



FLORENCE
IMMIGRANT
& REFUGEE
RIGHTS PROJECT

Annual Report 2010

Mission Statement

The Florence Project provides and coordinates free legal services and related social services to indigent men, women, and unaccompanied children detained in Arizona for immigration removal proceedings. The Project strives to ensure that detained individuals have access to counsel, understand their rights under immigration law, and are treated fairly and humanely by our judicial system.

A Message from the Executive Director

2010 proved to be a difficult year for Arizona. Despite the discouraging setbacks in the larger immigrant rights movement, I am deeply proud of the Florence Project's response to the newest set of challenges presented to our organization and clients. There is no doubt we emerged from a tough year stronger than we entered it, with an expanded scope of services to help more people, a broader network of community support to raise awareness about our clients, a small financial surplus, and a renewed commitment to the importance of our mission. The passage of Senate Bill 1070 pushed Arizona into the limelight, increased our workload, and caused fear both inside and outside of detention. But the attention it brought also provided a much needed window of opportunity to educate the community about the Florence Project and the people we serve. In such difficult times, our staff was honored to have been recognized and supported by such a wide range of community members, from musicians and artists, to peer legal service organizations, law firms and pro bono attorneys, to universities and students, to business leaders, to national advocacy organizations. Behind the scenes, we also witnessed an expanded detention system for unaccompanied immigrant children unfold in Arizona, with 30 new beds opening in 2010 and another 20 expected in 2011. We saw the addition of two new immigration judges in Florence and Eloy and the detention of hundreds of arriving asylum seekers from the horn of Africa. In the middle of all of this and much more, we managed to publish our first ever story project, sharing letters and stories from our clients, and celebrate our 20th anniversary with our supporters, former staff, board members, and friends. On behalf of our hardworking and dedicated staff, I am pleased to share this summary our work and thank you for the support that makes it possible.

A Summary of our Services

The People We Serve

The Florence Project's constituency consists of over 3,000 immigrant and refugee men, women and unaccompanied 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 monolingual Spanish speakers with limited to no formal educational background. While most are from Mexico and Central America, we served people from more than 90 countries in 2010. Because there is no right to government appointed counsel in immigration proceedings, an estimated 86% of detainees appear alone in their immigration court hearings. The Florence Project's work seeks to address this inequity and provide due process to this vulnerable population.

Florence Project 2010 Services

- ◆ Live “**know your rights**” **presentations** regarding people’s rights and remedies in removal proceedings. In 2010, we provided 561 rights presentations to 8,561 detained individuals. 1,129 of these individuals were unaccompanied immigrant children.
- ◆ Individual **case assessment** for all who request it and follow up **pro se assistance** for individuals fighting their removal cases who cannot afford to hire private counsel. In 2010, we provided case assessment and pro se assistance to 4,249 people.
- ◆ **Direct representation**, as resources allow, and **pro bono referrals**. In 2010, we provided direct representation to 162 adults and referred 105 cases to volunteer attorneys in the community. Our Children’s Project successfully represented an additional 36 unaccompanied immigrant children pursuing relief before the Immigration Judge and referred another 454 children to pro bono attorney matching organizations across the country.
- ◆ Assistance with release from custody including pro se **bond support**, **assistance with supervised release, habeas corpus petitions**, and requests for **humanitarian parole**. In 2010, we assisted 809 adults pursue release from detention.
- ◆ Group **peer-to-peer workshops** for individuals fighting similar forms of relief to assist and prepare each other for their final court hearings. In 2010, we provided 69 workshops to 292 individuals on topics including cancellation of removal for lawful permanent residents, bonds, appeals to the circuit court level, and asylum.
- ◆ 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 and **application preparation** and **documentation gathering** to support legal claims.
- ◆ **Trainings and consultations to public defenders** on the overlap of criminal and immigration law through our Arizona Defending Immigrants Program. In 2010, we provided 873 consultations to public defenders and defense attorneys.

Seventeen Year Old Girl Wins Lawful Permanent Residency

“Isabella” is a 17 year old citizen of Mexico who was brought to the United States by her mother when she was 10 years old. Isabella’s father left her family when she was a baby and her mother moved to the United States when Isabella was very young, leaving Isabella and her younger brother in the care of her grandmother. Living in Mexico, Isabella was sexually molested by a relative. When her grandmother’s health deteriorated and she could no longer care for the children, Isabella’s mother returned to retrieve her and brought her to Arizona, where she attended school and acculturated to the American way of life.

Isabella’s mother was emotionally and psychologically unstable and physically abused Isabella and her siblings, dragging her by her hair and beating her with a belt buckle to the point of bruising, bleeding, and scaring. Isabella’s mother routinely told her she was a mistake and shouldn’t be alive and encouraged her to commit suicide, leaving medication out for her. Isabella did attempt suicide but luckily survived. The

Children’s Project staff met Isabella in the Southwest Key shelter for unaccompanied immigrant children after she was caught shoplifting in Phoenix and turned over to immigration when her mother failed to pick her up at the police station. After learning about the extensive abuse Isabella suffered in Mexico and at the hands of her mother, the children’s team pursued a Special Immigrant Juvenile status visa on her behalf. Isabella was granted SIJS and her lawful permanent residency two days after her eighteenth birthday. She plans to continue with school so she can become a psychologist and help people with mental disorders.



Significant Accomplishments

Legal Victories

- ◆ The Florence Project provides core pro se services to thousands of clients who would not otherwise have any legal assistance. With our help in 2010, more than 34 people had their cases terminated on U.S. Citizenship grounds and an additional 76 had their cases terminated on other grounds. More than 279 people successfully pursued relief from deportation before the immigration court, including 184 lawful permanent residents winning cancellation of removal, and the remaining winning claims such as asylum, protection under the Convention Against Torture, adjustment of status, cancellation under the Violence Against Women Act, and U visas for victims of crimes.
- ◆ Our Children's Project successfully represented 32 unaccompanied immigrant children in 2010, helping these children obtain lawful permanent residence through Special Immigrant Juvenile Status visas based on abandonment, abuse, and neglect they suffered in their home countries.
- ◆ The Florence Project continued to represent 13 "unadjusted refugees" in their habeas petitions in Arizona District Court, challenging the lawfulness of their detention without charge. In 2010, this legal advocacy helped push Immigration & Customs Enforcement to issue a national memorandum requiring all unadjusted refugees be served with charges within 48 hours of apprehension.

Expansion of Services

- ◆ With support from outside organizations recognizing the urgent and diverse needs of our clients, the Florence Project welcomed 3 special project fellows in 2010 to provide targeted legal and social service support to clients with mental health issues, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied children.
- ◆ Confronting 30 new shelter beds in Phoenix for unaccompanied children, we expanded our Children's Project staff by creating a new Children's Pro Bono Mentor position. Our Pro Bono Mentor helps recruit volunteer attorneys and provides mentoring and support to attorneys once cases are referred.

Advocacy & Outreach

- ◆ Staff members presented as experts or led trainings at 40 different local and national events in 2010 both. These included the national American Immigration Lawyers Association conference, the Arizona Public Defenders Association annual conference, the Arizona State Bar convention, immigration symposiums at the University of California – Davis, Washington University, and Stanford University law schools, several public panels on Senate Bill 1070, and the national *Crossing Borders* conference of the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- ◆ Staff members further participated in 16 advocacy related meetings, visits, and events, including a community forum with the Assistant Secretary of Immigration & Customs Enforcement John Morton, a meeting with the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General's office, and fact finding visits from delegations of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees and Women's Refugee Commission.
- ◆ Working in collaboration with the Women's Refugee Commission and Applied Research Center, the Florence Project planned and co-hosted a national stakeholder meeting in Washington DC entitled *Maintaining Parental Rights During Immigration Enforcement Actions and Detention*. The roundtable meeting convened experts and practitioners from the immigration, child welfare, academia, and criminal fields to share information and best practices and strategize about training, policy, and practices to help minimize the permanent separation of immigrant families.



- ◆ With support from the Arizona Humanities Council and through the work of two project volunteers, we published a written story project called *Letters to a Detainee* and held 3 public panels to share the voices of immigrant men, women, and children detained in Arizona.

Collaboration

- ◆ As always, the Florence Project's breadth of work could not have been accomplished without the help of volunteers. In 2010, we leveraged our resources through the work of 63 volunteers, including physicians and mental health professionals, interpreters and country conditions researchers. We further referred cases for pro bono direct representation to 105 attorneys in the community. We also relied on the help of 13 law student interns throughout the year from the University of Arizona, Phoenix School of Law, Arizona State University, Penn State University, Harvard University, and New York University and hosted spring break service trips from 3 law students from Boston College and 4 law students from the University of Minnesota.
- ◆ We continued to collaborate with organizations on a national level by, for example, serving on the steering committee of the Detention Watch Network and working with partner legal service organizations in national networks including the Legal Orientation Program, the Detained Torture Survivor network, and the Access to Legal Services for Unaccompanied Children program. In Arizona, we strengthened our partnerships with organizations including the University of Arizona, the ACLU of Arizona, the Arizona Center for Disability Law and the Restoration Project.

Recognition

- ◆ The Florence Project was honored to receive the 2010 John Jay Medal for Justice from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. Fellow honorees included Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld, co-founders/co-directors of the Innocence Project, and Leymah Gbowe, Executive Director of Women, Peace & Security Africa.
- ◆ Legal Director/Criminal Immigration Consultant Kara Hartzler was awarded the 2010 Robert J. Hooker award from the Arizona Public Defender's Association, recognizing her work supporting the criminal defense bar through the Arizona Defending Immigrants Program.

Grandmother Released from Custody

"Elena" was apprehended by the Border Patrol in the Arizona desert with her two young grandchildren. A native on Honduras, Elena had been living in South Carolina, where she acquired temporary protected status in 2003. In January 2009, Elena was the victim of a home invasion and was shot in the stomach. Based on this crime and her cooperation with authorities, Elena became eligible for a U visa for crime victims. After she was shot, Elena's daughter came from Honduras to live with her, leaving her two children behind. A year later, Elena's two grandchildren were smuggled to the United States/Mexico border and Elena traveled to Arizona to retrieve them. After they were apprehended, Elena was detained at the Eloy Detention Center because her temporary protected status had expired and the two children were sent to the Southwest Key shelter for unaccompanied children in Phoenix. The Florence Project met Elena at Eloy and the children at Southwest Key, and prepared a request for humanitarian parole based on Elena's age, her lack of criminal history, her eligibility for a U visa, and the chronic pain and medical complications she continued to suffer from her 2009 gunshot wound. Based on the Florence Project's advocacy, Elena and her grandchildren were released and reunited in South Carolina.

Goals for 2011

- ◆ **Supporting our Programs** – Because the need for our services always exceeds our capacity, we will continue to focus on developing stable and diverse financial support to sustain our work. We hosted 4 small fundraising events in 2010 in Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff and will continue to follow this model to raise awareness and cultivate new donors. With a special fundraising capacity building grant, we will also work with a fundraising consultant in 2011-12 to expand and strengthen our individual donor base. This work will include expanding and diversifying our Board of Directors, organizing visits to detention centers and court to see our work firsthand, developing more sophisticated hard copy and electronic outreach materials, and redesigning our website.
- ◆ **Improving our Services** – Through the use of special project fellows, direct representation, volunteer attorneys and law students, and pro se workshops, we will continue to supplement our core pro se services with targeted assistance for clients that present significant vulnerabilities including the mentally ill, asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, long term lawful permanent residents, and parents with urgent child custody issues. We will also improve our services through on-site training opportunities for our staff on immigration law topics and others including witness preparation, interpreting, vicarious trauma, self care, and federal litigation.
- ◆ **Community Outreach & Advocacy** – We will continue to lead and participate in advocacy projects throughout the year on a local and national level, provided they do not impede our ability to provide services to detainees in Arizona. We will also continue to increase our participation in community outreach initiatives to raise awareness about the immigration detention system and raise the profile of the Florence Project.

Financial Information

Year End December 31, 2010*

Federal Government Subcontracts	53%
Foundation Grants	31%
Individuals	10%
Law Firms	3%
Religious Organizations	1%
Other	2%
Total Revenue	\$931,870.82
Program Services (salaries & benefits)	72%
Office Overhead	20%
Management	5%
Fundraising	3%
Total Expenses	\$813,560.59

*Accrual based budget / 2010 audit not yet completed



2010 Major Public Donors

Arizona Humanities Council
Arizona Public Service Foundation
Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education
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The Coleman Foundation
Paul & Florence Eckstein
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