2018 IMPACT REPORT









ABOUT

Catholic **Migration Services**

OUR MISSION

Catholic Migration Services is committed to "welcoming the stranger in our midst," by empowering underserved immigrant communities in Brooklyn and Queens regardless of religion or ethnicity. We provide high quality legal services, know-your-rights education, and advocacy to immigrants to advance equality and social justice in a changing and diverse population.

Our services are available without regard to national origin, religion or immigration status.

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Manuel Quintana, Esq., Chair Catherine L. Lou, Treasurer Very Rev. Patrick J. Keating, Esq. CEO Andrea M. Alonso, Esq. Ann C. Barcher, Esq. Gina Calabrese, Esq.

Joseph Corozzo, Esq.

Craig Eaton, Esq. Vincent lannelli Janet Marcic Robert McCreanor, Esq. Paul Michels, Esq. Sandra Munoz, Esq. Joseph Rosato, Esq.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Dear Friends of Catholic Migration Services:



Catholic Migration Services is pleased to provide this report on our activities for the year ending March 31, 2018, which continued to be a very challenging period for immigrants in our Brooklyn and Queens communities. For over 47 years, our mission has been to welcome the stranger

in our midst, and we have been privileged to collaborate with many others to accomplish this mission.

As you will see from the report that follows, our dedicated staff, with help from many volunteers, provided direct legal assistance to more than 3,100 Brooklyn and Queens residents on immigration, housing and employment matters. Catholic Migration Services also educated more than 3,600 immigrants on changing U.S. immigration policies. In addition, we helped more than 1,200 tenants come together to make their voices heard in the struggle to preserve affordable housing.

We are grateful for the support of our many donors; both those who give their financial support and those who give their time. Your support throughout the year helps us to fulfill our mission of welcoming and empowering immigrants throughout Brooklyn and Queens.

Sincerely.

Very Reverend Patrick J. Keating, Esq.

Chief Executive Officer

for full representation.

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Immigration

OVERVIEW OF OUR LEGAL SERVICES

Catholic Migration Services provided free legal advice and representation on immigration matters to more than 2,200 New Yorkers in this past year. Our team tackled a wide array of matters to help immigrants gain lawful status, adjust their status and reunite with family members. Our work included:

> CITIZENSHIP

We helped more than 600 lawful permanent residents apply to become U.S. citizens.

> DACA

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We helped **202** childhood arrivals obtain or renew DACA status. DACA status provides these children and young adults with some assurance that they will not be deported, and allows them to obtain work authorization.

> FAMILY REUNIFICATION

We helped **65** United States citizens and permanent residents obtain immigration status for their family members and reunite in the United States.

> REMOVAL DEFENSE

Our attorneys represented hundreds of individuals facing removal in Immigration Court ensuring that all clients are afforded due process under the law and quality legal representation.



> ASYLUM

We helped 31 immigrants obtain asylum or adjust their status based on asylee or refugee status.

> PROTECTING VULNERABLE **POPULATIONS** Catholic Migration Services obtained protections under our immigration laws for dozens of abused and neglected children, victims of trafficking and other serious crimes, and survivors of domestic violence.

COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

Our lawyers gave community presentations to more than **3,600** Brooklyn and Queens residents. These presentations informed immigrants about changes in federal immigration policy, and ways to avoid frauds and scams that target vulnerable immigrants.



Real Stories

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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Juan, a teenager who grew up in rural El Salvador, suffered harassment and persecution for being gay. He changed schools many times to avoid the harassment, but at his last school was threatened by a gang which told him to stop attending school because they didn't want "fags" there. When Juan continued to go to school, the gang members beat him severely and delivered death threats to Juan and his grandmother. Because the authorities were unresponsive, Juan fled El Salvador and sought asylum in the U.S. Catholic Migration Services' attorneys advocated for Juan through a two year asylum process, and ultimately succeeded in obtaining asylum for him.

Although the stories are real, the names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

Members of the Azam family sought help from Catholic Migration Services because they were persecuted in Bangladesh for their Catholic faith. The persecution became life-threatening when a well-connected Muslim man wanted to marry the Azam family's 12 year old daughter. He tried to kidnap her several times and confronted her parents stating that he intended to take their daughter, convert her to Islam, and marry her. When the Azam family refused, he told them he would not take no as an answer and had the family's home attacked by a mob. When that didn't work, he began calling incessantly, threatened to throw acid on the mother and kill the family's other two children, and demanded large sums of money. The mother and children left for the U.S. after they filed futile police reports. The father remained in Bangladesh, where he was subjected to beatings, kidnapping, mob attacks, and other persecution before finally fleeing to the U.S. Catholic Migration Services represented the Azam family and helped them obtain grants of asylum so that they can lawfully remain here.

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catholicmigration.org

Tenant Representation and Advocacy

OVERVIEW OF OUR LEGAL WORK

Our Tenant Advocacy Program advises and represents hundreds of tenants each year on a wide range of housing-related matters. Our work, primarily in Queens, preserves the limited supply of decent, affordable housing. We do so by preventing evictions, ensuring tenants are not overcharged, forcing landlords to provide repairs and essential services, and helping seniors and the disabled obtain exemptions from rent increases. We also organize tenants so that they can use their collective power to win concessions from landlords and improve housing policies on a local and state level. Some highlights of our work this year include:

> WEEKLY HOUSING CLINIC

We provided free legal advice to more than **500** tenants this year through our weekly clinics held in Sunnyside, Queens and Bushwick, Brooklyn.

> PREVENTING EVICTIONS

We prevented or delayed <u>31</u> evictions, enabling tenants to stay in their homes and avoid homelessness.

STANDING UP TO SLUMLORDS

We helped **28 households** win critically necessary repairs of sub-standard and hazardous housing conditions.

> RENT REDUCTIONS AND OVERCHARGE RECOVERIES

We helped 31 households win **more than \$121,000** in rent reductions and rent overcharge recoveries.

MONTHLY COMMUNITY MEETINGS

We held monthly meetings in both Queens and Bushwick at which tenants discussed housing issues and other concerns affecting their communities.

EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK

Carmen, a senior from the Dominican Republic, came to Catholic Migration Services in April 2017, requesting help to succeed to the rent stabilized tenancy of her father, who had recently passed away. By gathering documents to support her succession claim and advocating on her behalf, we convinced the landlord, without litigation, to provide Carmen with a renewal lease in her own name, with a rent increase limited to the percentage allowed for rent stabilized renewal leases. In addition, we were able to convince the New York City Department of Finance to approve her claim to succeed to her father's Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption, thereby having her rent frozen at less than half of the maximum legal rent for the apartment. Thanks to the work of the staff at Catholic Migration Services, Carmen was able to keep her long-time home at a rent that she will be able to afford long into the future.

Jésus came to Catholic Migration Services in July 2016, seeking help to obtain a lease from his landlord after his mother, the tenant of record of their rent stabilized apartment, passed away. Jésus lived in that apartment with his mother and sister for more than 30 years. Although the landlord was willing to recognize his right to succeed to her tenancy, it sought to increase the rent by more than \$400 per month, claiming that Jésus was his family's second successor (his mother being the first) and that the law permitted it to charge the same increase it would have been able to charge a new tenant. After Jésus refused to sign the lease offered by the landlord, the landlord commenced a case to evict him and his sister from the apartment. After substantial motion practice, the court agreed with our argument that under the rent stabilization law, Jésus was the first successor, not the second, and issued an order dismissing the case and directing the landlord to provide Jésus with a rent stabilized renewal lease, without a vacancy increase.

Tenant Organizers Achieve Big Wins

Our tenant organizers, in partnership with a dedicated group of tenant leaders from Queens and Brooklyn communities, achieved some important results this year that will benefit tenants citywide.

Advocating for Reasonable Rents

In June 2017, Catholic Migration Services and its partner organizations organized 150 Queens tenants to attend, and 50 to testify at, a hearing of the Rent Guidelines Board, the body that determines the maximum amount that landlords can raise rents in rent regulated housing. Thanks to these efforts, the Board limited rent increases on one year leases to only 1.25%, among the lowest increases in the Board's history.

Right to Counsel for Tenants Facing Eviction

Our tenant organizers have been educating thousands of tenants about their right to free representation in housing court if they are sued for eviction. That right was won in August 2017 after three years of advocacy by Catholic Migration Services and other organizations in the Right to Counsel Coalition. In March 2018, the National Low Income Housing Coalition awarded Catholic Migration Services and its coalition partners with the **Trailblazer Award** in recognition of our work to have New York City become the first city in the country to have Right to Counsel legislation enacted.

Representing Immigrant Workers

OVERVIEW OF OUR WORK

Each day millions of low-wage and immigrant workers struggle to make ends meet. Their struggle is made immeasurably more difficult when these workers perform the work that they have been hired to do, but their employers refuse to pay them in full, either by withholding wages for some or all of the hours worked, failing to pay the minimum wage, or refusing to pay overtime premiums when employees' hours exceed 40 in a week. The goal of our Workers' Rights Program (WRP) is to strengthen the enforcement of workers' rights through affirmative litigation, policy reform, individual representation and community education.

IN THE PAST YEAR, WRP'S ACCOMPLISHMENT INCLUDES:

- Provided legal advice to hundreds of individuals who called our free bilingual hotline;
- Recovered more than \$200,000 in unpaid wages for low-wage and immigrant workers;
- Successfully advocated to the Kings County District Attorney to pursue <u>criminal charges against ascofflaw</u> <u>employer</u> who abused dozens of construction workers; and
- Presented know-your-rights trainings at churches and community centers.



EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK

Hector, an immigrant from Ecuador, worked as a tailor for over fifteen years. Although Hector typically worked over fifty hours per week, he never received correct overtime pay. Throughout his employment, his employer would often "forget" to pay him or would give him checks with insufficient funds. When Hector asked that his wages be paid on time, his employer fired him. Catholic Migration Services filed a claim on Hector's behalf with the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL). At a mediation at NYSDOL, our advocacy led to a \$20,000 settlement for Hector.

Atif sought help from Catholic Migration Services after being fired from a security job at a theater, a job he held for fifteen years. Atif believed that his termination was related to his age and religious affiliation. He was often passed over for promotions although he had a spotless record and was one of the most experienced workers on staff. He was abruptly fired from his job after returning from his annual vacation visiting family in Bangladesh. Catholic Migration Services reached out to the theater, and after prolonged negotiations, the theater offered Atif his job back together with a significant amount of money to compensate him for his lost wages. Atif was thrilled to be able to return to work.



ETHNIC MINISTRIES

Catholic Migration Services is committed to collaborating with and serving the diverse ethnic ministries of our community through pastoral services for immigrants. The ethnic ministries preserve the cultural traditions and heritage of our people by ensuring ongoing fellowship and spiritual growth in the life of the Church.

Our annual **Shining Star Award** acknowledges honorees who, through their efforts in their communities, embody our mission of "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us."



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Financial Overview





Operating Expenses

(CALENDAR YEAR 2017)

Salaries and Benefits: \$2,145,466

Other: \$1,140,256

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$3,285,722

Our Team

Sr. Joan Anzalone, Immigration Counselor **Victoria Arrao.** Administrative Assistant

Magdalena Barbosa, Managing Attorney, Workers' Rights

Xiomara Bustamante, Immigration Counselor

Marisol Canales, Lead Immigration Counselor

Amy Collado, Tenant Organizer

David Colodny, Director of Legal Services

Sandra Cordoba, Law Graduate

Alice Davis, Senior Staff Attorney

Stephani Espinal, Housing Paralegal

Erin Fitzgerald, Operations Coordinator

Alexandra Goncalves-Peña, Managing Attorney, Immigration

Michael Holland, Volunteer, Ignatian Volunteer Corps

Christopher Holtz, Supervising Attorney

Very Rev. Patrick J. Keating, Chief Executive Officer

Mercy Kershner, Mercy Volunteer Corps **Ellen LaCarrubba,** Executive Secretary

Andrew Lehrer, Managing Attorney, Tenant Advocacy

José León, Supervising Attorney

Maria Londano, Custodian

Lorena Lopez, Tenant Organizer

Samantha Lyons, Staff Attorney

Mariam Magar, Senior Staff Attorney

Jose Giovanny Miranda, Law Graduate Chloe Moore, Naturalization Coordinator

Nanette Morales, Receptionist

Aida Ocasio, Receptionist

Carlos Ortiz, Tenant Organizer

Nancy Pardo, Executive Assistant

Thomas Power, Staff Attorney

Emma Qualy-Pearson, Jesuit Volunteer Corps

Ellen Ryan, Development Officer

Rebecca Rybaltowski, Outreach Coordinator

Jeanne Sanon, Immigration Counselor

Aviva Schaffer, Law Graduate

Amandeep Singh, Immigrant Justice Corps Fellow

Nicole Skaluba, Mercy Volunteer Corps

Nicole Steward, Senior Staff Attorney

Natasha B. Venegas Abarca, External Relations Associate

Joseph Weiman, Immigration Paralegal

Caitlin Wright, Immigration Counselor

List current as of December 31, 2018



