



REFUGEES OF COMEDY

October 14, 2026 • 6-9PM



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Welcome to the Refugees of Comedy!

Thanks for being a part of our fourth annual Refugees of Comedy! This is our main fundraiser, and by supporting IIB, you are helping immigrants and refugees in Buffalo.

This is a night of laughs and celebration, and I don't want to take away from that. However, I want you to know your participation is especially appreciated because, if you've spent ten minutes watching the news in recent months, you know things aren't great for a foreign-born person living in America right now. Your financial support is making life that much easier for them.

Thanks to Thom Tran, who has been with us from the start. He and his family came from Vietnam as refugees, and they even got help from IIB many years ago. Now he is killing it in Hollywood and on the comedy circuit!

Joining Thom this year is Francisco Ramos, a stand-up comedian/actor and immigrant from Venezuela. If you've seen him on TV, then you know you are in for a treat tonight. We appreciate him lending his talent to support us.

Finally, I want to thank the IIB board, team members, volunteers, and everyone else who help us make Western New York a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees. We've gone through a lot over the last year. There is no doubt that there will be more challenges ahead. But I am confident there is no better team with whom I would want to face the future.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Rizzo-Choi
Executive Director
International Institute of Buffalo,



EVENT DETAILS



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2026 · 6:00 – 9:00 PM

Buffalo Toronto Public Media

140 Lower Terrace, Buffalo, NY 14202



Know the Value of
Immigrants and Refugees



Donate to IIB

FEATURED PERFORMERS

Meet the Talent



Thom Tran

COMEDIAN · VETERAN · ACTOR

A Los Angeles-based comedian, musician, and U.S. Army Combat veteran, Thom Tran found his calling in standup following a gunshot wound to the head while deployed in Iraq. He founded the internationally touring *GIs of Comedy*, featured on Netflix's *Larry Charles' Dangerous World of Comedy*, CBS, and NBC. He has co-starred on *NCIS: Los Angeles* and *SEAL Team*, and appears in *My Dead Friend Zoe* alongside Morgan Freeman and Ed Harris



Francisco Ramos

COMEDIAN · ACTOR · WRITER

Originally from Venezuela and raised in Washington D.C., Francisco Ramos brings warmth, energy, and a uniquely bicultural lens to his standup. A top-ten finalist on NBC's *Last Comic Standing*, he has appeared on *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, Comedy Central's *@Midnight*, and performed for U.S. troops in Afghanistan. His television and film credits include Hulu's *This Fool*, Netflix's *Gentefied*, Showtime's *Shameless*, Steve Carell's *Angie Tribeca*, Netflix's *Lady Dynamite*, and voiced Marmoset in the animated hit *Rio* and Cartoon Network's *Victor and Valentino*. His debut comedy album *Vayalo* reached the top five on the Billboard Comedy Charts.

Naryan Padmanabha

FUSION SITAR PLAYER



Mohammad Mustafa & Zahra Fedayee

AFGHAN ARTISTS



History & *Mission*

OUR MISSION

The Institute makes Western New York a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees. We welcome, connect and empower foreign-born people and encourage our region's support for diverse cultures.

FOUNDED 1918

Over a century of welcome

The International Institute of Buffalo was founded in 1918 to serve indigent Italian girls & women who had come to WNY looking for work. Through every global conflict and wave of displacement that followed, IIB has stood at the intersection of welcome and belonging.

New Americans are often easy targets — they may lack the right to vote, are still learning English, and are building their financial footing. That is precisely why the International Institute of Buffalo exists.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Ellis Island of Western New York

IIB is completing a strategic planning process to determine how we can best serve our evolving community. Our vision will celebrate the legacy of immigrants and refugees who helped build Buffalo.

Our future includes an oral history project and a small museum space, a permanent home for artifacts collected over more than a century to tell our community's immigrant stories for generations to come.

CLIENTS SERVED

Over 4,000 people served in 2025

Our newest neighbors came from all over the globe, including: Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine, Eritrea, Congo, Thailand, and Syria. Community services include resettlement, education, employment, legal, and international exchanges.

STAFF BY THE NUMBERS

108

YEARS OF SERVICE

35

TEAM PROFESSIONALS

22

LANGUAGES SPOKEN

12

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



Our Work



New American Integration

Our NAI team provides intensive case management for arriving clients — particularly those with significant medical conditions left undiagnosed or untreated in their home countries. Our team members serve as teachers, guides, mentors, and advocates, making life-altering differences every day.



Legal Services

Our legal team helps immigrants and refugees navigate the complex American legal system — assisting with work authorization, family reunification, asylum applications, legal permanent residency and naturalization, and other humanitarian law grant requests.



Employment Services

We place clients with hundreds of employers across manufacturing, customer service, landscaping, and hospitality — and help immigrants return to professional careers in accounting, pharmacy, engineering, and architecture..



Interpreting & Translation

With 40+ years of language expertise, we offer in-person services in 100 languages, remote services in 300+ languages, and translation in 100 languages —the largest local language services network in Western New York.



Education & Exchanges

Our international exchange programs bring together different cultures in Western New York and around the globe by promoting partnerships, best practices, and mutual respect. Beyond these cultural gains, our programs empower the economy.



REFUGEES OF COMEDY

Thanks for Making a Difference!

Your attendance helps the International Institute of
Buffalo serve immigrants and refugees in
Western New York.

For more info, go to iibuffao.org



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