

AFI STATEMENT ON THE INCOMING 2025 TRUMP-VANCE ADMINISTRATION

November 12, 2024 - As an organization dedicated to supporting and uplifting artists at risk through pro-bono immigration representation and resettlement services, AFI recognizes the deep sense of fear and uncertainty associated with last week's presidential election result for our community. During this time of collective sorrow and anxiety over the direction of the United States' future, AFI remains steadfast in our commitment to serve artists at risk.

In our role as humanitarian immigration practitioners and champions of free expression, we reaffirm AFI's unwavering commitment to navigating immigration and related policy changes in service of artists at risk and to protect the human rights of asylum seekers and other forced migrants. Since our founding, AFI has risen to meet the needs of our community despite the plethora of restraints and challenges to immigration and artistic freedom under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Under the Trump-Pence administration, AFI responded to unlawful and harmful immigration policies like the 2017 "Muslim Ban" by increasing our pro-bono case intake and direct services capacity, successfully filing travel ban waivers so that artists from banned countries could continue to enter the U.S. AFI also partnered with artists and arts institutions in our network to curate artistic projects that centered migrants' lived experiences, like our 2018 exhibition "[Executive \(Dis\)order: Art, Displacement, & the Ban](#)" at the Queens Museum. In 2021, after the Biden-Harris administration's decision to withdraw US peacekeeping forces from Afghanistan led to the outbreak of a political and humanitarian crisis, AFI launched the [Afghan Artists Protection Project](#) (AAPP), an emergency response program which supported more than 500 Afghan artists and their families.

Leading up to the presidential election of 2024, our staff was outraged by the dehumanizing, xenophobic rhetoric that the Trump-Vance campaign employed to discuss their platforms on immigration and foreign policy. Such rhetoric not only denies the vital contributions - cultural and otherwise - of migrants to American society since this country's founding, but it also threatens the safety and dignity of immigrant communities living in the United States today.

As a group of legal experts and immigration attorneys, we are also appalled by several of the incoming administration's proposed immigration policies which we believe to be unlawful and which we fear could result in human rights violations, including mass deportations, ending DACA, processing asylum claims in a third country, and separating families during immigration detention.

In the face of these challenges, just as we have under previous administrations, AFI will remain dedicated to serving our community and to defending their rights under any circumstances. As we navigate new immigration policy changes, we will continue to provide the strongest immigration legal representation possible to our artists and take on as many new cases as we can. We also look forward to deepening our partnerships with our peer organizations in the field of immigration as we fight to protect the human rights of artists at risk and forced migrants together.

AFI also aims to equip our artists with information, resources, support, and a sense of community during these divisive times. To this end, we invite all AFI artists - past and present - to reach out to our team if you have questions or concerns about your immigration status. We also encourage you to subscribe to our artist newsletter, which includes information about year-round events where you can form connections with other artists in exile and support each other's work.

Finally, AFI looks forward to forming new relationships with artists at risk who can benefit from our services or core programs. If you are an artist at risk, we encourage you to visit our website to learn more about AFI's core programs and services, including the following:

Legal Services Program → AFI offers pro bono immigration representation for artists that have been persecuted or censored in their countries of origin. AFI's network of pro bono attorneys assists with talent-based visas, performance visas, cultural exchange visas, asylum petitions and refugee status for eligible artists. To find out if you are eligible for assistance, please visit our [Legal Services Program page](#).

Resettlement Assistance and Residency Program → AFI takes a holistic approach to supporting the artists in our network after they have resettled. Through our direct service programs, we obtain work authorizations permits for at-risk artists, we help them find temporary housing and studio spaces, and we match them with employment, internship, education, residency, fellowship, and other professional opportunities. To learn more, please visit our [Resettlement and Residency Program page](#).

It is more crucial than ever that we support artists at risk, who use their creative skills to pave the way forward towards a more equal, just, and sustainable future. We invite you to join AFI in our work to provide humanitarian aid and assistance to artists at risk by [donating today](#).