



"Finding Oasis was the best thing that could have happened to me."

Moises's Story
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OASIS LEGAL SERVICES

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2021

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THIS YEAR, Oasis strove to mitigate the continued impact of the pandemic on the LGBTQ+ immigrant community. In 2021, LGBTQ+ immigrants were significantly more likely to suffer from mental health challenges, employment and income loss and housing instability.

Informed by this need, Oasis created dozens of new community partnerships, ensuring pipelines of access for new clients and prioritizing at-risk communities, including HIV+ asylum seekers. Our team secured over 400 work-authorization documents, provided 340 clients with comprehensive case management, and trained over 700 legal advocates to ensure access to employment, benefits and quality legal representation.

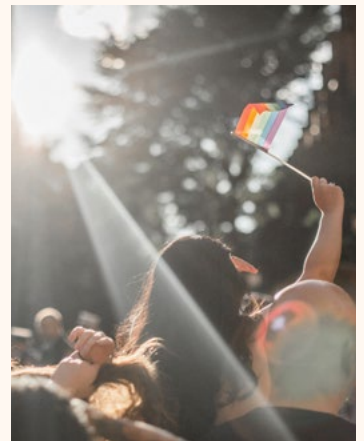
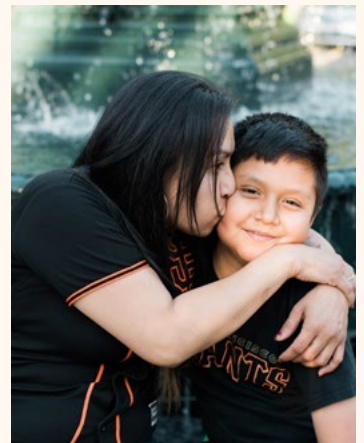
Together, we enter 2022 with trauma-informed direct legal representation for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers at the core of our holistic service model as we continue to center our clients' voices, expand asylum training and support to attorneys nationwide, and advocate for critical reforms.

In community,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Roberts". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Caroline Kornfield Roberts
Executive Director



MOISES'S STORY

AT JUST 17 YEARS OLD, Moises fled to the U.S. from Mexico. He suffered severe harm and death threats from his family because he is gay.

"I knew that if I ever went back, I would be killed."

That was in 1989, and for the next 30 years, Moises lived undocumented, "in the closet," and in fear. Without legal status, he could not finish his college education and was forced to abandon his dreams. He suffered from debilitating depression.

Finally, he realized he needed help. A partner nonprofit referred him to Oasis, and his application for asylum was filed in 2020. Like hundreds of others, his case fell into the immigration backlog, with no asylum hearing in sight, but in 2021 he received his temporary work authorization.

"Finding Oasis was the best thing that could have happened to me. Oasis connected me to a nonprofit providing free computer coding classes...The program gave me resources and helped me realize that I want to pursue a career in coding."



Moises was also referred to therapy at Partnerships for Trauma Recovery. "I am now seeing a wonderful [therapist] every week. I really identify and feel comfortable with her."

Now 49, Moises finally feels like he can start his life. "I feel so liberated, like I can finally breathe and stop lying about who I am. I had completely lost hope and [Oasis] gave it back to me."

OASIS CONTINUES TO REPRESENT

700+

LGBTQ+ ASYLUM SEEKERS WHOSE
CASES ARE CURRENTLY BACKLOGGED
WITH NO HEARING DATE IN SIGHT.

PABLO'S STORY

PABLO BAEZA BREINBAUR
OASIS CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER

WHAT DREW YOU TO OASIS AND WORKING WITH LGBTQ+ IMMIGRANTS?

As a queer immigrant who grew up transnationally, the intersection of these identities has always been a passion for me. I was born in Chile a year after the totalitarian dictatorship ended, and when I was young, Chilean society was still quite homophobic and oppressive towards minorities. I have always felt lucky to not have experienced that myself, and I wanted to give back to my community.

CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A MOMENT THAT YOU FELT THAT YOU ACCOMPLISHED SOMETHING VERY EXCITING OR IMPORTANT FOR A CLIENT?

One of my clients is Indigenous, primarily speaks an Indigenous language, and identifies as transgender feminine. I helped her navigate complex social-service and employment systems, empowering her to make her own decisions. She is now employed full time after years of piecemeal self-employment and contract labor, enrolled in ESL classes, and has access to computer literacy for the first time in her life.

HAVE YOU WORKED WITH ANY CLIENTS WHERE YOU BELIEVE THAT THE ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT YOU ARE GIVING THEM IS CHANGING THE TRAJECTORY OF THEIR LIFE?

Recently, we significantly expanded our medical and mental-health partnerships to better serve HIV+ and high-risk clients thanks to a generous grant from Gilead Sciences, Inc. Because clients often tell me that their psychologists don't talk to them or tell them what medications they are on or why, I work with them to feel able to ask important questions about their care and advocate when they believe they need to change their treatment.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR WORK MAKES YOU SMILE?

Our clients have often experienced some form of state-sanctioned abuse or neglect, so as an authority figure, it is important I do not re-traumatize them. When clients say they feel validated and respected it makes me happy. One client told me, "you helped me become aware of how deep I am going, and how comfortable I am with that, so that I can learn to pace myself and feel in control when I talk about hard things."



**OVER
50%**

**OF OASIS CLIENTS HAVE LIVED IN THE
U.S. FOR 10+ YEARS BEFORE THEY
ARE ABLE TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM.**

WHAT DO YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT YOUR JOB?

It's hard when I have to be honest about the lack of resources in certain areas. For some clients, especially those struggling with homelessness who cannot yet qualify for work authorization or benefits, there is often no good option. I share the basic information about drop-in centers, housing-authority waitlists and the 211 hotline, but those processes take time and require navigating complex systems.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH THE OASIS TEAM OVER THE PAST YEAR?

I have found working at Oasis to be a blessing. It is a warm and collaborative environment and I have found my coworkers are deeply committed to process and learning, while at the same time delivering a high volume of professional services. Having a community where we really look out for each other has been important for me.



PROGRAMMATIC UPDATE

AFGHAN PAROLE PETITIONS STAGNATE IN U.S. IMMIGRATION SYSTEM



Najib Faizi, the first man from Afghanistan to publicly declare himself a drag queen. (International Rescue Committee)

Over 30,000 Afghans applied for humanitarian parole when the Taliban took control of their country, including many LGBTQ+ Afghans whose lives are now in grave danger. Unfortunately, United States Citizenship and Immigration Service's (USCIS's) processing of all humanitarian parole applications has stagnated, without any mechanism for screening those who remain stranded in Afghanistan—and no plan to facilitate their safe passage to other countries. To date, USCIS has only processed a few of the thousands of applications, denied many others for not having enough proof, and is still sitting on 11.5 million dollars in filing fees. Oasis continues to strongly urge the administration to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ Afghans.



Take Action: Reach out to your congressional representatives today to let them know that they must work to secure safe passage for LGBTQ+ Afghan humanitarian parole applicants.



Asri's artwork:
"The ALiEN," "The Art Monster" and
"The Haram One"

ASRI'S STORY

IN 2019, I was an international student at U.C. Berkeley, just beginning to understand my identity as a gender-nonconforming Indonesian trans woman. At a presentation of the Berkeley Queer Student Union, Oasis attorney Ari Jones offered information about asylum for LGBTQ+ immigrants. I knew I needed to learn more, so I volunteered at Oasis's 2019 Fundraising Gala. From the coat-check stand, I watched the drag performances and heard the stories of those who had won asylum.

In Indonesia, a conservative Muslim country, living as a trans person is treacherous. The vibrant and resilient trans community is forced underground, in danger and on the margins. Coming out in the U.S., I lived with the fear that I would have to return to Indonesia, where I would have no support and be at risk of harm all the time.

In 2019, with Oasis's help, I applied for asylum, and in March of 2020, my case was granted. A weight was lifted off my shoulders, and my life is no longer in jeopardy. I can see

a future for myself now, and I am finally free to introduce my true self to my family. Without asylum that would never have been possible.

I now have a full-time job working at a local nonprofit teaching art to children around the Bay Area. Working with art has been such a blessing for me, and so rewarding.

In 2021, Oasis attorney Ari helped me apply for permanent residency. During this process, I mentioned my struggle to find culturally competent mental healthcare, and the desire to legally change my name and gender. Navigating the various bureaucracies on my own was challenging, and I felt very alone. Ari referred me to Oasis's social worker, Pablo, who connected me with a mental-health provider specializing in queer-competent care. Pablo also helped me file the paperwork to legally affirm my name and gender on my identity documents, a big positive step forward for me.



There are no other organizations doing this work like Oasis. Oasis is truly a community, supporting vulnerable members of society with nowhere else to turn. There are so many like me who are marginalized because of our intersectional identities.

Because of Oasis, we can finally embrace who we are and live openly. My dream is to be an artist and to share my narrative through art. This would never have been possible if I were forced to return to Indonesia. Now, I have the freedom to create art and show my work to the world.

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

121

LGBTQ+ NEW ASYLUM
SEEKERS REPRESENTED

408

WORK AUTHORIZATION
DOCUMENTS SECURED FOR
LGBTQ+ IMMIGRANTS

140

LGBTQ+ IMMIGRANTS
REPRESENTED APPLYING FOR
PERMANENT RESIDENCY

108

GREEN CARDS OBTAINED
FOR LGBTQ+ IMMIGRANTS

777

LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES
TRAINED ON HOW TO REPRESENT
LGBTQ+ ASYLUM SEEKERS

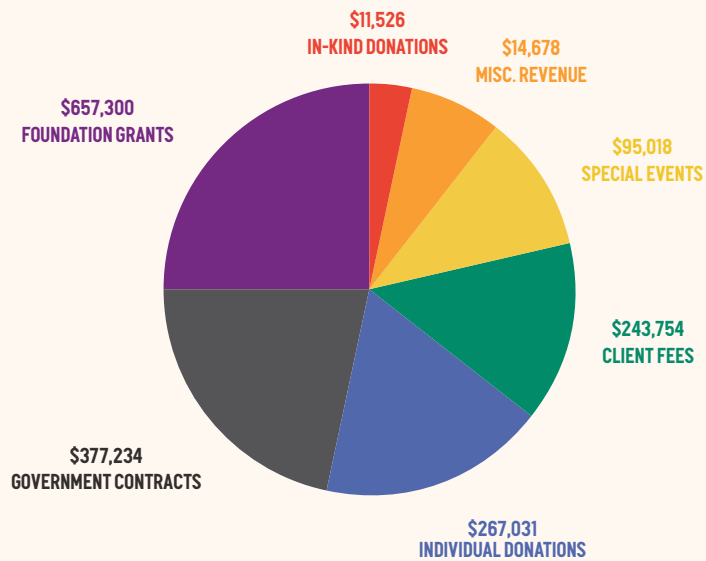
341

LGBTQ+ IMMIGRANTS PROVIDED
HOLISTIC CASE MANAGEMENT
AND WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT



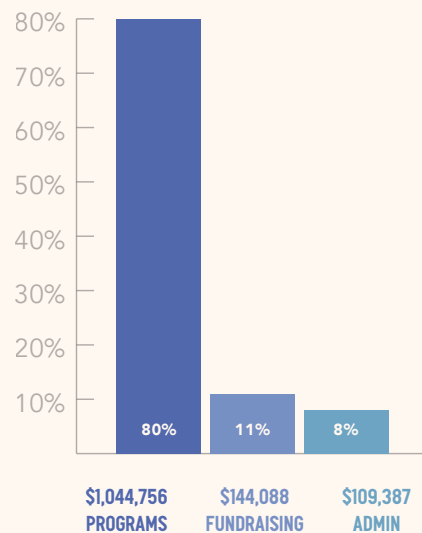


SOURCE OF FUNDS



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USE OF FUNDS



TOTAL: \$1,298,231

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2021 OASIS AWARDS



SYLVIA RIVERA LEGACY AWARD

Sylvia Rivera was a trans Latinx activist and tireless advocate against the exclusion of people of color, transgender and low-income members from the American Gay Liberation movement. Oasis's Sylvia Rivera Legacy Award honors her lifelong commitment by recognizing an individual who has dedicated themselves to doing the vital day-to-day work needed to protect and advocate for our community's most vulnerable members. In 2021, our award went to Nicole Santamaria, who has been supporting transgender women and survivors of anti-LGBTQ+ violence for over 15 years. As the Executive Director at El/La Para TransLatinas, Nicole strives to nurture a community that protects and empowers translatinas.



GILEAD

TITA AIDA ADVOCACY AWARD

Nicky Calma, also known as Tita Aida, is a trans activist and Filipina immigrant who has spent over 20 years working to increase access to AIDS prevention and treatment services for those on the margins of already-marginalized communities. In honor of her work and legacy, Oasis's Tita Aida Advocacy Award recognizes organizations, businesses and groups providing exceptional resources and services to the LGBTQ+ immigrant community. Our inaugural recipient in 2021 was Gilead Sciences, chosen for its pioneering work in HIV/AIDS antiretroviral therapy. Gilead continues to invest in underserved members of our community through its ongoing support for HIV+ LGBTQ+ asylum seekers at Oasis.

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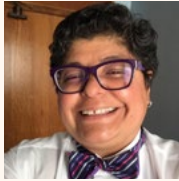
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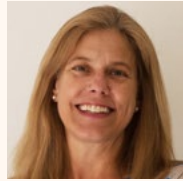
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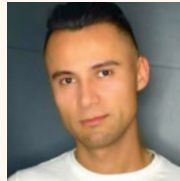
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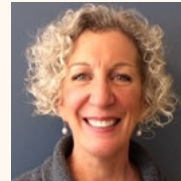
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PROGRAMMATIC UPDATE



OASIS CONTINUES TO FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS NATIONWIDE

On November 11, 2021, Oasis supported our client Jack S. in suing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to protect the right of asylum seekers to maintain work authorization while their cases are pending in government backlogs, often for years. This nationwide class-action lawsuit challenges DHS's failure to renew the lawful work authorizations of asylum seekers in a timely manner and seeks to compel them to take the necessary steps to address delays in adjudication of employment-authorizaton renewal applications for thousands of asylum seekers.



"I enjoyed my job and it brought meaning to my life... I have now been waiting almost seven months for USCIS to renew my work permit and I am desperate to start working again and regain the physical and emotional stability my life used to have." – Oasis client Jack S.



"In November, my co-chair, Anna Lijphart, and I visited El Salvador to learn about the conditions of the LGBTQI community. It saddened my heart to find that hate crimes against the community continue to go unpunished, that no laws protect LGBTQI persons from hate crimes and discrimination. What Oasis Legal Services does saves lives and is essential. I am proud to be a co-chair of the board of directors."

~ Rev. Rhina Ramos



L to R: Anna, Liz Muñoz (vicar at Santiago/St. James Episcopal Church in Oakland; bisexual Chicana activist and community organizer), Catalina (trans woman and Director of Community Activities at Diké), Rhina



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