



FLORENCE
IMMIGRANT
& REFUGEE
RIGHTS PROJECT

Annual Report 2007

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

2007 proved to be a year where the mission and work of the Florence Project was more important than ever. While there was no landmark comprehensive immigration reform passed in Washington, we learned from how the debate unfolded that the continued growth of detention and aggressive enforcement tactics on a national scale are almost certain in the coming year. We saw this materialize locally with the addition of 625 new bed spaces in Florence and an anticipated growth of over 500 new beds in Eloy in 2008. Our role in providing access to justice and support to the thousands of immigrants detained in Arizona is critical in this climate, especially as more vulnerable groups are targeted and more families are at risk of separation. Our conviction to work zealously and with respect on behalf of detained immigrants to ensure they are given the opportunity to make informed choices about their legal cases is unwavering. It is an honor to share with our friends and supporters the stories of our clients and the hard work of our staff and volunteers.

A Summary of our Services

The People We Serve

Our constituency consists of over 3,000 immigrant and refugee men, women and children detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on any given day in facilities in Florence, Eloy and Phoenix, Arizona. The majority of our clients are indigent monolingual Spanish speakers with limited to no formal educational background. While most of our clients are from Mexico and Central America, we had clients last year from 97 different countries. Our clients include lawful permanent residents, asylum-seekers, survivors of torture, individuals suffering from mental illness, and even U.S. Citizens. All of the people we serve 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 deportation. Increasingly, the people we serve are isolated from their families and communities, who may be as far away as Northern California, other western states, and even New York and New England.

Florence Project Services

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

- ◆ **Live rights presentations** (five times a week in Florence, six times a week in Eloy and three times per week for children) regarding people's rights and remedies in removal proceedings. In 2007 we provided rights presentations to 8,433 men, women, and children.
- ◆ **Individual case assessment** for all who request it. In 2007 we provided individual case assessment to 3,617 people.
- ◆ **Pro se bond assistance** with some limited representation in Florence and Eloy, and assistance with family reunification for children. In 2007 we provided direct bond representation to 47 people seeking release from custody.
- ◆ **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 either through pro se brief preparation or full representation.
- ◆ **Direct representation, pro se assistance, and pro bono referrals**, as resources allow. In 2007 we gave intensive pro se assistance to 3,568 people, assisted 278 people in their merits hearings for legal relief, provided 24 workshops on the topic of cancellation of removal for 171 detained lawful permanent residents, and referred 64 cases to pro bono counsel.
- ◆ **Assistance with supervised release and habeas corpus petitions** in Florence and Eloy. In 2007 we helped 23 people in their custody review process or to file habeas petitions.

Liberian Asylum Seeker Released from Detention

Richard is a native of Liberia and belongs to the Bassa ethnic group. In 1990, when Richard was eight, his father was killed by rebels under the command of former President Charles Taylor and his family home in Monrovia was burned to the ground. Richard and his mother fled and for years were wanderers within their own country. When Richard was thirteen, his mother passed away from malnutrition. With no one left to care for him, Richard fell into the hands of armed rebels who stopped him on the street and, after he refused to take arms and join them, beat him in front of a crowd to make an example of him. The rebels struck his neck with a rifle, stabbed him and dragged him through the streets by his legs, leaving him to die in the woods. When Richard awoke he called out for help and an elderly woman took him in and cared for his wounds for several weeks. Fearing he would be killed if found by the rebels, Richard fled Liberia and traveled by boat to Sierra Leone and then on to Venezuela, where he was imprisoned for not having documents to be there. Richard was eventually released and journeyed to the U.S. by walking and getting rides, arriving in the Arizona desert this summer. He told the border patrol official who stopped him that he had come to seek asylum protection in the United States. Richard was detained in Eloy, Arizona, where he was screened by a Florence Project staff attorney in July. Our staff attorney represented Richard in his bond hearing and persuaded the immigration judge to award him a two thousand dollar bond. Without a reasonable bond, refugees like George can be stuck in detention for years while pursuing their asylum claims. Even a two thousand dollar bond can be out of reach. It was for Richard, who had no money or family in the United States to pay his bond. So, our staff attorney worked to raise money for him. After spending four months in detention, Richard was able to post bond and gain release. He is now living in Laveen, Arizona with a Haitian friend he met in ICE detention and he has found support through the Liberian refugee community. The Florence Project referred Richard's case to a volunteer attorney through our pro bono program so he will have representation for his humanitarian asylum case in Phoenix immigration court.



Significant Accomplishments in 2007

Expansion of Services through New Programs

- ◆ With a generous private donation we were able to revive our Integrated Social Service Program in 2007 and hire a full time social worker onto our staff. Our Social Service Coordinator provides supportive services to our most vulnerable clients including those with psychosocial needs, long-term detainees, women with child custody issues, survivors of torture, children who have suffered extreme abuse and LGBT and transgender individuals. The Program also aims to assist individuals with post-release social services post-release including housing, substance abuse counseling and mental health treatment.
- ◆ With support from the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education in 2007 we also launched the Arizona Defending Immigrants Program (AZ-DIP), a two year pilot project aimed at addressing immigration consequences for non-citizen defendants in Arizona. Our full time Criminal Immigration Consultant provides consultations, trainings and written memoranda to defense counsel and other criminal justice stakeholders on immigration matters affecting defendants in Arizona to help limit the number of non-citizens who find themselves detained and in removal proceedings.

Outreach & Education on Detention Issues

- ◆ We hosted 3 visits to the Florence Project in 2007, including visits from Amnesty International volunteers on World Refugee Day and student delegations from the University of California-Davis and Borderlinks program in Tucson. We also participated in the visit of Jorge Bustamante, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of the Migrant, to the ICE Florence Service Processing Center.
- ◆ Florence Project staff appeared in the local and national media 8 times in 2007 speaking on issues such as the effects of aggravated felony laws and U.S. Citizens in detention. We provided training or spoke about detention and removal defense issues at 20 national and local conferences, including the American Immigration Lawyer's Association annual conference, the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association Conference, and the Arizona State Bar.
- ◆ In 2007 we also continued to serve on the Steering Committee of the Detention Watch Network, a national coalition of organizations and individuals working to educate the public and policy makers about the U.S. immigration detention and deportation system and advocate for humane reform.

Additional Services & Successes

- ◆ Our Detained Children's Initiative strengthened its services in 2007 operating with a full staff of two attorneys and one legal assistant. The Children's Initiative team gave 128 rights presentations to a total of 919 children and helped 8 children win Special Immigrant Juvenile Status visas, which provide a path to U.S. Citizenship for children who have been abused, abandoned or neglected in their home countries.
- ◆ The Florence Project continued to rely on an expanding volunteer base in 2007. We referred 64 cases to pro bono attorneys and 25 cases to Doctors of the World volunteers for psychological and medical evaluations in support of asylum or forms of protection for survivors of torture. In addition, we hosted 8 law student interns from Harvard University, the University of Arizona, Northeastern University, New York University, Stanford University, and the University of Michigan, 3 part-time volunteers, and continued to collaborate with the Arizona State University Immigration Law clinic on children's cases.



Goals for 2008

Strengthen Our Organization

- ◆ With funding from the Hispanics In Philanthropy Funders' Collaborative, we began a two year strategic planning process in 2007, which we will continue in 2008. By addressing our organization's strengths, weaknesses, and overall effectiveness we hope to continue to make our clients needs and our direct services our first priority. In 2008 our consultant will complete an organizational assessment, environmental scan, and conduct focus groups with community stakeholders. She will also lead our board and staff through several strategic planning/training sessions where we will evaluate the demand for our services, programs and how we should plan for the future to be most effective for our clients.
- ◆ We plan to host at least one fundraising event in 2008 to expand our individual donor base and educate prospective individual donors about the Florence Project and detention issues in Arizona. We will also begin planning for a larger scale event to commemorate our 20th Anniversary in 2009.

Expand Our Pro Bono Network

- We will continue to leverage our limited resources by reaching out to the legal community for pro bono services. In 2008 we will establish a Pro Bono Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from major law firms in Arizona. This Committee will advise and work with the Florence Project to expand the number of pro bono referrals, foster a mentoring system among pro bono attorneys in the law firm community and build a lasting organizational relationship with the Florence Project. We also plan to host at least four pro bono trainings/recruitment events in 2008.

Enhance Delivery of Services

- ◆ In 2007 we began the process of updating our written self-help materials designed for pro se detainees and hope to have the approved materials fully released in 2008 and translated into several languages for use in all of the detention facilities we serve and to share with legal service providers across the country.
- ◆ We will expand our Integrated Social Service Program and the social services we can provide to clients by building relationships with other service providers in Arizona and western states who may be able to assist clients with their post-release needs. If funding is obtained, we will create a release guide of information and social services for detainees being released to aid their path to reintegration.

2007 Major Public Donors

Arizona Public Service Foundation
AZ Foundation for Legal Services & Education
EN & Nadine Basha, Jr.
Brelje & Associates
Matthew H. Cody
CW & Modene Neely Foundation
Community Foundation for Southern Arizona
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Perkins Coie Brown & Bain
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Quarles & Brady Streich Lang
Dr. Jerzy Rozenblicit
Claire Sargent
Silicon Valley Bank Foundation
Snell & Wilmer
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Stanford Public Interest Law Foundation
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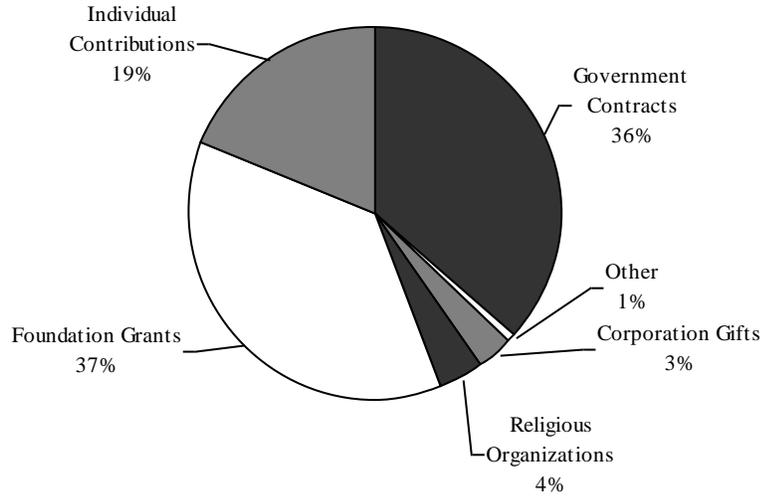
Financial Information

Year End December 31, 2007

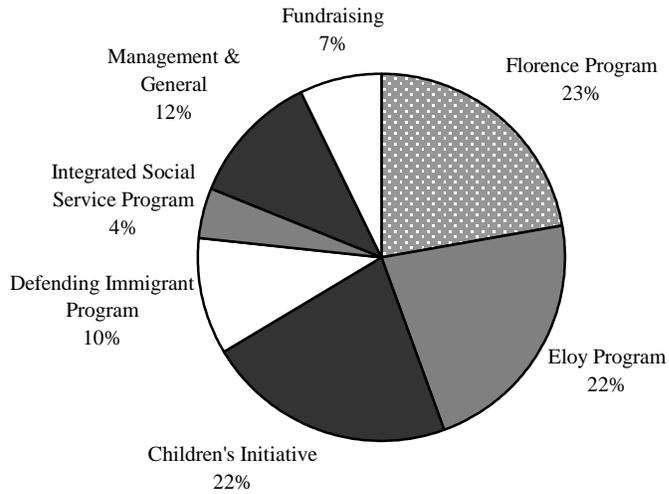
Steve J. Miller Foundation
SunCor Development
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William K Perry Farms
William S. & Ina Levine Foundation

Total Revenue \$895,840



Total Expense \$806,830



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