

NEW YORK JUSTICE FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

2023 – 2024

Report

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

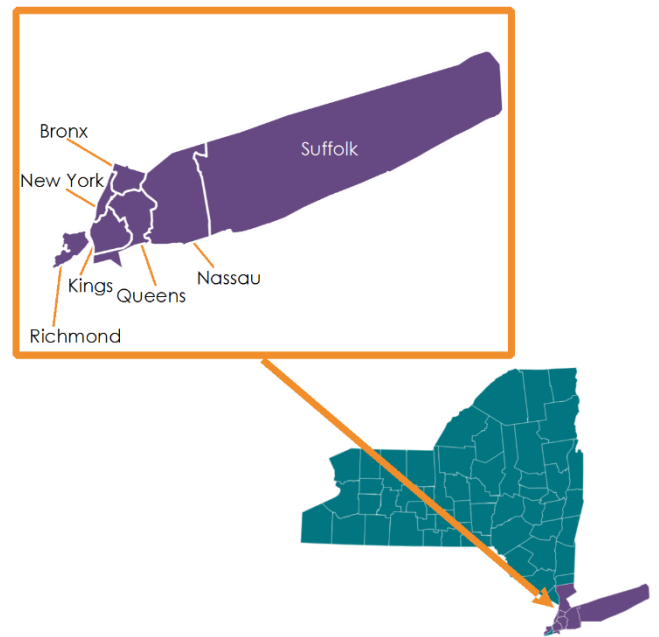
Over the course of the reporting period, we have served hundreds of clients and have provided legal education sessions to over one thousand immigrants in New York City and Long Island. Through our program during the reporting period we have closed 467 immigration cases, providing legal assistance to undocumented immigrants living at or below 125% of the federal poverty line.

According to the Office of the New York City Comptroller’s report “Economic Benefits of Immigration Legal Services”, immigrants obtaining Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) increase their yearly wages by about \$5,000. With over thirty of these types of cases closed in the reporting period, this amounts to over \$150,000 in increased wages for our clients from securing their EADs.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

Case Example #1: Amir was born in Northern India, the eldest of three children, where his family often struggled to make ends meet. He came to the United States with aspirations of securing a brighter future for his loved ones. Leaving his entire family—his siblings, mother, father, and cherished wife—behind, he wholeheartedly pursued opportunities to provide for them and pave the way for a better tomorrow.

For 28 long years he has been physically separated from his wife, however, their love for each other fostered. He calls his wife every morning and evening. They talk about their daily encounters, accomplishments, and everything in between. Similarly, he remains close to both his mother and father whom he calls every morning and evening without missing a day. He states, “I put effort into the relationship I have with my family. I keep in touch with their daily life. I miss them deeply!”



Service Area: New York City and Long Island

Population Served: Low-Income Immigrants

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
 Total Staff: 7
 Lawyers: 5
 Others: 2

Amir worked full-time at a gas station during most of his time in the U.S.. In 2016 he was assaulted on the job, and he vividly describes the amount of blood and the pain he experienced. Due to his immigration status and lack of funds, he did not go to the hospital that night but waited until the next morning to see his primary care doctors where he was prescribed merely pain medication.

The incident left both emotional and physical scars. He recalls the frantic phone calls to his family members in India: his fear festered as he told his family vividly about the assault. His family was very fearful of his life and did not want him working there anymore. He states, “I was scared I was going to be killed one day just for doing my job.”

He recalls during this time when he felt helpless, his friends referred him to a legal clinic in Hicksville. It was here that he met TJ Mills, Immigration Law and Justice New York’s Managing Attorney. TJ helped Amir apply for U-visa based on being the victim of an assault and cooperating in the investigation of the crime.

On December 13, 2023, the Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) granted a U-visa to Amir. As a result of his U-visa approval, CIS is able to grant his wife a U-visa as well. Approval permits her to immigrate from India immediately. Amir states excitedly, “[m]y wife is just waiting to be interviewed at the U.S. embassy in India and be granted her U-visa as well.”



Finally, after being separated in 1996—almost 28 years—Amir will reunite with his wife. He is so grateful to both Immigration Law and Justice New York and TJ Mills for helping him gain legal status. He states as tears run down his face, “Life has completely changed... I can breathe freely, I can work freely, I can talk freely. I was so scared of what was going to happen to me... My family feared it was the last day they would speak or see me ever again.” He thanks TJ Mills profusely for helping him, and states, “I can’t thank him enough...He is an amazing person and my life completely changed.”

CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



He awaits December 4, 2026 to apply for a green card and finally see his family and homeland after 28 years. He tells anyone in a similar circumstance, “Go see TJ Mills! He is an amazing and kind person who can help change your life too!”

Case Example #2: Vanessa, originally from China, was born into a farming family and was only able to complete elementary school. Working as a factory employee, she earned about \$50 per month under challenging conditions and low wages. Yearning for more freedom, around 19 years old, she decided to seek a better life in the United States.

Since immigrating, Vanessa has built a family and is now a mother of three. Due to the high cost of living in New York City, she and her children were forced to reside with her husband’s parents. Vanessa’s mother-in-law, seemingly harboring resentment, unleashed a torrent of verbal abuse upon her children, particularly the younger ones.

What commenced as hurtful words soon manifested into physical brutality. When the mother-in-law became abusive, as a mother she would block the hits to protect her children. Vanessa states, “I wanted to protect my children, and it pained me to listen to and watch. I tried my best to protect them.” However, despite her best efforts, her brother-in-law and father-in-law,

aligning with the mother-in-law's desires, spiraled into a disturbing cycle of abuse. She describes her children were often taken to a secluded room for further punishment. Her children did not have a safe home and were left with deep bruises and physical as well as psychological wounds. Confronting the relentless brutality, Vanessa took decisive action, reporting the abuse to the hospital and a social worker. This courageous step led to a case being opened by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). The hospital, recognizing the profound trauma inflicted on both

Vanessa and her children prescribed not just medical intervention but psychiatric care to navigate the emotional scars etched by their harrowing experiences. Amid the trauma she endured as an indirect victim of child abuse, Vanessa found a glimmer of hope through the help of Immigration Law and Justice New York. The Administration for Children's Services recognized her as a victim based on her cooperation and the harm she suffered. Struggling through these traumatic events with no end, Vanessa stumbled upon ILJNY at a nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting immigrant adults in learning English. Learning about her immigrant rights at ILJNY, Vanessa felt a sense of relief. She realized that there was a pathway to legal representation that could bring about better circumstances for herself and her children.

In Vanessa's life, the narrative shifts from the daughter of a Chinese farmer to a resilient mother navigating the complexities of family, immigration, and justice in the bustling cityscape of New York. Through adversity, Vanessa's story is a testament to her strength and determination to carve out a better future for herself and her children. With the guidance of ILJNY, a request for a U-visa has been filed on her behalf. This visa would provide her with the legal status she needs and allow her to access essential healthcare assistance. Vanessa, grappling with serious medical issues and kidney problems, is desperate for adequate healthcare. If granted the U-visa, she will be entitled to the health benefits necessary for her well-being, including the possibility of an organ transplant. The U-visa, a symbol of hope, could transform Vanessa's life.

Looking ahead, after three years in U-visa status, crime victims like Vanessa become eligible to apply for green cards. It's a journey towards stability and security that Vanessa eagerly anticipates. Grateful for the support of ILJNY, Vanessa expresses, "Thank you to the help from volunteers and attorneys at ILJNY for their tireless efforts in fighting for me and my children." Through their advocacy, Vanessa is one step closer to the better life she sought to achieve in America.

OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

Community Legal Education: ILJNY conducts community legal education sessions at St. Paul and St. Andrews (SPSA) UMC during their “Miracle Mondays”. These are events at SPSA UMC for immigrants that distribute food, toiletries, clothes, and other essentials. During these events ILJNY attorneys conduct presentations in English and Spanish on common immigration issues, solutions, and processes. The target population is undocumented immigrants in Manhattan and surrounding areas. While our total goal was conservatively set at 750 attendees, we have far surpassed this at well over one thousand attendees already.

ILJNY also provides small numbers of intakes and consultations at these community education sessions. ILJNY has also conducted legal education sessions to the backstretch workers at Belmont Racetrack on Long Island twice per year, as well as conducting pro se assistance through our asylum attorney in partnership with Afrikana, a legal service provider to mainly Black and women immigrants.

Community Legal Education Example: In January 2024, St. Paul & St. Andrews (SPSA) UMC in Manhattan invited NY JFON’s Asylum Attorney Nneka Okpara and Executive Director Rev. Paul Fleck to do a presentation and consultations with groups of asylum seekers from Venezuela, Haiti, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Cuba, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and several other countries. Nneka has filed several notices of representation on behalf of asylum seekers in removal proceedings.

Limited Representation: NY JFON provides limited representation. Our organization does not believe that pro se assistance is effective/ appropriate, however, we have been providing limited appearance assistance in change of venue, preparation of the asylum application, and employment authorization cases.

1,893

people
benefited
from

**Community
Legal
Education**

33

people
benefited
from

**Pro Se
Assistance**

TECHNOLOGY

ILJNY has begun to implement the use of eIMMIGRATION as a case management tool and tracker giving easier access to client information when needed. We have hired an information technology consultant who is improving processes and security.

IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

The technology grant has allowed us to acquire a 6-month Starter Pro plan for our non-profit website, managed IT service for 6 months, 4 months of Kindful CRM donor database, 2 Zoom licenses, 2 laptops, a desktop computer, toner supplies, and upgraded phones for the Hicksville office, along with extra computer and telephone accessories.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

Our attorneys attend the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) conference each summer as well as a National Roundtable sponsored by the Immigration Law & Justice Network.

3

attorneys volunteered **21** hours

19

Other volunteers volunteered **912** hours

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

In 2023 ILJNY began a partnership with St. Paul and St. Andrews United Methodist Church (SPSA UMC) located in Manhattan’s Upper West Side. The church, which serves a “community of radical welcome”, has provided migrant support since late 2022 in response to the arrival of immigrants and asylum seekers bussed from the southern border. On Mondays from 9am to 12pm the church provides welcome backpacks, goods such as clothes, diapers, and hygiene products, emergency food kits in conjunction with West Side Campaign Against Hunger, resources from community partners Venezuelan Immigration Aid, and assistance enrolling children in school. In partnership with SPSA UMC, ILJNY attends the migrant support events once per month, providing Know Your Rights/ Legal Information Sessions to the larger group and one-on-one legal consultations for those interested. Of those we would select cases for full representation and provide high quality pro se assistance for others wishing to proceed.

We have also begun a partnership with the Backstretch Employee Service Team (BEST) to provide Know Your Rights/ Legal Information Sessions and consults to backstretch employees at Belmont Racetrack. Currently these events happen twice per calendar year.

ILJNY’s asylum attorney also collaborates with Afrikana to provide pro se assistance to asylum seekers.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

\$ 278,791.37

IOLA Funding	\$ 98,331.91
Other	\$ 326,879.19

