

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



## PROTECTING MILITARY FAMILY FROM DEPORTATION

As Ellis was packing his bags for his 2nd deployment with the U.S. Army, this time to Iraq, he took a moment to send this family photo and a note thanking Catholic Migration Services for all we have done for him and his family. Our Naturalization team helped him become a U.S. citizen. He joined the military to serve his new country but during his first deployment, his mother Lucinda and 2-year-old brother Owen were facing deportation. Ellis did not know if his family would be there to welcome him home when he returned from his tour of duty, and they faced danger if they were forced back to Jamaica. So he once again turned to us for help. Our Removal Defense team filed a prosecutorial discretion request in the deportation proceedings case. The prosecutor signed a joint motion to terminate the deportations, which was granted by the judge. Now Lucinda can remain with all of her children in the U.S. and apply for a green card and Owen can get Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), so both have a pathway to citizenship. Since they are not allowed on military bases until they are granted full legal immigration status, they have not been able to live with Ellis and have been staying in a shelter. Our work also saved the little boy and his mom from being out on the street - with their pending parole in place they were eligible for an eviction extension from the shelter when little Owen underwent surgery and needed a home to live in during recovery.



A client picks up his check from our Employment team after settling his case over unpaid wages from his employer.

## WINNING BACK PAY FOR BUILDING SUPERS

Catholic Migration Services' Housing and Employment units collaborated to successfully represent Vlad and Alicia, two building superintendents in Queens who were sued for eviction following the end of their employment as supers. Our team discovered that they may have been living in a rent stabilized apartment with a right to renew their lease and possible claims for having been overcharged rent. In addition, we found that they had claims for years of work without being paid minimum wage. Our Housing team defended the tenants in Housing Court, while our Employment team filed a separate lawsuit against the landlord in Supreme Court for the labor law violations. With our help, Vlad and Alicia won approximately \$50,000 in rent credits and cash from their landlord/employer.



Catholic Migration Services' Tenant Organizers join colleagues from Chhaya, Woodside On The Move, Make The Road, and DRUM for a community meeting 7/10 on the Rent Guidelines Board process and imagining a more just system. Our Housing legal team also provided legal advice to 18 tenants who had been denied their Right To Counsel and connected them to our community organizing program.

# LEGAL CLINICS PROVIDE FREE IMMIGRATION ASSISTANCE – AND A WAY FOR VOLUNTEERS TO GIVE BACK

This Summer and Fall, Catholic Migration Services held several public clinics to provide free legal services to New Yorkers in need, assisting nearly 100 people with their cases. These ranged from helping newly arrived families with their asylum cases to helping seniors apply for a rent freeze so they can remain in their homes.



*Clinic helping legal permanent residents become U.S. citizens*

In addition to providing help for people in need, these clinics are also a great way for volunteers to give back to the community. We are proud to partner with many of the top law firms in New York City, who provide pro bono services to our clients free of charge, and even provide office space so we can conveniently and comfortably provide our services to the public. We rely on volunteers to provide translation services and were so happy to have a former client return to help us translate Haitian Creole for our recent clinic to help people fleeing Haiti apply for Temporary Protected Status.

## THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS FOR SUPPORTING OUR SUMMER/FALL CLINICS:

### NATURALIZATION 6/4

AIG

### ASYLUM 6/5

SIMPSON THACHER & BARTLETT LLP  
MORGAN STANLEY

### IMMIGRATION CONSULTATIONS 7/10 & 10/9

MILBANK LLP

### HOUSING NYC

### RENT FREEZE PROGRAM 7/17

NEW YORK LAWYERS FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST  
MORGAN STANLEY  
WEIL, GOTSHAL & MANGES LLP

### TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS/TPS HAITI

9/10

CATHOLIC CHARITIES BROOKLYN & QUEENS

# TENANTS FIGHT BACK AND WIN AGAINST ZARA REALTY

After years of fighting, hundreds of tenants in Jamaica, Queens won an important victory against Zara Realty when a judge in NYS Supreme Court ruled in their favor in an Article 78 case against what would have been their 3rd illegal rent increase since the pandemic started. Their landlord had already raised rents by hundreds of dollars in all of the 80 apartments in the building by improperly applying for multiple MCI (Major Capital Improvement) increases. Zara Realty, which owns nearly 40 rent-stabilized buildings in Queens, is notorious for its predatory practices, including buying buildings, then changing the locks and forcing tenants –



predominantly from low-income immigrants - to provide birth certificates and marriage licenses, and pay high fees just to get the keys to their own homes. The Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), the New York State housing agency, approved two MCI increases in 2021, even though there was a rent reduction order in effect for refusing to provide enough keys. In some cases, a family of 5 were only given only 1 key. Zara spent years in court trying to overrule the decision and collect more rent. But tenants continued to fight back with the support of the legal team and tenant organizers of Catholic Migration Services. In 2022, Zara was forced to provide free keys as the law requires and after a protracted legal battle led by our legal team, the Appellate Division 2nd Dept affirmed the rent reductions while Zara refused to provide keys to the tenants. Now, this Supreme Court decision upholds the denial of another devastating rent increase. Carlos Ortiz, a tenant organizer working for years on this fight, said, “We are celebrating the victory against this rent increase, but we are also still fighting to reverse the other illegal increases approved by DHCR. We believe that if we continue fighting, justice will be done, and the other increases will be reversed once those appeals reach a conclusion. This is a perfect example of how the work of our legal team and tenant organizers go hand in hand.”

## CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE

Our website redesign is now live. Our Development team rebuilt the site from the ground up with web developer Social Ink. It has a bright new look featuring our new logo and colors, intuitive navigation menus with up-to-date information, and links to connect to our services and volunteer opportunities.

