Dear friends,

The past year presented many new opportunities for our coalition to work toward the rights and dignity of all people in Alabama. We expanded our efforts through two new programs: The Gathering, which brings black immigrant leaders together, and Abrazando Nuestras Raices, a family reunification program that helps parents in Mexico get visas to see their children in Alabama.

We welcomed Evelyne Rivera to our family as an organizer for the north region of Alabama, and we said farewell to our Executive Director of 3 years, Sarai Portillo. We also brought many new immigrant leaders into our coalition, representing communities in Montevallo, Jemison, Russellville, and others.

Our coalition continues to do the difficult work of expanding our efforts and finding new ways to embody our mission. The continued implementation of oppressive anti-immigrant laws has been a struggle at every turn, but we are resilient as we fight for justice, celebrate our thriving communities, and find hope in the rise of grassroots organizing across Alabama.

Moving into 2020, we are thrilled to have hired a new Executive Director, Ana Delia Espino. We’ve been working to get our communities counted in the 2020 Census, and we are building capacity for our Alabama Vota campaign this fall.

We could not do our work without your continued participation and support. Thank you for all that you do, and for believing in the power of grassroots leadership!

Allison Hamilton
Interim Executive Director

Thank you for your continued support and for believing in the power of grassroots leadership!
As part of the Alabama Hard to Count Collaborative, ACIJ led census outreach initiatives in Latinx immigrant communities in northern and southern regions of Alabama. Focusing on community engagement and in-depth workshops to help participants reflect on their personal connections to the census, we reached hard-to-count counties in these regions to build community trust, educate communities about the census, and offer support for census completion.

Through our voter engagement initiative Alabama Vota, our Leadership Council is developing a strategy for getting out the vote in the 2020 elections. This strategy will include work with organizational coalitions, outreach through our workshops and programs, phone banking, and continued contact with communities engaged through census outreach.

ACIJ grew rapidly in the wake of HB 56 in 2011, when immigrants were targeted at our homes, jobs, and schools. From that moment on, we have worked to nurture the civic life of our communities. We are educating and engaging immigrant communities in the most important civic duties, from registering to vote, voting locally and nationally, completing the census, and being active in their neighborhoods, towns, and schools.

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In early 2019 with the encouragement of our Leadership Council, we initiated a family reunification program called Abrazando Nuestras Raíces (Embracing Our Roots). Our communities live under threat of discrimination, detention, and deportation, and they rely on the emotional support of their families to move forward with their lives.

Many of our members were forced to leave their countries without the possibility of returning home, and have not seen their parents in over 10 years. We have a large population of people living in Alabama who have roots and family members in Mexico, so we work with Mexican state governments to obtain U.S. tourist visas for parents of our members. We were able to bring our first group of parents from the state of Veracruz in December, and we look forward to reuniting more families in 2020!

We have reached over 400 people through this program to provide information about the 2020 Census and Know Your Rights, and we plan to add voter engagement education this year.
Our Leadership Council represents an organized base of immigrant leadership in Alabama, where previously communities were isolated and completely shut out of civic engagement. The Council is made up of immigrants from across Alabama, primarily undocumented mothers, fathers, and children.

They convene quarterly for training and decision-making sessions. Around 35-40 people attend these meetings, where they work to set organizing priorities, develop campaign strategies, and evaluate collective work.

Through the Council’s work, we have permanently gutted one of the nation’s most extreme anti-immigrant laws, educated hundreds of immigrant communities about their rights, and sent delegations of undocumented immigrant leaders to speak at regional and national conventions. Alabama immigrant leaders offer important contributions to strategy dialogues among national and regional groups, bringing the first hand perspectives of undocumented and directly affected immigrants to the table.

Most recently, our leaders implemented a statewide support hotline for COVID-19 resources, and they are spearheading a fundraiser for financial relief for immigrants in Alabama.
In 2019, our fellow Archie Creech facilitated a series of “Gatherings” with Majadi Baruti of Greater Birmingham Ministries to bring a diverse group of people together from African and Afro-Caribbean communities. We reached over 40 immigrant leaders from Haiti, Jamaica, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.

Early conversations were primarily focused on needs assessment and have highlighted concerns about healthcare, access to legal services, and racial discrimination. We have faced new challenges in building relationships across linguistic and cultural differences, but we are excited to see the outcomes of diversity and anti-racism work that is led by and for immigrant communities.

Black and Brown communities share common struggles in this country and we believe that working together is crucial to achieving our goals. For years, ACIJ has marched in Selma at the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration alongside our brothers and sisters in the African-American community.

We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen our bonds and move together on our journey toward justice and liberation.
As a relatively young organization, we always want to engage new generations of leaders who sprout in our fast-growing and connected communities. Some of the most compelling and effective activism comes from empowered and supported youth. Many of our youth want to be part of the fight for justice, so we work to give these young activists the training, tools, and resources they need to carry out in the years to come.

Our organizer Evelyne is working with youth who are fighting for the preservation of DACA and TPS and the implementation of the Dream and Promise Act. We amplify the voices, leadership, and power of immigrant youth who will continue to fight for our values and move Alabama forward.

ACIJ also offered support in the planning meetings for AL Dares to Dream, a new youth-led movement that aims to empower, educate and organize local immigrant communities to fight for the preservation of DACA and TPS and to reshape future immigration reform to be more diverse, inclusive and free from compromises that sacrifice the safety and well-being of the communities that raised our youth.
The ICE Breakers Coalition launched a 24-hour rapid response hotline in August 2019; ACIJ is a partner in the coalition with Adelante Worker Center, Greater Birmingham Ministries, and Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama. The rapid response network is three-pronged, with volunteers answering calls about ICE activity, volunteers being deployed to sites with reported ICE activity, and volunteers accompanying at-risk immigrants to court appointments and ICE check-ins. We are receiving an average of 10 calls a month.

There are many immigrant families living across Alabama who do not have access to these resources when dealing with ICE. We are working to expand our rapid response network statewide, ensuring that every person in Alabama can get help when they need it. Our organizers are now working with organizations and community leaders in Huntsville and Montgomery to expand the network.

Just a few weeks after the ICE Breakers Hotline launch, one of Adelante’s board members and his 18-year-old son were detained during a check-in with ICE. Thanks to the volunteer accompanying them, we received immediate news of the detainment and were able to gather over 50 people outside the ICE headquarters for a demonstration that morning.

ICE Breakers hotline operates a 24/7 hotline for community members to report ICE activity.

Our nation is facing a pandemic that does not discriminate and has threatened the livelihoods of people across Alabama. Thousands of immigrants have lost their jobs, and they have been excluded from federal and state relief. Families are struggling to buy groceries, pay for utilities, and cover their rent. You can help a family in need in rural parts of Alabama to receive financial support for their survival.

We hear first-hand about the dire needs of immigrants in Alabama, and we have created the ACIJ Community Aid Fund to support people who are struggling financially during this crisis.

Your contribution will go directly to immigrants who do not qualify for unemployment or federal stimulus benefits.

Stand with us as One Family, One Alabama!

“I am a single mom. I have no one here and three young children. My husband was deported. I don’t know how to read or write. I speak little Spanish and I haven’t worked babysitting for a long time.”

— Maria from Guatemala —

Thank You for Another Year of Support!