



Catholic Migration Services staff at a recent immigration clinic with Adhikaar for Human Rights and Social Justice

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

CATHOLIC MIGRATION SERVICES REAFFIRMS ITS COMMITMENT TO IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

For over 50 years, Catholic Migration Services has been at the forefront of the fight to protect immigrant rights. The organization reaffirms its commitment to promoting justice and compassion for immigrant communities, especially in light of recent government decisions that have put many immigrant communities at risk by removing essential protections for those fleeing violence and turmoil in their home countries. This has resulted in fears of deportation and negative rhetoric towards immigrants.

Magdalena Barbosa, the Director of Legal Services at Catholic Migration Services, emphasized the critical importance of their mission to "welcome the stranger in our midst." She stressed that a person's dignity is not determined by their citizenship or immigration status, making Catholic Migration Service's work to support immigrant communities more essential than ever.

To help navigate these challenging times, Catholic Migration Services has updated their "Know Your Rights" page on their website, providing essential information about immigrant rights in the United States. They are also collaborating with local churches and community groups to raise awareness about the legal rules and immigration policies.

HELPING WORKERS RECOVER OVER \$1 MILLION FROM EMPLOYER

In the winter of 2022, three employees of a commercial cleaning company went to their local workers' center to complain about their treatment on the job. They worked for a large company, with offices in New York City and Long Island, cleaning the facilities on Rikers Island. Their supervisors were demanding illegal kickbacks — with every paycheck, the workers were expected to pay their supervisors anywhere from \$100 to \$200 in cash, in order to continue their employment. One week, one of the three workers refused to pay the kickback, and was fired. The workers' center reached out to Catholic Migration Services.



Attorneys from the Employment team immediately realized that, in addition to the illegal kickbacks and retaliation, the company had also failed to pay the prevailing wage — a higher minimum wage required for employees who work on city contracts. Catholic Migration attorneys helped the workers gather their evidence and contacted the New York State Attorney General's Office to report the violations. Our clients struggled to convince their coworkers to also come forward. Their coworkers were fearful of retaliation, which could mean losing their job. The workers persisted, though, even when their supervisors repeatedly contacted them, pressuring them to drop their complaint.

On January 22, 2025, the New York Attorney General Letitia James announced that her office had recovered \$1.13 million dollars in stolen wages for CMS' clients and their co-workers. "The settlement reached by Attorney General James is a significant victory for the 250 workers whose wages were stolen and who faced retaliation for complaining about the violations," said Deputy Director of Catholic Migration Services Alice Davis.

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE PURSUE AN EDUCATION IN THE U.S.



After being abandoned by his parents in Colombia, Julian had to drop out of school at an early age and work to support himself. At the age of 17, Julian made the long journey to New York City on his own, in search of a better life. Never giving up on his dream of an education, he turned to Catholic Migration Services for help. Our Removal Defense team rushed to help him and filed paperwork on the last day possible before he aged out of eligibility for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, which is an immigration status available to minors who have been abandoned, neglected, or abused by one or both of their parents that can be obtained through petitioning family court to conclude a youth under 21 cannot reunite with their parents..

Safely in New York City, Julian reunited with his aunt and a family court judge granted her guardianship. His aunt enrolled him in a public high school that offered support for newly arrived immigrant youth, where he excelled in art classes. When Julian appeared before the judge, he reported that he had applied to colleges in the United States, and Julian is now in college studying art and business. He is grateful for the opportunity to pursue his education and make his dream of becoming a creative director come true.



Catholic Migration Services' managing immigration attorney Raluca Oncioiu (left) speaks on the plenary panel with elected officials at the LEAP Coalition conference

PRESENTING AT LEAP COALITION CONFERENCE

Catholic Migration Services attorneys shared their expertise with hundreds of legal professionals at the LEAP Coalition conference on January 9, 2025. Raluca Oncioiu, Managing Attorney for Catholic Migration Services' Immigration Program, spoke about anticipated changes under the new Trump Administration on the plenary panel to approximately 300 attendees alongside New York State Assembly Member Harvey Epstein, New York City Council Member Alexa Aviles and leaders from TakeRoot Justice and Make the Road New York.

Catholic Migration Services has significant experience providing zealous advocacy to groups of clients who join together in pursuit of a common goal, such as groups of tenants who join together to obtain critical repairs and services from their landlords, and groups of workers who join together after being victimized by wage theft. Catholic Migration Services' attorneys David Colodny and Samantha Lyons provided a training on Ethics and Group Representation to legal advocates on how to ensure they are complying with the ethical rules when representing groups of people together in a case.



Samantha Lyons and David Colodny giving a training at the 2025 LEAP Coalition Conference



HELPING SENIORS STAY IN THEIR HOMES

Lionel, pictured here with his son Santiago, is a senior who had been living in his Queens apartment for over 20 years and his landlord sued to evict him as he battled cancer. Thanks to advocacy from Catholic Migration Services, they were able to remain in their home for two years so Lionel could undergo cancer treatment.

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