



2024

# ANNUAL REPORT



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# A letter from our Executive Director

Dear Somos Familia Community,

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with deep gratitude and immense pride for all that we have built together. At Somos Familia, our commitment to creating a world where Latiné LGBTQ+ people and their families thrive, has never been stronger. Each step we've taken this year, each workshop, support group, community gathering, and moment of advocacy has been rooted in love, resilience, and the belief that everyone deserves to feel seen, valued, and safe.

This year, we witnessed young leaders rise, families grow in understanding and acceptance, and communities rally together in bold acts of solidarity. We expanded our programming to reach even more youth and caregivers, provided culturally responsive education, and deepened our partnerships across schools, clinics, and faith-based spaces.

Through it all, we centered the voices of those most impacted and stayed true to our values of inclusion, healing, and justice. We are especially proud of the ways our team responded to the needs of our community in real time, offering hope, resources, and connection during moments of uncertainty. Whether it was uplifting trans and non-binary youth, celebrating queer joy through art and culture, or equipping families with tools to navigate complex conversations, Somos Familia showed up with heart.

Thank you to every volunteer, donor, partner, and community member who made this year possible. Your trust fuels our work, and your support ensures that our vision of an affirming and equitable future can become a reality.

We invite you to continue dreaming, building, and rising with us in the year ahead.



**Sasha Ritzie-Hernandez**  
Executive Director  
Somos Familia





# Our Team



## Alexander Gonzalez

(he/him/el)

Alex is a bilingual Community Health Educator at Somos Familia with over 15 years of experience in advocacy and education across issues such as immigration reform, housing equity, climate justice, and LGBTQ+ rights. Born in Mexico and a UC Berkeley graduate with a B.A. in Gender and Women's Studies, Alex brings deep personal and political commitment to his work. He coordinates and facilitates impactful workshops on gender and sexuality in both English and Spanish, and is a co-founder of a Spanish-language support group for Trans Latinx men. His leadership continues to foster inclusivity and strengthen communities across multiple movements.



## Maria Velazquez

(she/her/ella)

María Velázquez Tapia is a bilingual Family Leadership Coordinator, a Mexican psychologist with a Master's in Human Potential Development and certification as an instructor and coach. With over 15 years of experience, she has dedicated her career to developing personal and organizational leadership. She is an expert in soft skills training, including emotional intelligence, teamwork, women's empowerment, effective communication, conflict management, self-esteem, stress management, resilience, and positive mindset. María is also skilled in facilitating support groups and focus groups that promote well-being and improve quality of life.



## Gabriel Oropeza

(he/him/el)

Gabriel Oropeza Gonzalez is a bilingual intern and undergraduate student at UC Berkeley, pursuing a Bachelor of Arts with anticipated graduation in 2027. A top 1% graduate from Fontana High School and recipient of the National Hispanic Recognition Award, Gabriel is passionate about community empowerment and technology. He is actively involved in the Computer Science Undergraduate Association, Raíces Recruitment and Retention Center, and Latin American Leadership, with a strong focus on supporting Latine student success and inclusive spaces in STEM.



# Our Team



## Brenda Roque

(she/her/ella)

Brenda is a queer Latiné intern and first-generation college student from the Bay Area, with a B.A. in International Relations and Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity at Stanford University. Deeply committed to social justice, Brenda's academic work explores the intersections of global development, human rights, and racial equity. Her lived experiences as the daughter of undocumented immigrants and a native Spanish speaker fuel her dedication to community empowerment and advocacy. At Stanford, she serves as the Financial Officer for Barrio Assistance, supporting local Latiné youth through culturally responsive tutoring and college access. Brenda has also led district-wide initiatives through Rotary Interact, worked to combat human trafficking with regional nonprofits, and continues to center race, ethnicity, and identity in her leadership, activism, and service.



## Anna Perronne

(she/her/ella)

Anna is a queer Latina student at Stanford University with a B.A. in Political Science and a minor in Comparative Studies of Race and Ethnicity. Her academic work centers on the intersection of identity, policy, and social justice, with a particular focus on racial-ethnic identity formation, immigrant communities, and educational equity. Anna has worked with grassroots organizations in Ecuador, conducted research on child development and identity, and supported gender justice initiatives both on campus and abroad. With bilingual Spanish skills and a passion for community empowerment, she is committed to uplifting Latiné LGBTQ+ youth and families through relational, culturally grounded work.



## Cesar Rodriguez

(he/him/el)

Cesar Rodriguez is a queer, first-generation college student with a major in Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity with a minor in Spanish at Stanford University. Born to a mixed immigration status family, Cesar brings lived experience and academic insight to his work on immigration, disability justice, and LGBTQ+ advocacy. His passion for intersectional social justice has guided his research, organizing, and community engagement from advancing student debt cancellation efforts to supporting marginalized youth through mentorship and public policy work. Cesar is committed to healing, liberation, and building affirming spaces for Latinx queer communities.





# Our Programming



## Overview

Somos Familia works closely with Latine LGBTQ+ youth, and families of LGBTQ+ loved ones, ensuring access to resources, support, and affirming spaces. Through education, we provide bilingual (English/Spanish) training and workshops for schools, organizations, and service providers, equipping them with the cultural competency needed to support the LGBTQ+ community. Our family support programs foster dialogue and healing, helping caregivers and loved ones navigate the journey of affirmation and acceptance.

Advocacy is a core part of our work, as we push for policies that protect and uplift LGBTQ+ students, families, and community members. Somos Familia actively engages with school districts, policymakers, and community partners to fight for inclusive curriculum, anti-discrimination policies, and equitable access to resources. We collaborate with educators and advocates to ensure that Latine LGBTQ+ voices are heard in decision-making spaces, and we empower young leaders to champion their own rights through training and mentorship. By advocating for systemic change, we ensure that our communities are not only acknowledged but prioritized in policies affecting their daily lives.

At the heart of Somos Familia is health and community organizing, bringing together individuals and families to create networks of solidarity and resilience. We facilitate peer-led support groups for Latiné Trans Men, LGBTQ+ youth, and families of LGBTQ+ loved ones, ensuring they have a space to connect, share experiences, and access culturally affirming resources. Our community gatherings celebrate LGBTQ+ identity and culture, fostering an intergenerational movement for inclusion and justice. By prioritizing intersectionality, we recognize how race, gender, immigration status, and socioeconomic background shape lived experiences. This understanding allows us to create meaningful change that uplifts Latiné LGBTQ+ individuals and their families. Through this approach, we foster a more inclusive and just future where all community members can thrive.

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## Our Vision

Somos Familia envisions a just and liberated world where people of all genders and sexual orientations are not only accepted, but fully embraced, celebrated, and supported.

## Our Mission

Somos Familia nurtures leadership within Latine families and communities to cultivate a culture of belonging, affirmation, and collective power, where people of all genders and sexual orientations are not only safe, but able to live fully and thrive.

# Our Programming Continued

## Focus Areas

### LGBTQ+ Latine Youth



- Create safe spaces for leadership development and peer support.
- Provide LGBTQ+ affirming mental health resources and mentorship.
- Advocate for inclusive school policies and curriculum representation.
- Connect youth with internship and career development opportunities.
- Promote cultural expression and art as tools for affirmation and healing.

### Families of LGBTQ+ loved ones



- Offer bilingual workshops and peer-led support groups to foster acceptance.
- Provide culturally relevant educational materials on LGBTQ+ identities.
- Foster intergenerational dialogue to strengthen family relationships.
- Equip families to become advocates in their communities and schools.
- Connect families to accessible, language-appropriate support networks.

### Tran and non-binary community



- Offer bilingual workshops and peer-led support groups for family acceptance.
- Provide access to affirming healthcare, advocacy, and resources.
- Promote leadership development and visibility in broader LGBTQ+ movements.
- Create community healing spaces that center intersectional experiences.
- Support the development of trans- and non-binary-led content and resources.





# Empowering LGBTQ+ Youth

Somos Familia's youth programming is designed to equip LGBTQ+ young people with the knowledge, confidence, and resources they need to advocate for themselves and their communities. Through bilingual workshops, mentorship, and leadership training, we provide safe and affirming spaces where youth can connect, learn, and grow.

Our work focuses on education, policy advocacy, and community organizing, ensuring that young people have the tools to challenge discrimination, push for inclusive school policies, and build networks of support. By partnering with schools and youth organizations, we continue to expand opportunities for LGBTQ+ youth to lead, organize, and create meaningful change in their communities



## Program Highlights

- Delivered 30+ school-based workshops covering LGBTQ+ rights, healthy relationships, and self-advocacy, equipping youth with tools to navigate challenges confidently.

- Hosted weekly LGBTQ+ youth support groups, offering a safe and affirming space for young people to share experiences, access resources, and build connections.

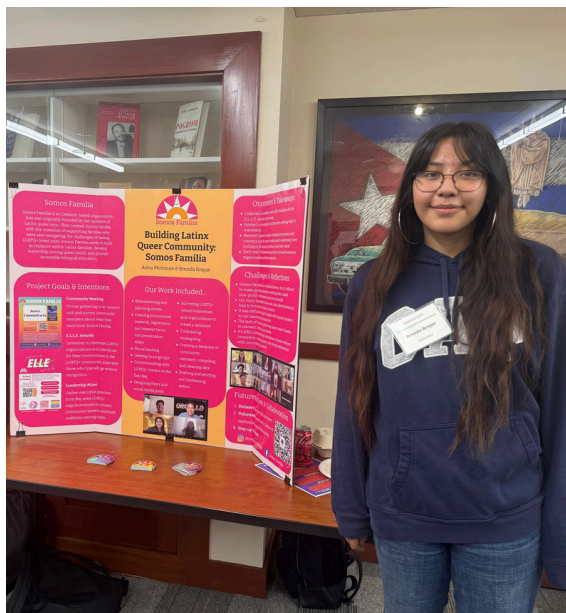
- Provided career development, internships, and leadership opportunities to DACA LGBTQ+ youth gain job skills and professional experience.

- Partnered with 12+ schools and community organizations to create safer, affirming environments for LGBTQ+ students through policy advocacy and educator training.

- Partnered with Gender and Sexualities Alliances (GSAs) across multiple schools, providing mentorship, organizing support, and resources to strengthen student-led advocacy.

- Provided 6 paid internships to local Latine LGBTQ+ students from Stanford University and UC Berkeley.

## OUR IMPACT



“Interning at Somos Familia has really pushed me out of my comfort zone. I’ve learned new skills, taken on challenges, and grown so much while supporting LGBTQ+ youth and families.”

— Brenda  
Stanford University Student

“At Somos Familia, I found a supportive and inspiring community that empowered me to speak up and listen more deeply. In a time of uncertainty, it was meaningful to be part of a team fighting for the rights of Queer Latine youth and their families.”

— Gabriel  
UC Berkeley Student





# Nuestra Familia

At Somos Familia, we believe that family acceptance and understanding are essential in creating safe, supportive environments where LGBTQ+ individuals can thrive. Through a bilingual, culturally responsive approach, we provide parents and caregivers with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to navigate conversations about gender identity and sexual orientation with confidence.

Our programming fosters intergenerational dialogue, leadership development, and advocacy, ensuring families feel empowered to support their LGBTQ+ loved ones both at home and within their communities. By collaborating with local organizations and centering the voices of families, we continue to strengthen our efforts to address key challenges and expand access to affirming services.



## Program Highlights and Impact



- Hosted weekly family support groups, providing culturally relevant guidance for parents and caregivers.
- Conducted bilingual workshops on LGBTQ+ identities, family acceptance, and mental health.
- Conducted two town halls to discuss the future of our programming to identify key topics of interest for families.
- Partnered with local organizations to provide families with immigration related resources that address legal protections, rights, and available support services
- Provided leadership opportunities for families, equipping parents and caregivers with the tools to advocate for their LGBTQ+ loved ones and engage in community organizing efforts
- Distributed LGBTQ+ educational resources tailored to Latiné families, ensuring accessibility and cultural responsiveness.

# 92%

of families reported a better understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ loved ones.

# 88%

of caregivers said they gained practical tools and resources to support LGBTQ+ family members.

# 80%

of parents felt more confident discussing gender identity and sexual orientation with their children.



# Grupo de Apoyo Fenix



Grupo de Apoyo Fénix

Grupo de Apoyo Fénix is a support group for trans men, FTM, and non-binary individuals who identify along the masculine spectrum, ages 18 and older. We provide a safe space to discuss needs, share resources, and access culturally competent services. Our program offers Spanish-language resources on sexual health, including support groups for HIV and sexual health, ensuring access to essential information and services for our community.

## Program Highlights and Impact

Distributed a total of **309** culturally responsive care packages, each with bilingual HIV prevention materials and resources on housing, healthcare, and immigration.

Facilitated **30 HIV & STI testing referrals**, ensuring timely and inclusive care through partners like Planned Parenthood and Out of the Closet.

Launched the **first-ever Latinx Trans Panel** at the Creating Change conference, elevating community voice and HIV awareness.

Accompanied community members to **167** Planned Parenthood appointments, providing support during sensitive healthcare visits.

Outreach & Crisis Intervention: **1,426** crisis calls, text, emails and 30 in-person wellness check-ins, connecting individuals to resources and support. By listening with empathy, non-judgmental and compassion for our community.



# 72

in-person and virtual gatherings for Latinx trans men and LGBTQ+ community members.

# 358

referrals to culturally responsive, often Spanish-speaking therapists addressing trauma, emotional support, and HIV-related stigma.

# 150

providers trained in culturally competent, trauma-informed, and gender-affirming HIV care.



*premios*  
**ELLE**  
*awards*





## Rhina Ramos



Rhina is an ordained minister with the United Church of Christ. She founded Ministerio Latino in 2011, establishing a Spanish-speaking, affirming congregation for LGBTQ+ Latiné immigrants. Originally from El Salvador, she emigrated to the U.S. at 14 and later became a labor attorney, advocating for immigrant workers

## Monica Rodas



Monica, holds advanced degrees in Health Education and Higher Education of Health Sciences from the University of El Salvador. A former Health Sciences professor, she is a dedicated educator working with vulnerable communities, youth, and women while advocating for Sexual and Reproductive rights.

## Santana Tapia



Santana holds extensive experience in activism, using their intersecting identities to drive meaningful change. They have played key roles in political lobbying, contributing to legislation like the FAIR Education Act, AB 1266, and Federal Title IX amendments.. Serves as Director of Programs for Drag Story Hour.

## EL/LA Para TransLatinas



EL/LA para TransLatinas, a San Francisco Bay Area organization empowers trans Latinas through education, advocacy, and leadership. Committed to safety, dignity, and rights, EL/LA addresses systemic barriers like gender-based violence, discrimination, and limited healthcare access.



# Sponsors

We deeply thank the ELLE Awards sponsors for their generous support in uplifting LGBTQ+ leaders, activists, and changemakers. Your commitment ensures that their contributions are recognized and celebrated, particularly within Latiné and BIPOC LGBTQ+ communities. Thanks to your sponsorship, we honor those advancing equity and inclusion while strengthening the movement for justice. From all of us at Somos Familia, thank you for standing with us!





# Special Thanks to Our Funders

FLEISHHACKER  
FOUNDATION



San Francisco  
Foundation



Blue Heart



We are deeply grateful to our funders for walking alongside us in this journey toward justice, healing, and belonging. Your support is more than a grant, it is a reflection of trust, solidarity, and shared purpose. Because of your investment, Somos Familia has been able to offer life-changing programs for LGBTQ+ Latiné youth and their families from affirming mental health resources and leadership development opportunities to healing circles, culturally rooted workshops, and policy advocacy driven by those most impacted.

In moments of growing hostility toward our communities, your partnership reminds us that love is louder, and that together, we can build systems that honor the full humanity of trans, queer, undocumented, and BIPOC youth. Your belief in our mission gives us the strength to keep dreaming, building, and creating spaces where our people are safe, seen, and celebrated.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for believing in us, for resourcing our resilience, and for making it possible to transform pain into purpose and care into collective power.

# LOOKING AHEAD

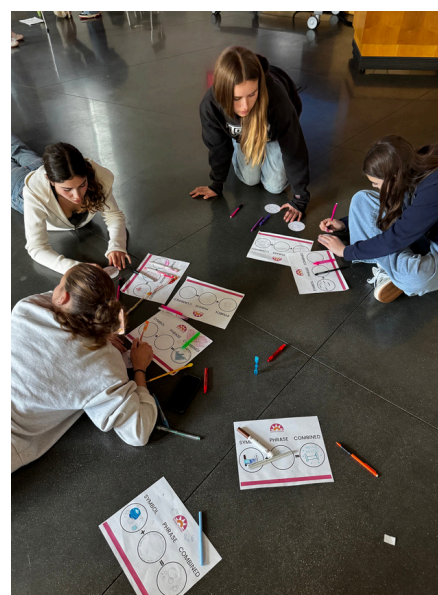
## Education

Education is a pathway to healing, affirmation, and liberation for Latinx LGBTQ+ youth and families. As we expand our work across schools in the Bay Area, we are developing the California LGBTQ+ Youth Bill of Rights, a “Know Your Rights” tool that equips students with accessible information about their rights in school and resources. We are growing our internship program, currently with UC Berkeley and Stanford, to include Oakland Unified School District and Peralta College, and launching Academic Excellence Packages to recognize LGBTQ+ students who thrive academically despite systemic barriers. We are also expanding our culturally responsive programming middle and high schools, offering bilingual workshops for students, staff, and families on gender identity, mental health, healthy relationships, HIV prevention, and immigrant family support. Somos Familia also provides training and consulting for schools and community organizations, including professional development, inclusive curriculum, GSA support, and language justice strategies, all grounded in lived experience and a commitment to creating inclusive learning spaces where LGBTQ+ youth and families can thrive.



## Advocacy

Our advocacy focuses on ensuring our communities are safe, inclusive, and resourced to serve those most impacted by marginalization. In partnership with the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy, Somos Familia is working to shift public dollars toward community wellness, access to mental health, and housing security. We bring a strong community voice to these coalitions, lifting up the lived realities of LGBTQ+ youth, immigrant families, and communities of color. We are also working to strengthen and expand the Sanctuary District Policy across the Bay Area ensuring that it not only protects undocumented students and families, but also affirms the rights and safety of LGBTQ+ students. Through our LOVE Campaign (Lifting Our Voices for Equity), we will continue to mobilize youth leaders, offer bilingual education rights workshops, and push for school policies that reflect the dignity and brilliance of Latinx LGBTQ+ communities throughout the region.



## Health

Somos Familia is building the future of culturally responsive, bilingual sexual health education and HIV prevention for trans, non-binary, and queer Latinx communities. With continued support from Viiv Healthcare, we are entering a new phase of growth that centers wellness, trust, and dignity for those most impacted. In the coming year, we will expand our mental health referral initiative for Spanish-speaking LGBTQ+ individuals facing systemic barriers to affirming care and launch new healing retreats for trans Latinx men that integrate HIV education, emotional resilience, and cultural celebration. Every step forward is rooted in language justice, cultural humility, and lived experience, expanding not only access to lifesaving care, but also the possibility of healing, connection, and collective power.





# Support Our Work Build Our Future



At Somos Familia, every workshop, care package, support group, and healing space is powered by the belief that Latine LGBTQ+ people and families deserve to thrive with dignity, safety, and love.

But we can't do this work alone.

Give today! and invest in the future we all deserve. Your support creates safer, more affirming spaces for the most vulnerable in our community.

Get in Touch

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**Somos Familia**

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