FAREWELLS AND NEW BEGINNINGS: ANNOUNCING THE FLORENCE PROJECT’S CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

Reflections from Lindsay Marshall, Outgoing Executive Director

Florence Project staff members often count years of service in so-called “dog years” since multiplying one year by seven seems to more accurately reflect the learning and dedication put into one year of work at the Project. In May of this year, after nearly forty two years with the Florence Project (in actuality, almost seven), I left the Executive Director role to accept a position with Colorado Legal Services in Durango, Colorado.

My emotions about leaving were tempered by focusing on a thorough and thoughtful transition. Among the many things The Florence Project does well is handle turnover and my leaving was no exception, with many staff members stepping up to participate in the hiring process for my replacement and help ease the transition. I couldn’t be happier with the Board of Director’s decision to name Lauren Dasse as the new Executive Director after a full hiring process. Because of her time as a staff attorney on our Eloy Team, she knows the Florence Project’s work well, which is a huge advantage. She is an Arizona native and just an all-around poised, smart, and passionate person. Lauren has worked with various social justice and human rights organizations in Arizona, Mexico, and New York City, and we all look forward to seeing her leadership in action in the years to come.

Now, a few months after my departure, I am flooded by reflections and lessons learned during my time in Florence. Once I came out of the fog of the initial transition period and had the luxury to look back, I realize how connected I still am and how much my time at the Project enriched me as an attorney and as a person. The work never really leaves you in part because most of us come to the Florence Project looking for more than a job and stay because of all there is to learn and to contribute to the greater cause.

When I left in May, the Florence Project faced a pressing funding gap to maintain vital programs, was continuing to grow with rapid expansion of detention bed space in Phoenix, and was keeping an eye on a proposal from the Senate for possible reform. Lauren, as incoming Executive Director, took on these fun challenges, along with wrapping up her staff attorney job and all of the other work I passed on to her with a slap on the back and a vote of confidence, all as another hot summer in the desert crept in and I moved northward.

Despite these uphill battles, I have hope the fundraising goal will be met because of the diversity and depth of people like you who support the Florence Project’s work. One of my favorite things to do as director was to open...

...Continued on page 2

NOTES FROM THE FIELD: COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND THE FLORENCE PROJECT

By Dorien Ediger-Seto, Development & Outreach Coordinator

Sometimes leaving the Florence Office after a day of presentations in detention, we pause for a moment to wonder at the beauty of the sky and the seemingly endless desert that extends into the mountains from our back porch. Our thoughts are full of the stories of people we’ve met and counseled that day and our task ahead; to untangle their legal options and do the very best that we can despite the terrible circumstance of detention. As we lock the back door and prepare for the long drive home, the desert is quiet and there is a strange peace in the air. Sometimes, it is lonely work – we are a small staff in the middle of the desert taking on the giant that is the deportation system today. ...

...Continued on page 3

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- MUSIC FOR JUSTICE 2
- BOARD & STAFF 2013 2
- NOTES FROM THE FIELD 3
- CHILD OF THE DUST 4
- NEW PRO BONO PARTNERSHIPS 4
- STAFF PROFILE 5
- CLIENT SPOTLIGHT 5
- STAFF CORNER 6
- FIRRP SUPPORTERS 7

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*Berénice* reunited with family after release from detention

Lindsay Marshall and Lauren Dasse on Lindsay’s last night in Tucson, AZ.
FAREWELLS AND NEW BEGINNINGS

Continued from page 1

incoming donation envelopes after newsletters went out and read the names of our supporters, some of whom
would leave a short inspiring note to “keep it up” or thank us for what we do. After some time I began to recognize
nearly all of the names and felt a boost every time a donation came in, since it meant we were another step closer to
meeting our modest budget goals.

As a reluctant fundraiser who came to appreciate its power and importance, I can say with confidence that a
donation to the Florence Project is among the best “bang for the buck” contributions you can make to a cause. I
know firsthand how far each dollar is stretched, how appreciative the Project’s clients are that the organization
exists, and how hard and creatively the staff works (and how little money they make). The difference you make
through your contribution is astounding and keeps the Florence Project alive and thriving in a physical and legal
environment that needs it desperately. Thank you for making that difference during my time with the Florence
Project and for standing with me in continuing to support the organization and its clients today.

The Dando family and Lindsay visiting and drawing pictures on her last day at FIRRP

JOIN US FOR THE
3RD ANNUAL MUSIC FOR JUSTICE!

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Raffle! Prizes! Food available for purchase! Bring the whole family!

Buy tickets at www.firrp.org/getinvolved/donate/ or call (520) 868-0191 ext. 103 or
mail us a check with “Music for Justice” in the subject line:
Po Box 654
Florence, AZ, 85132
COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND THE FLORENCE PROJECT

Continued from page 1

Other days, the reality that we are just one group of people working on the front lines of a national struggle about immigration is impossible to forget. This has been particularly evident this spring and summer as a number of events have brought national attention to the detention facilities we work in and to the issues that the Florence Project and our clients struggle with every day.

In the last week of April, we heard that a long-running lawsuit regarding competency issues in immigration court, Franco v. Holder, had resulted in a preliminary injunction ordering that legal representation be afforded to immigrants found to be incompetent. The Florence Project has been advocating for the mentally ill in detention for many years, and the injunction was a long-overdue victory to protect a particularly vulnerable population.

The same week, two people incarcerated at the Eloy Detention Center committed suicide. We were tragically reminded that the devastating mental health effects of detention and deportation remain, even with the increased legal safeguards in place. As we worked with our clients to provide additional support to those who needed it and our staff grappled with the news on a personal level, the national news spotlight turned to conditions at Eloy.

Then, in July, the Eloy Detention Center was in the news again when the Dream 9, a group of immigrant youth, presented themselves at the port of entry in Nogales, staging an act of civil disobedience that resulted in them being detained while their asylum interviews were conducted.

The policy backdrop to these events, and the overarching news story of the spring and summer, was of course Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR). Since the Senate passed S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act in June, all eyes have turned to the House of Representatives to see what is next. Naturally, we have been called upon to field questions about CIR from curious friends and hopeful clients. “What do you think of the bill? “Will it pass?” “Will you still have a job in a year?”

Since many of our loved ones read this newsletter, I will take a moment to assure you that, for better or worse, the answer to that last question is yes. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of today’s iteration of CIR that will change our clients’ lives and require significant increases in the services that we provide.

First, the Senate bill as passed holds some welcome changes to current law. The bill does contain a path to citizenship for the nearly 11 million people living without authorization in the US today. Even so, the road to legalization contains a number of conditions that will ultimately exclude indigent undocumented immigrants from its benefits. The bill also contains positive reforms to asylum law. The bill provides for representation of particularly vulnerable people (including children and mentally ill people) in removal proceedings, which is an encouraging step towards ultimately perhaps having a public defender system for Immigration Court. Finally, the bill would reform detention somewhat, encouraging the Federal government to consider alternatives to detention in more cases. No matter what the final version of the bill looks like, the Florence Project will be on the frontlines ensuring that indigent immigrants and asylees get to take full advantage of its benefits.

Unfortunately, there are also a number of very ugly parts of the Senate bill. As with all immigration legislation in the past two decades, it expands the grounds for deportation, and further limits judicial discretion in their application. Meanwhile, the Corker-Hoeven amendment would put an additional 18,000 Border Patrol agents on the ground in a region that is already saturated with law enforcement. We are very concerned that the increased militarization will result in more deaths in the desert, more abuses of power by Border Patrol officers, and increasingly coercive smuggling networks. We anticipate that these reforms will expand the number of people in detention.

Further complicating things, the government shutdown seems to have cut off the possibility of a bill going forward. Most recently, Nancy Pelosi introduced her own version of the Senate bill, and there is also a series of proposed bills on the table that focus exclusively on increased enforcement and removal operations. The S.A.F.E Act, for example, dramatically increases the number of people in detention while decreasing the avenues for staying in the United States close to family, friends, and community. At the time of writing this article, the government shutdown and deportations continue while CIRs prospects in the House remain uncertain.

With so many unknowns, we are curious and apprehensive to see what else happens in Washington this fall, as we continue working through the shutdown. However, one thing is for sure: our little office in the middle of the Arizona desert will stay very busy in the months and years to come.

ACTION STEPS

1. **Donate to the Florence Project!** Your support will help us provide crucial, on-the-ground assistance to people in detention today and into the future, regardless of CIR.

2. **Join the Detention Watch Network (DWN)** for updates and information on CIR, its detention-related provisions, and more ways to get involved. (http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/joinDWN)

3. **Contact your representatives in Congress** to express your opinions and wishes for CIR.

The Dream 9 shortly before presenting themselves at the Nogales Port of Entry

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*P.S. Visit the Florence Project website for more information and imagery of the Florence Project and our clients.*

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*P.P.S. Donate to the Florence Project and other organizations that support immigrant rights. Here are a few:**

- **Detention Watch Network**
- **American Immigration Council**
- **Immigrant Legal Resource Center**
- **National Institute of Justice**
- **Center for Migration Studies**
- **Proyecto El Refugio**
- **Laredo Center for Human Rights**
- **Centro de Derechos Humanos la linea**
- **Citizens for Border Humanitarian Aid**
- **Grupo Paz en la linea**
- **Abrazos por la vida**
- **Las Patronas**
- **Casa Alitas**
- **American Civil Liberties Union**
- **American Friends Service Committee**
- **Border Network for Human Rights**
- **Puerto Rico Immigration Coalition**
- **National Action Network**
- **National Immigration Project**
- **Muslim Advocates**
- **New Mexico Immigration Coalition**
- **Puerto Rico Advocacy Network for Immigration Rights**
- **American Immigration Council**
- **Center for Migration Studies**
- **Proyecto El Refugio**
- **Laredo Center for Human Rights**
- **Centro de Derechos Humanos la linea**
- **American Civil Liberties Union**
- **American Friends Service Committee**
- **Border Network for Human Rights**
- **Puerto Rico Immigration Coalition**
- **National Action Network**
- **National Immigration Project**
- **Muslim Advocates**
- **New Mexico Immigration Coalition**
- **Puerto Rico Advocacy Network for Immigration Rights**
A CHILD OF THE DUST’S FIGHT FOR ANOTHER CHANCE

By Cliff Levenson, Pro Bono Attorney

It is estimated that tens of thousands of U.S. military men fathered children with Vietnamese women during the long war in Vietnam. Few of the fathers ever met their offspring, and even less brought their children to the United States after the war ended. In the years that followed the war, these children, sometimes known as “Children of the Dust” or “Amerasians”, bore the faces of unwanted invaders and suffered exclusion from education, abject poverty, and physical and psychological persecution. Eventually, Congress passed the Amerasian Homecoming Act, which provided green cards to these children of U.S. veterans.

In the spring of last year, Tally Kingsnorth reached out to the Arizona immigration law community for an interpreter willing to facilitate communication with a detained Vietnamese speaker. Right away, I enlisted the help of Nancy Le to provide language support and I agreed to accept the case.

It took only a couple of visits with “Cuong” to get to know a gentle, kind man who loved his family. We soon learned that Cuong was a “Child of the Dust,” as the son of a Vietnamese (actually in his case, Cambodian) mother, and an absentee American serviceman father. It also became clear, as I shared my own experience in recovery with him, that Cuong had come to a key insight while spending two years in prison and then in immigration detention. He had reached the conclusion that drugs and alcohol contributed to his problems with the law and with his relationships with family and the community, and that his years of sobriety had to continue if he wanted to change his path.

In Immigration Court, our task was to persuade the judge that Cuong deserved a second chance at keeping his green card and his life here in the United States. I had advised him, as a fellow alcoholic in recovery as well as a lawyer, to speak from the heart, and he did. On the big day, Cuong’s heartfelt testimony moved everyone in the courtroom. He described his childhood in Vietnam of not being allowed to go to school and watching cows in the rice paddies from age 11. We also learned that he had asked the criminal court judge in his drug paraphernalia case to send him to prison, so that he could “clean himself out.”

To the Immigration Judge, he repeatedly expressed his remorse, and teared up when discussing his mother and grandmother. At the conclusion of his testimony he thanked the Judge, and the Trial Attorney. During our meetings, I had talked to Cuong about AA and NA meetings near his home, and he told the Trial Attorney, when asked about his plan upon release, that he intended to go to those meetings.

After 10 long minutes of deliberation, the judge canceled the removal order and allowed Cuong to keep his green card. We went back to the holding cell, and Cuong asked when he would be released. When I told him in a few hours he cried and hugged me.

Thanks to the Florence Project for giving both Cuong and I this amazing opportunity. I am sure that we will continue to help each other in the future.

NEW PRO BONO PARTNERSHIPS FOR KIDS CASES!

With the ongoing expansion of our Children’s Program, we are always on the hunt for new partnerships with pro bono attorneys. This year, we are pleased to deepen and expand our relationships with three firms in particular.

Last fall, our Children’s Team and Pro Bono Director met with attorneys at the Law Offices of Snell & Wilmer to discuss the possibility of partnering to provide increased volunteer representation of abused, abandoned, and neglected kids arriving at the border. In the last ten months, the firm has represented three children seeking Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. Snell attorney Sara Agne recently obtained permanent residency for her client, a young man from Guatemala who will continue to live with his foster family as he pursues his high school diploma.

In January, the Florence Project partnered with Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy to provide services to unaccompanied minors who reunify with family in the Phoenix area. The firm has agreed to accept up to 12 cases per year of children applying for affirmative relief before USCIS. Although released minors are able to live in a less restrictive setting, they often face logistical challenges — including getting to and from court hearings and maintaining contact with their attorneys — that detained children do not. Through this partnership, the Florence Project in conjunction with the Fragomen attorneys are meeting the legal needs of a previously unserved population of kids in Arizona.

Meanwhile, we continue to work closely with countless Lewis Roca Rothgerber attorneys on various advanced legal claims for children, as well as adults. We were enormously pleased to have Cindy Villanueva, an associate at the firm, join our Board of Directors after successfully helping two abused, abandoned, and neglected children obtain permanent residency in the United States.

Many thanks to our old and new partners in ensuring that unaccompanied migrant minors have strong advocates in immigration court!
UPDATES FROM THE CHILDREN’S PROJECT!

By Jena Gutierrez, Children’s Staff Attorney

Our Phoenix office has been very busy this summer with a recent influx of kids apprehended while making the journey to the United States. The number of detained minors screened by the Children’s Project each month was, on average, over 50% greater between January and July 2013 than during the same period last year. The Children’s Project is charged with delivering “know your rights” talks, or “charlas,” and completing an initial legal screening for every minor who arrives in detention in Arizona. Kids who qualify for relief get a referral to an appropriate legal services agency or may be represented in court by our Children’s Project.

The increased number of detained children has led to various changes in Phoenix, including the opening of another detention facility with the capacity to house over 100 minors (bringing the total number of “beds” for children in the Phoenix area to 450). The Children’s Project itself has also grown, with the addition of four new positions in less than a year! Below, learn about some of our new staff, clients and the power of community partnership:

LAURA BELOUS
Laura Belous is our new Children’s Pro Bono Mentor, bringing us her expertise in both child welfare and immigration law. Laura is a longtime FIRRPie: a former law school intern, and the co-creator of our Letters to a Detainee storytelling project (available at www.firrp.org), Laura also worked as a Mental Health Fellow with the Florence Project for two years, assisting clients with serious mental illnesses in Eloy, Florence, and Phoenix. After leaving the Florence Project in 2012, she spent time as a staff attorney with the Pima County Office of Children’s Counsel. In that capacity, she represented over 450 children in dependency proceedings before the juvenile court and helped a number of noncitizen children obtain Special Immigrant Juvenile Status orders. We are so excited that Laura has joined our team again!

LAURA GUTIERREZ
Laura Gutiérrez is no stranger to the Florence Project either, although she brings experience from a different perspective. Laura was detained for one year and three months at the Eloy Detention Center, and it was there that she began more formal efforts in immigrant advocacy. Despite the toll that detention can take on the human spirit, Laura found strength to lend a hand to others along the way. In addition to researching and preparing her own case, she assisted other women in gathering evidence, writing letters to judges, and translating critical documents such as birth certificates. She received legal assistance from the Florence Project and she was released, and later hired by the Children’s Project in May 2013. Her advocacy continues every day—she attends court hearings and sits at the “respondent” table, just as she did when detained, but she now speaks on behalf of many children who are escaping violence or are simply fighting to survive. We are so happy that Laura has been able to join our team!

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT:
“JOSE” AND THE POWER OF A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

“Jose” is a wonderful kid and representative of the kind of case that the expanded Children’s Project can undertake. With just a few weeks til his 18th birthday, DHS detained Jose and he was facing removal to his home country. When the Florence Project met Jose, he decided to courageously fight his case for lawful permanent residency – courageous because part of his case, which normally takes months, had to be completed in less than three weeks in order for him to remain eligible for relief. Even if he accomplished that first phase, Jose would likely be transferred to adult detention to complete the remainder of his immigration case, as he had nowhere else to go. Luckily, with the help of Florence Project staff, everything fell into place for Jose. The Children’s Project reached out to the Phoenix Restoration Project – a community group of volunteers who support people in detention and those recently released – to ask if any of their volunteers would be willing to host Jose if ICE decided to release him when he turned 18. Within a week of Jose’s 18th birthday, the Restoration Project located a volunteer, “John,” who was ready to open his home to this boy whom he didn’t know. Jose was released on his birthday and has been living with John ever since. A few weeks later, he won his case and is now attending school, taking English lessons, learning how to cook, and working towards his dream of getting a degree and “being somebody in life.” We are incredibly grateful for the Restoration Project’s community support and for welcoming Jose with open arms.
**STAFF CORNER**

This summer has been a whirlwind of goodbyes, welcomes, and lots of hard work. As our beloved Lindsay Marshall left for Colorado and the fearless Lauren Dasse took her place as Executive Director, other friends and colleagues have also said their goodbyes. Very sorely missed is Michele Dando, our long-time Office Manager. Michele left the Florence Project at the end of August after a record 11 years of service! Michele was an incredibly helpful and supportive figure in the Florence Office, welcoming visitors and making sure that generations of new staff and interns learned the correct way to drink light beer (salty). From killing the many spiders that live in our office storage space while cleaning out old files, to making sure we all got paid every month, to keeping us in the good graces of the Town of Florence. Michele (and her amazing family) dedicated her many years of service to keeping the Florence Project a wonderful and functioning place to work. We will miss Michele, and wish her all the best going forward.

The rest of the Florence office has not escaped the transitions! Argentina Iniguez left her position as Development & Outreach Coordinator and was replaced by Dorien Ediger-Seto, formerly the Florence Legal Assistant. Ben Harville joined Charles Vernon and Erik Morrison on the Eloy team, while Melissa Rivera remained on the Florence Team holding everything together and welcoming Legal Assistant Stephanie Quintana-Martinez, previously an organizer with the Southside Worker Center and the Tucson Protection Network Coalition, and Legal Representative Luis Mancheno, a recent graduate of the Roger Williams School of Law.

We said goodbye to Samantha Williams in the early summer, and welcomed Laura Gutierrez and Angelica Canales as our two new Children’s Legal Assistants, while Golden McCarthy joined us from CUNY Law as our new Children’s Staff Attorney. Rounding out the Children’s Program, we are thrilled that Laura Belous re-joined our team as the Children’s Pro Bono Mentor.

We are excited for this fall and winter, as cooler temperatures return to our corner of the desert and our fantastic new staff members bring fresh ideas and energy to our work. Many thanks to Lindsay, Michele, Argentina, and Sam, and welcome to Stephanie, Luis, Laura G., Angie, Golden, and Laura B!

**A (NOT SO) SMALL VICTORY: THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION CAPS PRISON PHONE RATES**

A little-known but very significant impediment to our clients’ ability to fight their deportations is the prohibitively expensive phone system that they rely on to keep in contact with their families, and collect essential documents for their legal cases. Back in February 2013, the Florence Project submitted a letter to the Federal Communications Commission about this very issue as they considered a proposed rule change based on the Wright Petition, a reform that would require phone companies to base their prison phone rates for out of state calls on actual costs, rather than profit, and cap the rates at 25c per minute and prohibit connection fees. We were thrilled when we learned that the rule change was approved on August 9th with a 2-1 vote! The rule change, at least a decade in the making, regulates phone rates in order to prevent communication between inside facilities and the outside world from becoming prohibitively expensive. Although immigrant detention centers are technically not correctional facilities, the same companies provide (and profit from) telephone service in ICE detention as in prisons across the country. This means that not only do the rates and quality of phone calls vary dramatically between facilities, but also that immigrant detainees must rely on a prohibitively expensive privatized phone system to secure documents crucial to their legal cases.

It remains to be seen exactly how this will impact the rates in ICE detention centers in Arizona, and further reform is necessary to reduce the costs of in-state calls, which are still unregulated. However, we are excited for the progress and hope that it will alleviate at least a small part of the financial hardship that detention has on our clients and their families. The FCC’s acceptance of the Wright Petition is a long-awaited victory for many in the prison justice and immigrant rights community, and the Florence Project is proud that we were able to add our perspective, along with the hundreds of prisoners, family members, and advocacy groups that urged the FCC to act.

*LEFT* The notorious Mad-Dawg Dando — we miss you Michele!

*CENTRE* Tally Kingsnorth, Pro Bono Program Director Extraordinaire, with colleagues, Board Secretary Margarita Silva, Attorney Magdaly Fontes, and Justice Alan Paige after winning the Outstanding Young Lawyer Award from the State Bar of Arizona at their annual awards luncheon on June 21st, 2013.

*RIGHT* Mandatory fun! Our summer interns and staff take a break from visiting people in detention to enjoy a Diamondbacks game.
THE FLORENCE PROJECT RELIES ON THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF INDIVIDUALS, CORPORATIONS, FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, AND LAW FIRMS TO PROVIDE ITS MULTITUDE OF LEGAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES.

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INDIVIDUALS
TORCH OF JUSTICE SOCIETY
The Florence Project created the Torch of Justice Society to provide individuals with the opportunity to support the Florence Project at higher financial levels. Contributions of all sizes enable us to serve thousands of detained men, women, and children facing removal proceedings.

BENEFACTORS OF JUSTICE ($500 AND OVER)
Susan & Joseph Aparicio
John & Bonnie Bouma
Margaret R. Diaz & Gary Zehr
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Elias & Cecilia Esquer
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Lisa Gruber
Donna Jones
Patricia A. & David A. King
Carmelle Kniss
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Pearl Tang
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Jim Walter
Barbara & Richard Ward

We have listed contributions received between January 1 and August 31, 2013. Please contact us at firrp@firrp.org if you believe your name has been omitted in error or if you would like to make a change to how you are recognized in our newsletter.

Art from a person detained at Eloy
ABOUT THE FLORENCE PROJECT
The Florence Project’s work is carried out primarily through five programs: the Florence “Justice and Efficiency” Model, the Eloy Pro Se Model, the Detained Immigrant and Refugee Children’s Initiative, the Defending Immigrants Program, and the Integrated Social Services Program. As part of its direct legal services, the Project has created “Know Your Rights” videos and self-representation packets as an educational resource for non-profit service providers and detained people nationwide. Nationally, the Florence Project advocates for positive change in federal policies and practices towards those detained and it serves as a resource-development and training center for detention program “best practices.” The Florence Project undertakes its national advocacy through membership in the Detention Watch Network, a coalition of more than 100 nonprofit organizations that work with the 200,000 men, women, and children who are held in the U.S. annually as immigration detainees.

MISSION & VISION
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.

TO DONATE TO THE FLORENCE PROJECT:
Mail a check or money order to:
The Florence Project
P.O. Box 654
Florence, AZ 85132
Visit our website and contribute via PayPal:
www.firrp.org

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Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 654
Florence, AZ 85132
T: 520.868.0191 x105
F: 520.868.0192
www.firrp.org