healthy meals, and learning appropriate portion sizes, “Ana” has lost weight, and now seems destined to stave-off early on-set diabetes. Not only does that contribute to Ana's life-long health, but also her parents are spared the worry and the expense of remedial care. Ana has new energy and is a more apt pupil, better able to focus on her learning.