

**RESPONSIVE PHILANTHROPY**  
**Fall 2012**



**Member Spotlight: Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)**

Los Angeles, CA | [www.maldef.org](http://www.maldef.org) | Est. 1968

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**NCRP:** *What are the greatest civil rights issues facing Latinos today and how is MALDEF working to tackle them?*

**MALDEF:** The continued proliferation of state and local measures that encourage or, in some cases, mandate racial profiling by police and others in an attempt to enforce federal immigration law raises ongoing concerns about the civil rights of all Latinos. Extending back two decades to California's Proposition 187, MALDEF has been at the forefront of challenging the constitutionality of such laws through federal litigation. Our efforts continue today as we seek to identify and challenge each of the new legislative means being used to target the growing Latino population. At the same time, MALDEF's long-standing work to increase equity of opportunity in education is needed today more than ever. With Latinos representing one in five public school children nationwide, and one in four of those of younger age, our nation must address our ongoing inability to eliminate the educational achievement gap. Through litigation and policy advocacy at the federal and state level, MALDEF continues to seek policy change to enhance equal educational opportunity from pre-K through higher education. If the Supreme Court further limits affirmative action in university admissions through the currently pending Fisher case, these efforts will take on even greater significance.

**NCRP:** *Litigation is a key part of the organization's work to promote social change. How has this approach to advocacy furthered MALDEF's mission and positively affected the lives of Latinos?*

**MALDEF:** Throughout its history, MALDEF has had great success in litigating to defend and promote the civil rights of all Latinos living in the United States. We have successfully challenged laws restricting the right of access to education. For example, in *Plyler v. Doe*, a 1982 Supreme Court decision in a MALDEF case established the constitutional right to a free public education to every child regardless of immigration status. We have also successfully struck down laws restricting the free speech rights of immigrant day laborers and laws, like Arizona's SB 1070, that seek to improperly pursue separate state immigration regulations.

Through our voting rights litigation, we have successfully challenged discriminatory redistricting decisions and challenged at-large election systems that serve to exclude meaningful Latino participation. For example, in 2006, MALDEF prevailed in a case that went to the Supreme Court, *LULAC v. Perry*, and our victory resulted in an additional Latino congressional district in Texas. We are currently engaged in similar cases following the 2011 redistricting process.

Finally, through our education litigation, we have successfully obtained significant additional support for Latino public school students throughout the nation. In cases challenging education resource distribution in states like Arizona, California, Illinois and Texas, MALDEF's litigation has positively affected the educational experiences of millions of Latino students and their classmates.

**NCRP:** *What's next for MALDEF?*

**MALDEF:** As the nation's Latino population grows in every region of the country, MALDEF looks to expand its regional office network to better serve the civil rights legal advocacy needs of the nation's largest minority population. With regional offices currently in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Antonio and Washington, D.C., and smaller satellite offices in Atlanta and Sacramento, MALDEF will be seeking the resources to expand its regional presence into the Southeast and Northwest and to strengthen its services in all of the states where we do not have a physical office.

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