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## **New American Democracy Fellowship**

Over the past 3 years, the MIRA staff has engaged youth and youth serving organizations to organize young people's leadership on immigrant rights campaigns. Youth received training and played leadership roles in the following accomplishments:

- Sent a delegation of over 40 youth to Washington DC on April 18, 2004 to advocate for the DREAM Act;
- In Spring 2005, youth organized a statewide, 10-city tour of immigrant students to call attention to the need for equal access to higher education;
- Organized multiple, large scale events and actions at which youth served prominent, leadership roles, around the Massachusetts In-State Tuition Bill between September 2005 and January 2006; and,
- Trained and supported youth who spoke with local and national radio, television and print media regarding immigrant issues (ranging from ethnic newspapers to mainstream AM talk radio).

The growing engagement of young people in Boston and across the region led to the creation of the New American Democracy Fellowship (NADF), through which immigrant youth organize, with MIRA support, for immigrant rights and comprehensive immigration reform. NADF primarily engages youth ages 16-25 from across Massachusetts, and organizes through meetings, outreach, events, voter education, legislative and media advocacy.

In 2006, Carlos Saavedra and Patricia de Oliveira were selected as the first two Fellows. The Fellows have held weekly meetings to plan actions, coordinate outreach to youth across Boston, Massachusetts and New England, and begin to develop a long-term plan and structure. In every city and town the Fellows travel to in Massachusetts, other potential Fellows are identified to help advance the goals of NADF.

Goals for NADF include:

- Create substantive roles and opportunities for immigrant youth (focus on engaging younger youth, ages 15-18) to build leadership and shape the public policies that affect their lives
- Develop statewide and regional capacity for empowering immigrant youth to be advocates for comprehensive immigration reform

In collaboration with partners across Massachusetts, and with NADF colleagues across the country, the decision to develop, support and amplify immigrant youth leadership will leave a mark on Massachusetts for generations to come.