



The Samaritan Chronicles

PROMOTING JUSTICE FOR MIGRANTS & UNITY FOR ALL

Welcome to the first edition of The Samaritan Chronicles

The word Samaritan is commonly used for a person who, without hesitation, stands ready to help others in distress. This is the essence of what CLINIC and its network strives to do each day. The Gospel of Luke's parable of the Good Samaritan is a universal message of how we are to treat others and care for those in need.

According to the Gospel, when pressed by a lawyer on how to obtain eternal life, Jesus tells him to "Love thy neighbor as thy self." Asked who is considered a neighbor, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan who took mercy upon a fellow traveler when he was attacked and robbed. Jesus commands the lawyer to go and do likewise. The lesson is that being a neighbor does not mean living in close proximity to another, for the Samaritan of the Bible was himself a foreigner and a particularly despised foreigner at that. Being a neighbor, or a modern-day Samaritan, means putting aside cultural, religious, and other differences to help anyone in need.

In his message for World Migration Day in 1997, Pope John Paul II said "the parable of the Good Samaritan invites everyone to reach out beyond the bounds of justice in the perspective of gratuitous and unlimited love." It is in this tradition of compassion that CLINIC supports its network of charitable legal immigration programs that assist poor migrants and refugees regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or gender.

This newsletter will share with you the stories of our work and the work of our strong network of affiliate programs around the country. We hope you find these stories inspiring and that, through them, we all remember what it means to be a neighbor.

In justice and unity,

Maria M. Odom
Executive Director



Maria M. Odom
Executive Director

inside...

PRO BONO ATTORNEY HELPS WEST AFRICAN ACTIVIST WIN ASYLUM 2

U VISAS OFFER HOPE FOR IMMIGRANT VICTIMS OF CRIME ... 3

SPOTLIGHT:

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE NATIONAL ASYLEE INFORMATION & REFERRAL LINE..... 2

DID YOU KNOW? 3



MASTHEAD PHOTOS: Paula Endo, Human Issues Collaborative, Inc.



CATHOLIC LEGAL IMMIGRATION NETWORK, INC.

Pro Bono Attorney Helps West African Activist Win Asylum

For Greg Chinwe* the wait was finally over.

After more than two years, a telephone call came from his attorney, secured through the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc (CLINIC), informing him that he could remain in the United States with his wife and four-year-old daughter. The decision was another celebratory win for the **Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) Pro Bono Project**, which secures volunteer attorneys for detained individuals or other immigrants facing government appeals in immigration proceedings.

Sarah Mendola, Chinwe's volunteer attorney through the BIA Pro Bono Project, delivered the good news. Mendola, who works as a white collar securities and litigation associate for Dechert LLP of New York, had successfully convinced the BIA that Chinwe would suffer political persecution if he were deported to his native West African country**. The Board agreed and affirmed Chinwe's request for asylum, a request that had lingered in the overburdened and backlogged immigration court system.

"He was very pleased with the result and to have the matter settled," said Mendola.

Chinwe fled his country in 2002 after his father, a political activist, was arrested. Chinwe, himself a vocal supporter of political freedom, was also a target of political persecution.

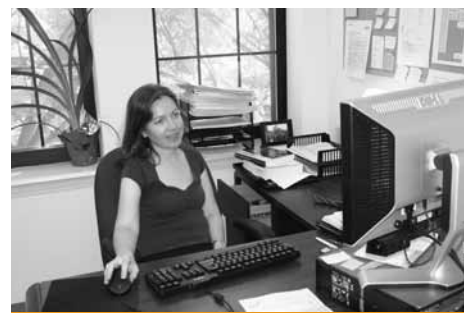
In the United States, he filed for and was granted asylum. However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appealed, which is not uncommon, explained Ann Atalla, project coordinator for the BIA Pro Bono Project at CLINIC.

"When cases are appealed by the government, it can be very frustrating for the immigrant, particularly if the individual has already spent a significant amount of time in detention. People's lives are on hold until the matter is resolved," said Atalla.

Although an immigration attorney by profession, Chinwe readily accepted assistance from CLINIC's BIA Pro Bono Project. The asylum process can be complex, Atalla explained. Part of the difficulty comes from the fact that success requires highly specialized knowledge of immigration law, and can require interaction with more than one government agency within the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security. For individuals in deportation proceedings, the wait can also be long. Statistics from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that in 2009 there are more than 63,000 asylum cases pending in the United States. As of 2009, approximately 22,000 were approved.



Sarah Mendola, volunteer attorney with CLINIC's BIA Pro Bono Project.



Ann Atalla, CLINIC's Advocacy Attorney for the BIA Pro Bono Project.

Most detainees and immigrants find the asylum process burdensome and hard to navigate without an attorney. The assistance of law firms like Dechert LLP, which has participated in the BIA Pro Bono Project since 2006, provides a lifeline.

The BIA Pro Bono Project has recruited more than 400 law firms, attorneys, and law schools to provide free legal assistance to detained individuals or those facing appeal from the government. The project provides assistance to volunteers through a document bank with sample briefs and assists with research and creating legal strategy.

"As far as asylum cases go, this case was very attractive," said Atalla, who works to place approximately 70 cases per year. "Volunteers are usually very receptive to cases that challenge a person's liberties or

Continued on page 4

* Names have been changed to protect the identity of individuals.

** For safety reasons, we have chosen not to reveal the country's name.

SPOTLIGHT

Celebrating 10 Years of the National Asylee Information & Referral Line

Imagine the hardships of settling into a new country, learning a new language and not knowing where to turn for help. That's the challenge that faces newly arrived asylee seekers to the United States. To assist in the transition, CLINIC created the National Asylee Information and Referral Line, a lifeline that connects asylees to hundreds of service providers.

Established in 2001, the National Asylee Information and Referral Line was created with funding from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). With a simple phone call asylees are put in touch with more than 500 local service providers able to connect the newcomer to vital resettlement services including English language

classes, job placement assistance, temporary housing and health care. On average, 23,000 people from over 100 nations are granted asylum each year in the U.S. To thousands of these asylees, a single, centralized, and multilingual source of accurate information about programs and services, like the National Asylee Information and Referral Line, is an invaluable resource.

"As a core part of its mission, CLINIC works to help ease the process for immigrants that arrive here after experiencing severe trauma, as many asylees do," said Laura Burdick, project coordinator for CLINIC's Citizenship and Civic Participation Project. "This line is an instrumental part of that process."

Operated by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, a CLINIC member agency, the referral line has served over 30,000 asylees since its inception in 2001. Many find out about the resource because the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) includes the toll-free number in its asylum grant letters. The phone number is also posted in immigration courts, ensuring that judges and attorneys are aware of the service.

For more information on the National Asylee Information and Referral Line visit: www.cliniclegal.org/asylees ■

Did you *know?*

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines an asylum seeker as “a person who has left their country of origin, has applied for recognition as a refugee in another country, and is awaiting a decision on their application.” In the United States, thousands of individuals submit applications for asylum to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) each year. Below is a sampling of statistics about asylum seekers in the U.S.

DID YOU KNOW:

- That 63,804 asylum cases were still pending at the end of 2009?
- That 49,023 new asylum applications were filed in 2009?
- That 22,119 asylum applications were approved in 2009?*
- That 22,969 asylum applications were submitted just in the first six months of 2010?

Unless otherwise noted, all statistics are from: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

* U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), Refugee, Asylum, and Parole System (RAPS) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR).



U Visas Offer Hope for Immigrant Victims of Crime

Jorge* came to the United States to find his mother. When he arrived at the border, he was arrested by Border Patrol and placed in detention. While in detention, the 17-year old was assaulted by a security guard.

Like many undocumented immigrants, Jorge was scared to report the crime. Undocumented immigrants are particularly vulnerable as victims of crime and violence because many fear revealing themselves to law enforcement officials. This fear has meant crimes against immigrants, especially women and children, often go unreported. As an unaccompanied minor, Jorge came to the attention of Catholic Charities Immigration and Refugee Services in New Orleans from its work in the detention centers.

“Most of these individuals are never aware that help is available or that they may be eligible for relief that could help them stay in the United States,” said Marco Balducci, staff attorney for Catholic Charities Immigration and Refugee Services. “When we met him he was scared and reserved, uncertain about talking to us. Once we earned his trust, we explained to him that we could help.”

The teenager was completely unaware that there was any option that would allow him to remain in the United States, said Balducci. Jorge was Immigration and

Refugee Service’s first U visa case for an unaccompanied minor. The program has since worked on 50 other U visa cases.

Congress created the U visa in 2000 for immigrants that are victims of a crime. In 2009, about 5,800 U visas were approved. Another 11,000 await adjudication as of May this year.

The assistance from Immigration and Refugee Services was the kind of help the program was now able to provide as a result of participating in CLINIC’s **Gulf Coast Immigration Project**. Through the project, launched in 2006, CLINIC provides funding and training to programs in Biloxi, Jackson, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, and New Orleans, all cities affected by Hurricane Katrina, so the programs could expand their services to address the marked increase in the needs of immigrant populations since the hurricane. Programs are encouraged to hire more staff, offer more services, and enhance their skills.

Balducci helped Jorge file for a U visa. The application process can be difficult as the burden is on the immigrant to prove that he or she suffered physical or mental abuse as a result of the crime. While Jorge had suffered back injuries and experiences recurring headaches, he had to get his assault certified. The proof or certification must come from a law enforcement official or state agency, which is sometimes unaware of its role. In Jorge’s case, the local Child Protective Services had declared that he was the victim of an assault, but the case manager had left the agency before Jorge’s application was certified. With the help of Catholic Charities, the teenager was



CLINIC and nonprofit immigration programs like Catholic Charities Integration and Refugee Services are helping immigrant victims of crime apply for relief.

able to get the qualifying documents for his application.

“We knew he was eligible and had submitted all the qualifying documents. There was some resistance from some of the agencies that we needed to certify his assault but through advocacy we were able to obtain certification,” said Balducci.

Jorge’s application to stay in the U.S. permanently was finally approved. He now lives in Tennessee with his mother. ■

* Names have been changed to protect the identity of individuals.



CATHOLIC LEGAL
IMMIGRATION
NETWORK, INC.

415 Michigan Ave., NE, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20017-4503

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WASHINGTON DC
PERMIT NO. 462

CLINIC serves vulnerable and low-income newcomers regardless of race, religion, or national origin. **CLINIC** reunites immigrant families, gains protection for those who fear persecution in their native countries, represents foreign-born religious workers, and helps permanent residents to become U.S. citizens.

Contact us at

(202) 635-2556 • Fax (202) 635-2649
E-mail: national@cliniclegal.org
Donate on-line at www.cliniclegal.org

Join us on Facebook:
facebook.com/cliniclegal

Follow us on Twitter:
twitter.com/cliniclegal

For the latest information about **CLINIC** and immigration issues, please visit our website at www.cliniclegal.org

Pro Bono Attorney Helps West African Activist Win Asylum

Continued from page 2

indicate that their civil rights would be violated in their home countries.”

“It had some very compelling and interesting legal facts,” said Mendola, including Chinwe’s political activism and the threat to his daughter of female genital mutilation (FGM), which is also common in the West African country, if he were deported. Despite these facts, it would take more than a year between filings for Mendola to get a response. Chinwe’s asylee status allows him to work and live legally in the United States. ■

Giving Back

The need for affordable legal services for indigent and vulnerable immigrants is growing each day. CLINIC needs your help now to continue its support of start-up and existing immigration programs.

CLINIC and its affiliates currently help more than 600,000 immigrants reunite with family members, file for citizenship, and help individuals fleeing persecution gain protection. But also many more immigrants and their families are in need of assistance.

Your donation ensures that CLINIC programs and those of its affiliates continue to provide vital affordable legal services to hundreds of thousands of immigrants across the country.

Ways to Help

Online:
www.cliniclegal.org/donate

By Mail:
CLINIC
415 Michigan Ave. NE, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20017

Please join CLINIC in providing legal immigration services to those in need.

