



IRIS GOMEZ joined MIRA's Board when churches were offering Central American refugees sanctuary to protest U.S. asylum policies and Congress was enacting legislation making it illegal to earn a living without the government's permission. She has supported MIRA in countless advocacy campaigns. As the senior immigration lawyer at Massachusetts Law Reform Institute for the last fifteen years, Iris has co-counseled class action litigation on MIRA's behalf against the state Registry of Motor Vehicles for illegal license denial practices, advocated for higher education legislation and administrative reforms on behalf of high-achieving immigrant youth, and championed the rights of asylees, detainees, battered immigrants, and immigrant families before federal and state courts, immigration authorities, state agencies and the legislature.

Born in Cartagena, Colombia, Iris immigrated to the United States as a child. She grew up in Miami, Florida and overcame difficult socioeconomic circumstances to achieve her dream of a college education. She obtained a law degree from Boston University School of Law, where she now teaches Immigration Law part-time. Before joining MLRI, Iris represented farm workers, juvenile defendants, Latinos in Boston's South End, and refugees and immigrants from all over the world. At MLRI, the state's legal services back-up center, she handles impact litigation and other systemic advocacy and provides training and legal support on immigration law and immigrant rights matters. Until recently, she also chaired the National Immigration Law Center's Board of Directors. She is a Trustee of The Hyams Foundation.

Iris has received the Jack Wasserman Award for Excellence in Litigation from the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the Massachusetts Bar Association's Access to Justice Legal Services Award, the Massachusetts Association of Hispanic Attorneys' *Las Primeras* Award, and the Boston Bar Association's John G. Brooks Legal Services Award. She has published two poetry collections, *When Comets Rained* (2005) and *Housicwhissick Blue: Poetry of the Blue Hills Reservation* (2004), and is the author of a coming-of-age novel about a Latina teen - for which she is currently pursuing publication options.