

2020 ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

# CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

# 2020

**ENSURE JUSTICE.  
REPRESENTATION FOR ALL.**



ROCKY  
MOUNTAIN  
IMMIGRANT  
ADVOCACY  
NETWORK

# Children's Program

## Program Overview

Since 2014, there has been an exponential increase in unaccompanied children coming to the United States, the majority of whom are fleeing violence in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Many of these children have been abused, abandoned, and neglected by their parents and qualify for a pathway towards lawful permanent residence known as **Special Immigrant Juvenile Status**. For most children, it has been a long wait from the beginning of their case to ultimately winning permanent residency, due to extensive visa backlogs and delays. RMIAN's Children's Program has successfully represented hundreds of these children before the State courts, US Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the Immigration Court.

CLIENT  
STORY

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## Emiliano's Story

When, at the age of 15, Emiliano received gang and death threats, he left for the United States in search of his uncle, who had always been an emotional support for him. When Emiliano arrived in the United States, he was detained by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. After a month in detention, Emiliano was finally released and with the help of RMIAN, Emiliano was approved for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. Five years later, in December 2020, Emiliano had his Merits Hearing and was granted permanent residency. In the United

States and under the care of his uncle, Emiliano has prospered and even been able to graduate high school. With his residency, Emiliano is now free to pursue his dreams without fear.



**“I am grateful for all of the opportunities I have been given since arriving in the United States. Everyone should fight for their dreams and never give up”**

**Emiliano**

**Guatemala**

# Detention Program

## Program Overview

As the news of the COVID-19 pandemic spread, the Detention Program mobilized to secure release for as many people as possible from the Aurora detention facility. RMIAN staff and its network of volunteer attorneys prepared an onslaught of release requests for clients, accompanied by expertly crafted post-release plans by our social workers. RMIAN's Legal Orientation Program team drafted pro se release requests, empowering detained individuals to ask ICE to free them from custody. Through a group habeas petition, RMIAN demanded the release of medically vulnerable clients. The Detention Program nimbly adapted to representing clients remotely and providing "*Know Your Rights*" presentations and client intakes telephonically. In 2020, the barriers to support people in detention were more profound than ever. Nevertheless, RMIAN staff and volunteer attorneys were zealous in their commitment to serve noncitizens stripped of their liberty.

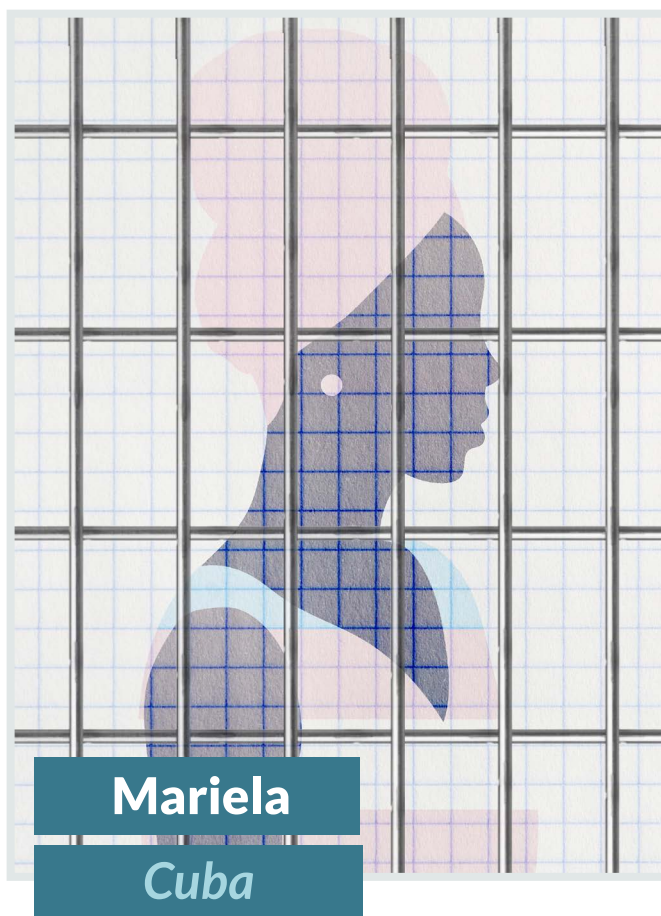
CLIENT  
STORY

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## Mariela's Story

Mariela<sup>1</sup> faced much adversity in Cuba due to her transgender identity. Discrimination and transphobia on the part of Cuba's society and government led to physical abuse and incarceration on multiple occasions. Fearing for her life, Mariela fled Cuba and began the arduous journey towards freedom in the

United States. After months of traveling, sleeping on the streets, experiencing hunger, and encountering other dangers, Mariela arrived. However, she was swiftly placed in removal proceedings and transferred to the Aurora detention center. While in detention, she experienced extreme stress and was repeatedly denied critical medical care by a facility unable and unwilling to meet her needs—but Mariela was not alone. Upon arrival at the ICE detention center, she was paired with two passionate pro bono attorneys from RMIAN’s network of volunteers and a social worker from RMIAN’s Social Service Project. Together, Mariela’s dedicated team fought for her freedom from detention and for access to the care she needed. With RMIAN’s support, she was released from detention and found shelter and safety with family outside of Colorado. While Mariela’s case is no longer handled in the Colorado court, her RMIAN pro bono attorneys and social worker continue to fight for her right to stay in the United States and pursue a safe and happy life.



**“When I was with [my RMIAN social worker] or my lawyer, I felt safe. I felt confident. I always said that with the team next to me, everything was going to flow and everything was going to be okay... they were my protectors”**

<sup>1</sup>The client’s name has been changed to protect her identity.

# Social Service Project



## Program Overview

Despite its many adversities, 2020 was a year of inspiring growth for RMIAN's Social Service Project. Since 2010, the Social Service Project has provided wrap-around support to particularly vulnerable clients served by RMIAN's legal programs. **In 2020, RMIAN expanded its ranks with the addition of a third masters-level social worker to serve not only adults in ICE detention but also the youth in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement.** Although historically involved primarily in the Detention Program, the Social Service Project began working more intensively with other children and parents represented through RMIAN's Children's Program. RMIAN social workers helped these children and their families apply for housing, healthcare, and economic assistance, along with other COVID-19 related needs. The Social Service Project collaborated with multiple mental health professionals to produce an expert letter regarding the psychological impact of COVID-19 on detained immigrants; the letter was circulated nationally to support release requests. And, alongside RMIAN's Detention Program, the Social Service Project partnered with advocates throughout the country to find parole sponsors, transportation, appropriate healthcare, and other support for dozens of detained transgender asylum seekers.



# 2020 Annual Highlights

## Organization totals

**1,394** Individual legal intakes conducted

**626** Clients directly represented by RMIAN staff attorneys



**339** Clients referred to RMIAN's network of Pro Bono attorneys

**93** cases interpreted and  
**400+** documents translated by volunteers

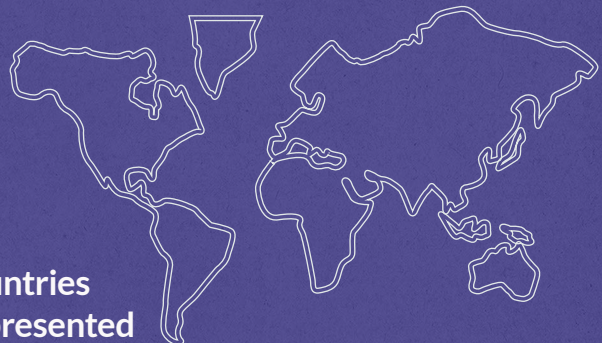
**2,134** People reached by "Know Your Rights" presentations



**134** Clients provided holistic support through RMIAN's Social Service Project

**4,283** Community members attended trainings held by RMIAN staff

**73** Countries Represented



AT RMIAN, WE BELIEVE THAT  
100% OF INDIVIDUALS IN LEGAL  
IMMIGRATION PROCEEDINGS  
DESERVE REPRESENTATION FROM  
AN ATTORNEY. PLEASE VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE AT [RMIAN.ORG](https://www.rmian.org) TO LEARN  
MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN  
SUPPORT THIS GOAL.



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