



WE HELP OUR NEIGHBORS FIGHT DEPORTATION, ADJUST THEIR LEGAL STATUS IN THE U.S., BECOME U.S. CITIZENS, AVOID EVICTIONS, AND RECOVER STOLEN WAGES.

### SURVIVOR OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FINALLY GETS LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENCE

For many years, Evelyn\* had suffered severe abuse from her employer. It was so bad that she qualified for a special visa for victims of human trafficking (T visa). Now she needed help to become a permanent resident, along with her husband and two sons. It was during the pandemic and offices were closed, so everything had to be done remotely. Catholic Migration Services staff traveled to Evelyn's home several times to obtain all the necessary documents. Then USCIS responded with a request for additional documents to prove that Evelyn and her family were indeed eligible to adjust their status. With this new development, our staff met with Evelyn again and prepared the T visa re-certification and all the exhibits proving that she qualified.

After so many years of abuse, months of pandemic delays, plus requests for additional evidence, Evelyn and her family were finally granted Lawful Permanent Residence. She could now travel freely and attend a family wedding. Her son could now petition for his fiancée to join him in the United States. This case held special significance to all of us at Catholic Migration Services because survivors like Evelyn, who have endured human trafficking, deserve to live a dignified life without fear in the United States.

## FIGHTING ABUSE AND DEPORTATION

Jenifer\* was ordered to be deported several years ago after she lost her immigration court case, even as she was enduring domestic violence at home. With the help of Catholic Migration Services, she was able to reopen her immigration court case and apply for protection under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) for herself and her children. After several years of waiting, her VAWA application was approved, and Jenifer received her work authorization permit. She and her family are now in the process of fighting to end their immigration court case and apply for permanent residency.

### THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT AT OUR FALL CLINICS:

PRO SE PLUS PROJECT 9/26  
CLEARY GOTTLIEB  
NEW YORK LAWYERS FOR THE  
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GOLDMAN SACHS

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CITIZENS FINANCIAL

HOUSING 10/18  
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PRO SE PLUS PROJECT 10/31  
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MARSH MCLENNAN

**THANK YOU**  
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FOR YOUR SUPPORT

**WELCOME AVODAH FELLOWS!**

## OVERCOMING DISABILITY AND BUREAUCRACY TO NATURALIZE

Paz\*, a 30 year-old from the Dominican Republic who was born with Down syndrome, needed help to become a US citizen. She is almost non-verbal and would not be able to pass the English and civics tests or take the Oath of Citizenship of a standard naturalization interview. Paz needed a medical exemption (form N-648) and an oath waiver, which had to be signed by her physician before it could be sent to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). However, Paz's doctor refused to cooperate with Catholic Migration Services staff and document her severe disability. Without the doctor's signature, there was nothing our legal team could do, and Paz would never become a U.S. citizen, despite being otherwise eligible.

Paz's mother switched their family to a new doctor who signed the necessary forms documenting the disability. Three months later, Paz was called for an interview. She uses a walker, so getting to USCIS was a challenge. The officer approved her application and medical exemption, and granted the oath waiver. Her sister was able to take the Oath of Citizenship on her behalf. After so many obstacles, Paz walked out of the building a U.S. citizen, making her and her mother very proud.

## WORKING 6 DAYS A WEEK, WINNING \$50,000 OF STOLEN WAGES

Over the past year alone, Catholic Migration Services has helped low-wage immigrant workers recover over half a million dollars in unpaid wages from their employers. In one case, Connie\* worked 6 days a week at a laundromat but her employer was not paying her the legal minimum wage and overtime rates required by law. She took her boss to federal court to petition for her stolen wages to be returned to her but was struggling to press her claims without a lawyer. After Catholic Migration Services stepped in to help, Connie won the \$50,000 of wages she was owed, plus the employer had to pay an additional \$5,000 for court fees and costs. The settlement will help support Connie and the four generations of her family who live with her in East Elmhurst: her husband, two adult daughters, granddaughter, and her mother.



## TENANTS UNITE TO SUPPORT RIGHT TO COUNSEL

In September, tenants came together to demand that Hanny Chandra have her case adjourned so that she could obtain legal representation to defend her against eviction. Hanny lost her job during the pandemic and fell behind on rent. When her landlord took her to court, she was denied her right to counsel, in violation of New York City's 2017 Right to Counsel (RTC) law. Thanks to tenant presence - including Catholic Migration Services housing organizers - the court attorney agreed to give Hanny an adjournment. Now, she has legal representation and feels prepared to fight for her home!



**Sam Ida stands with his daughter, Laila, in front of the building where their family has lived for more than a decade. Multiple rent increases over the last few years raised concerns for Mr. Ida and motivated him to help start a tenant association.**

**Credit: Tom Sibley for The New York Times**

**NEW YORK TIMES: Tenant Association Organized by Catholic Migration Services Turns Strangers into Neighbors**

## HELPING ASYLUM SEEKERS REPRESENT THEMSELVES IN COURT

Emilio\* recently arrived in New York City, seeking asylum. He fled Nicaragua after posting criticism of the government on social media. Due to the unprecedented demand for legal services, he could not find an attorney to take his case. He turned to the Pro Se Plus Project (PSP) of Catholic Migration Services, which provides thorough legal orientations, robust screenings, triage, and community access to pro se assistance with applications for asylum, employment authorization, immigration court motions, and other immigration-related relief for unrepresented immigrants. Emilio was referred to us shortly before his court hearing, where he would either be granted asylum, some other protection - or ordered deported back to Nicaragua. Emilio did not know what evidence he could provide to support his asylum claim and was going to walk into the hearing empty-handed before our attorney explained the types of evidence



he could show that would support his fear of returning to his home country. Emilio was then able to find a witness and his old social media posts. Our attorney drafted declarations from Emilio and his witness, translated the social media posts, researched human rights reports on social media censorship in Nicaragua, created a summary of the information relevant to Emilio's claim, and filed the evidence packet in advance of the hearing.

Ultimately, Emilio was not granted asylum, but was granted protection under the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which ensures that he will not be deported back to Nicaragua and will be eligible to work in the United States. At the end of the hearing, the judge congratulated Emilio on how he presented his case and Emilio expressed gratitude for the help he received from Catholic Migration Services and the Pro Se Plus Project that empowered him to represent himself and avoid deportation.

*\*some names have been changed to protect privacy*

## IN THE NEWS

[CBS NEWS: QUEENS RESIDENTS IN RENT-STABILIZED BUILDINGS TAKE AIM AT ZARA REALTY, CLAIM TENANT ABUSE](#)

[QNS.COM: FLUSHING TENANTS SPEAK OUT AGAINST JAMAICA REAL ESTATE COMPANY'S ALLEGED HARASSMENT, UNLAWFUL RENT INCREASES](#)

[NY1 NOTICIAS: RECUERDAN QUE POR LEY LOS INQUILINOS TIENEN DERECHO A UN ABOGADO DE VIVIENDA GRATUITO](#)