



FLORENCE
IMMIGRANT
& REFUGEE
RIGHTS PROJECT

Annual Report 2005

Mission and Vision

The Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project, Inc., "The Florence Project," provides holistic, free legal services to immigrants, refugees, and U.S. citizens detained by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Arizona for immigration processing. The Project serves men, women, and children, including those with mental health and social service needs. The Project advocates for a more just and efficient judicial system for individuals in immigration detention, and believes that everyone should understand their rights and options under immigration law and have access to legal counsel. Although the government assists indigent criminal defendants and civil litigants through public defenders and legal aid attorneys, it does not provide attorneys for people facing deportation. The Project strives locally and nationally to address this inequity.

A Message from the Executive Director

The last year was one of transitions and great challenges. Not only did the organization have to manage significant staff transitions and the loss of the social service program, but also work against an increasingly anti-immigrant political backdrop and with record increases in the number of detained in Arizona. As has been the case with the Florence Project over the last sixteen years however, our staff, Board of Directors, volunteers and supporters from all over the country have truly exhibited their dedication to the mission of the organization. It is the spirit of possibility and transformation that guide our dedication to our clients and their families. As we look forward to the next year, I am proud to share the work of my colleagues and present you with the significant accomplishments we have made in legal advocacy and empowerment for detained immigrants in Arizona.

Accomplishments for 2005:

- One of our greatest accomplishments for the year is our continued ability to provide high-quality legal services to an astonishing number of detained individuals, as you will see in the impact of services statement.
- Also, for the first time since the inception of the Detained Children's Initiative, in 2005 the Florence Project hired a Children's Paralegal. Working in partnership with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, we hired a paralegal who has been assisting the Children's Attorney and working with our child clients. As a result of this successful collaboration and the great impact the paralegal has made in the casework of the Children's Initiative, we were granted additional funding through multiple sources to institutionalize the Children's Paralegal position.
- Throughout the year the Florence Project legal staff strengthened relationships with pro bono attorneys across the country to advance the appellate representation for detained individuals in Arizona. Our attorneys referred several cases to appellate experts, which could have a major impact on the cases of thousands of detained immigrants and refugees nationwide. In 2005 our legal staff referred 50 cases for pro bono legal representation.

Challenges in 2005:

- One of the greatest challenges in 2005 has been the increased demand for services and developing a strategic use of resources to meet those needs. As the only free legal service providers in Arizona we face this challenge every year as the number of immigrants detained in Arizona increases.
- With the loss of our full-time social worker in 2005, our staff faced a significant challenge in coordinating social services for long-term detainees and post-release services. We were the fortunate recipients of a private donation to revive the social work program in 2006 and have already begun the hiring process.

Goals for 2006:

- In our continued efforts to diversify our fundraising base, we are currently developing an annual individual giving program to increase individual giving to the Project.
- As recipients of a grant to hire a full-time pro bono coordinator, we hope to increase our outreach efforts to the private bar in Arizona through presentations and training. Our goals include better integration of the Florence Project mission into the activities of the Arizona Bar, increasing the number of pro bono attorneys accepting detained cases and formalizing our training materials and database for tracking pro bono referrals.
- In response to the growth of our organization and the dramatic increase in the demand for our services, we intend to lay the foundation in 2006 to launch a strategic planning that will include discussion of both long-term and emergency needs. We are hopeful that this process will strengthen the entire organization and allow us to respond more effectively to the needs of those in detention.
- Finally, our attorneys will engage in outreach to refugee communities and resettlement agencies in Arizona with the goal of educating individuals about immigration law in an effort to prevent detention and deportation. This project is a direct outgrowth of our experience working with an increasing number of refugees in detention. As a first step, we have been invited to give a presentation at the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program Annual Conference in April 2006.

An Introduction to the People We Serve:

Our constituency consists of over 2,400 immigrant and refugee men, women and children detained by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Arizona on any given day. Representing at least 10% of the national detained population, the majority of our clients are indigent monolingual Spanish speakers with limited to no formal educational background. While the majority of our clients are from Mexico and Central America, we had clients last year from 74 countries alone. Our clients confront the emergency need for a full range of legal services in their bond and merits hearings, motions, and applications for relief from removal. Ninety percent of those detained cannot afford legal representation and the government does not provide attorneys for people facing removal. The detained immigrants and asylum-seekers we serve are isolated from their families and communities, which may be as far away as Northern California, other western states, and even New York and New England. Our clients include:

- **Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs)** - The Project continues to provide a broad range of services to lawful permanent residents including case representation and extensive pro se assistance. In 2005 the Eloy Project **presented 19 pro se workshops serving 158 detainees**. We are proud that our work with LPRs often results in the reunification of families in the U.S. after a period of prolonged detention.
- **United States Citizens** – The Project continues to see a number of cases involving U.S. citizens in detention. With the assistance of FIRR staff detainees are made aware of the requirements for U.S. citizenship. FIRR staff contacts family to obtain evidence and writes motions to the immigration courts to terminate proceedings. In 2005 our legal staff **identified 76 citizenship claims** of individuals in detention.
- **Detained Children** - The Project provides comprehensive services to detained children in Arizona. The Children's Initiative experienced a huge increase in its caseload. In 2005 the Children's Attorney provided legal rights presentations to **an all time high of 1259 children**. Including the new facilities, the Children's Attorney with the help of the new Children's Paralegal gives 2-3 rights presentations each week as the bed space increased to 200 from 110 in Phoenix and Scottsdale.
- **Individuals with mental health/social service issues** – As the number of people in detention increases, we continue to see a rise in the number of individuals with mental health/social service needs who need extra assistance in articulating their claims, identifying outside rehabilitation and counseling services, and coordinating psychological evaluations. In 2005, in the absence of a social worker, staff attorneys **referred 34 cases to Doctors of the World** for evaluations.
- **Survivors of Torture** – With the sustained support of the Office of Refugee Resettlement and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, we continued to provide specialized services for this group. The majority of the survivors we work with are legal residents who came to the U.S. as refugees, after having suffered from torture and persecution in their home countries. In 2005, the legal staff at Eloy **worked with 76 survivors of torture** at the detention center.



A Bosnian Refugee's Struggle to Reunite with Family

Alen Kristo is a Bosnian Muslim who was held and tortured in a concentration camp in the early 1990's. His time in the concentration camp caused post- traumatic stress disorder and alcoholism that led to his arrest. He was detained for a year and a half after failing to adjust his status to that of a legal permanent resident. Numerous staff members worked with Alen throughout the course of his detention, and one of our Eloy attorneys provided representation before the Immigration Judge. During the 18-month detention, Alen's wife, Jasmin, traveled to Eloy, Arizona to provide him support. In a phone conversation with the Attorney, she expressed her need for her husband's release and her willingness to do anything for the Project in order to help him. "Without your help, I would still be in detention or in Bosnia without my family," Alen said after his release in September. In September 2005, a Florence Project staff attorney represented Alen in his pre-hearing conference and the merits hearing for his application for adjustment of status. The government did not oppose and the Immigration Judge granted his application. With the help of the Florence Project, Alen, his wife, and their 2 teenage children are working to reestablish their life in Phoenix, Arizona. Alen is participating in rehabilitation for his alcoholism and therapy for his post- traumatic stress disorder.

A 14 year-old Honduras Boy's story

Miguel Antonio is a 14-year old street kid from Honduras. Before abandoning his family, Miguel Antonio's father threatened that he would kill the boy and his mother. Later, Miguel's mother abandoned him when he was 7 months old - she gave him to her mother to raise. When he was about 6 years old his grandmother grew too old to care for him and he was forced to live on the streets. From time to time, a local woman gave him food and a place to sleep, but he mostly begged for food on the streets and essentially had to take care of himself. Miguel has worked odd jobs- mostly painting furniture and washing cars- for the last 8 years. He has been threatened and beaten by gangs numerous times culminating in a violent attack with a machete. Miguel was severely beaten and was left with a huge wound on his back. He did not report the attack to the hospital or the police because he was scared that the gang would kill him for making a report or seeking help. Against these incredible odds, Miguel made his way to the U.S. where he hopes for the first time in his life to find some peace and security. The Children's Attorney is working to find a pro bono attorney to represent him to obtain a Special Immigrant Juvenile Visa in hopes of securing permanent status in the United States in Michigan where he was transferred to foster care.

Types of Services:

The Florence Project provides a full range of legal services for our constituents including:

- Live **rights presentations** (five times a week in Florence and Eloy and now 2-3 times per week for children) regarding people's rights and remedies in removal proceedings;
- Individual **case assessment** for all who request it;
- Pro se **bond assistance** with some limited representation in Florence and Eloy, and assistance with family reunification for the detained children;
- **Application preparation and documentation gathering** to support the legal claims. We work with clients' families to prepare affidavits and supporting documentation;
- Assistance with raising **issues of deportability or eligibility for relief** before the immigration judge and the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) either through pro se brief preparation or full representation;
- **Direct representation, pro se assistance, and pro bono referrals**, as resources allow.
- **Assistance with supervised release** in Florence and Eloy.

Impact of our Services:

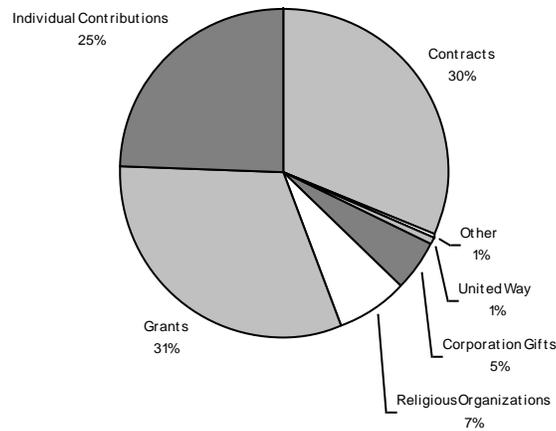
In 2005, we provided **rights presentations to 12,479 people** and provided in-depth case assessment and follow up services to 6,758 people. We gave **intensive pro se assistance to 892 people** (not including those we assisted who later bonded out or hired an attorney), provided **representation at bond hearings to 100 people**, and **assisted or represented 261 people in their merits hearings** to seek legal status in the US. At the Eloy detention center FIRRP staff provided **19 workshops** on the topic of cancellation of removal to **158 detainees**. We know based on experience that without us, fewer clients would win their cases. We also know that without us many of the complex eligibility issues that we see would never get raised in immigration court. The legal staff at Eloy worked with **76 survivors of torture** at the detention center. Despite the Florence Project's presence and unique service delivery many detained immigrants in Florence and Eloy lack legal representation. Without the assistance of a pro bono coordinator, it remained a challenge last year for staff to recruit, train and mentor pro bono attorneys in addition to their own demanding legal case work. Despite the challenge, however, we were able to conduct a legal training at a local law firm and throughout the year our legal staff **referred 50 cases** in 2005.



Financial Information

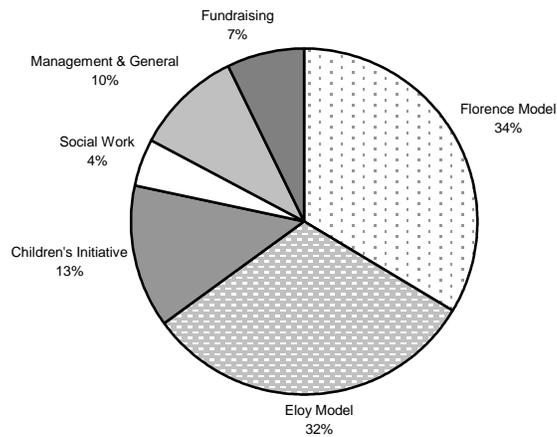
Year ended December 31, 2005

Revenues



Total Revenue \$555,450

Expenses



Total Expenses \$524,280

Major Public Donors

Adler Management, LLC
 APS Foundation
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As of March 1, 2006

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