



Catholic Migration Services staff and volunteers at a Pro Se Plus Project community clinic at the offices of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP on April 17, 2024

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

WINNING OVERTIME PAY FOR DELIVERY WORKERS

Catholic Migration Services recently won a \$215,000 settlement for five delivery workers who worked for a local chain of dim sum restaurants. Our clients had to work six days per week, twelve hours per day and were paid monthly salaries that fell far below the applicable minimum wage and did not include mandatory overtime premiums. The workers were organized by the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association (CSWA), a group assisting primarily low-wage workers in the Chinese community. Together with our pro bono co-counsel WilmerHale, we brought suit and won, and the employer was ordered to pay the full settlement amount immediately. The workers have now been paid in full.

"Wage theft is rampant in the foodservice industry (and many others), and it takes courage for workers to come forward to recover what their employers have stolen from them. CSWA's tireless efforts to help workers understand their rights and support them in coming forward to vindicate those rights is critical in allowing lawyers like us and our pro bono partners to recover these stolen wages," said Skadden Fellow and staff attorney Anthony Damelio.

**Some names have been changed to protect privacy.*

AVODAH FELLOWS JOIN US FOR YEAR OF SERVICE

Alex Dobin and Theo Deitz-Green have been working at Catholic Migration Services for the past year as members of the Avodah Justice Fellowship with Jewish Service Corps, a service year program where corps members live, learn and work together in cities across the U.S. Avodah Corps Members volunteer full time with local non-profits, tackling crucial social and economic justice issues. The New York cohort is made up of 15 Corps Members volunteering with different organizations across the city, serving clients and tackling issues ranging from food insecurity to gender based violence to housing discrimination and more. Theo, who grew up in New Jersey, had always wanted the opportunity to live in New York City, while Alex was drawn to the communal living aspect.

Alex, who recently graduated college with a major in Political Science, joined the Removal Defense team, which helps New Yorkers facing deportation and family separation. She also assisted asylum seekers obtain work permits and those fleeing war and persecution in applying for Temporary Protected Status.

“This is really an important time to be doing this work in New York City. Newly arrived immigrants face challenges applying for asylum and other relief from removal, obtaining work authorization, and navigating a confusing and ever changing legal system,” said Alex. “It’s so great to witness some of our clients receiving their work authorization because people want and need to work and there is a 180-day waiting period to apply for the work permit after applying for asylum. One of the most gratifying experiences Alex had was being in the courtroom when our client won their case and was told they could remain with their family in the U.S.

Theo had a very different experience on the Naturalization team, assisting long-time permanent residents in becoming citizens. He found fulfillment in helping clients with complicated cases. “It was special to be able to help people that other organizations don’t have the capacity to help,” said Theo. The most gratifying case he worked on was of someone who had cancer who was eligible to naturalize but could not travel to the government offices. Theo and the team secured a medical accommodation and arranged for a home oath ceremony, allowing the individual to become a U.S. citizen, despite his severe illness. “‘Welcoming the stranger’ is a Catholic value, and it is also a big Jewish value, mentioned in Torah many times,” Theo said, referencing the mission of Catholic Migration Services.

Avodah Program Director Becca Belkin said, “We are incredibly proud of our partnerships with organizations such as Catholic Migration Services. It has been particularly wonderful to hear stories from [Alex and Theo] about meaningful interactions they have with clients, and the growth they have each noticed in themselves as they develop new skills to support their clients in tangible ways.” Both Alex and Theo enjoyed their experience living in Brooklyn and working with Catholic Migration Services. They recommend the experience to others seeking meaningful work.



Theo and Alex on the stoop of the NYC townhouse where they have been living this past year

TENANTS SUPPORT STATE-WIDE RIGHT TO COUNSEL

Tenants, organizers and attorneys recently came together for a Right to Counsel (RTC) Town Hall in Queens where New Yorkers testified on the importance of RTC to prevent evictions and called on the state government to work together to uphold and expand the law statewide. Following the town hall, a version of our legislation was included in both the Assembly and Senate budgets. Unfortunately, when the State budget was passed earlier this spring, RTC was not included.

"After a year full of heartfelt actions, our cause saw positive gains and support from our legislators. Unfortunately, the Governor and certain elected officials chose to ignore the need to protect tenants in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. We look forward to raising our voices again during the next legislative cycle," said tenant leader Wanda Martinez.

HELPING YOUTH FLEEING PERSECUTION

The Removal Defense Project (RDP) offers legal assistance to immigrants fleeing persecution and harm from their home country, including assistance with Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), which provides a pathway to citizenship for qualifying juveniles under the age of 21. Despite the heartbreak many face, obtaining SIJS can offer a new beginning for young immigrants to thrive and have a better future here in the United States, enabling them to pursue their dreams of becoming successful professionals.

Carolina* fled El Salvador with her 6-year-old daughter Julia in 2018 after a gang robbery. Despite being apprehended at the border and placed in removal proceedings, she obtained a private lawyer who helped her apply for asylum. Unfortunately, her asylum case was denied in 2019 and Carolina and Julia were ordered deported. They did not have money for an appeal and sought our help. Although nothing could be done in Carolina's immigration case, our attorney determined Julia's eligibility for SIJS due to neglect by her father. The RDP team initiated a custody case in family court, to award mom Carolina full legal and physical custody of Julia and obtain the special findings order necessary to apply for the special immigrant juvenile visa. Serving the neglectful father with the custody papers posed a challenge. Even though he resided in a neighboring state, he had minimal contact with Julia and evaded attempts at service. Concerned about the negative impacts on his immigration status, he disappeared from the neighborhood. Our lawyer documented this, which resulted in the family court referee agreeing to waive in-person service and allowing the court papers to be sent via text message. Carolina was subsequently granted full custody of Julia, along with the special findings order. With the help of Catholic Migration Services, Julia secured SIJS and is awaiting the priority date to apply for a green card. Today Julia is a thriving 12-year-old, on the honor roll in math and English, and dreams of one day becoming a doctor.

IN THE NEWS

University of Virginia School of Law:
Serving Over Spring Break

Queens Ledger:

Queens Community Orgs Host Town Hall on Tenant Right to
Counsel Bill

Flushing Post:

Assemblymembers Raga and Ardila Join Dozens of Woodside
Residents Fighting for Statewide Right to Counsel



Catholic Migration Services Removal Defense
Supervising Attorney Lynn Neugebauer
discusses "Forced Displacement and
Immigration Today" prior to the showing of
Émigré at the New York Philharmonic



Our sold-out event at Emma's Torch in Brooklyn honored Epicenter NYC for their deep commitment to communities of color.



CATHOLIC
MIGRATION
SERVICES

SAVE THE DATE
2024 IMPACT RECEPTION

Honoring
Davis Wright Tremaine, LLP
Virginia & Ambinder, LLP

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024
5:30 - 8:30PM

THE MALT HOUSE
9 MAIDEN LANE
NEW YORK, NY 10038

TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE FOR OUR NEXT EVENT

