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THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE FLORENCE IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS PROJECT

FALL 2011

GOT JUSTICE?

Why the Florence Project Matters

By Roxie Bacon

Roxie Bacon is a former immigration attorney, law professor, Arizona State Bar President, and Chief Counsel for U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services. She is also a longtime supporter of the Florence Project.

A lifetime of practicing immigration law, teaching it, developing policy for it and, ultimately, serving as Chief Counsel to Citizenship and Immigration Service, the federal agency dedicated to immigration, has taught me a critical lesson: without immigrants the United States would have neither its glorious past nor a hopeful future. Think about it—we would have no transcontinental transportation, no skyscrapers, or manufacturing and industry foundations, we would have no agricultural dominance or information technology revolution. We would also have almost no Nobel Prize or National Science Foundation winners, and our universities would have far less lustrous faculty and student bodies. Immigrants came to build America, often in harsh and hostile conditions, and stayed to become America, in all its bold and vibrant diversity.

As a nation we have not always been welcoming. Arizona today sits as the poster child for short-sighted treatment of people, documented or not, mostly from south of the Border, whose collective contributions have been overwhelmingly positive for our economy. By dehumanizing such persons, labeling them "illegals" and then eradicating not only their basic rights but those of their U.S. citizen loved ones, we now have a stymied economy, a divided community and politicians who nurture fear rather than understanding. This is no way to prosper.

Economists and demographers are united in concluding that, particularly in developed nations where the birth rates continue to decline, migration of an able and energetic work force that reflects the global realities of this century is imperative. The reality is that we cannot maintain either our national or state greatness without immigrants.

The Florence Project is one of the most important voices for the most vulnerable immigrants. Their work has stopped wrongful deportations allowing immigrants to remain in the United States, keeping families and communities intact. In case after case the Florence Project is the only assistance available for migrants who face deportation, a civil not criminal remedy for civil not criminal infractions. By injecting fairness into an otherwise indifferent system, the Florence Project keeps alive a basic national tenant: we will all be treated justly and equally. No one believes in that American Dream more than immigrants, papered or not, and the United States has never needed their strength and belief more.

Thank you for your past and future generous support of this important organization. Your contributions answer the voices of hate in a way that resonates across families, communities, our state and our nation.

Claudia, making pupusas in Tucson days after she was granted asylum and released from detention.

Musa, a refugee from Sudan, was released from detention after nearly two years. He is now reunited with his infant son in Phoenix.

FLORENCE PROJECT LAUNCHES FALL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN!

The Florence Project is on track to assist 9,000 detained immigrants this year. These are 9,000 men, women, and unaccompanied children in Arizona who - without the Florence Project - would have faced deportation without any legal assistance. Among these 9,000 people are mothers and fathers of U.S. Citizens, children, veterans, survivors of persecution, torture, and domestic violence, and longtime lawful permanent residents of the United States. None of these individuals have the right to appointed counsel, despite being detained and facing permanent exile from the United States.

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Luis was granted special immigrant juvenile status as an unaccompanied minor, which provides a pathway to U.S. Citizenship.

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Fall Fundraising Campaign

The Florence Project stepped into this breach more than 20 years ago, and has asked for your help to accomplish our mission since. We have seen our client base grow from 300 people detained on any given day in Florence in 1989 to more than 3,000 in Florence, Eloy, and Phoenix in 2011. Along the way – with your support - we have grown to better serve our expanding client base with their complex needs. Yet those who know this field and the Florence Project understand that while our impact is great, the need is greater still.

It is in this spirit that our Board of Directors has launched a special fundraising campaign. With a generous matching gift of $50,000 provided by our Board of Directors, we seek to raise another $50,000 from community members before the end of the year. Individual donations will be matched dollar for dollar by our Board's gift, allowing us to raise a total of $100,000.

How will we spend these funds? As you may know, the Florence Project operates on a very lean budget, with 94% of our funds supporting program services. This is made possible by our small, passionate, and dedicated staff who work long hours and earn one third of what they would make if working in the private sector. Recognizing that our organization is only as impactful as it can be because of our talented staff, all funds raised from this campaign will go directly to modest base salary increases and support for training and professional development opportunities. This investment to recognize and support our staff internally will allow us to continue to serve people externally with the highest quality legal and social service support.

You will soon receive an appeal letter in the mail asking for your contribution to support our campaign. You may also support us by enclosing a contribution with this newsletter, or donating online at www.firrp.org.

Please consider acting now and giving generously to our campaign to help us take advantage of this exciting matching gift and invest in the Florence Project's staff and future.

Music for Justice!

Join us for a Florence Project Benefit Concert!

Saturday, November 19th
6:00 PM (doors 5:30 PM)
KT and Repeat Offenders @ the Rhythm Room
1019 East Indian School / Phoenix / 602-265-4842
$20 advance / $25 door

KT and Repeat Offenders is a 12-piece, high energy rhythm and blues band that plays blues, 60's R&B, Santana, rock, and Motown music and are known as one of the Valley's most fun and infectious live bands. You don't want to miss them or Florence Project Board President Noel Fidel on guest trumpet! For more information visit their MySpace page or search for them on YouTube. Purchase tickets online at www.firrp.org or by mailing a check for $20 with the enclosed envelope. We'll mail you your tickets to bring to the show.

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Intern Reflection

By José M. León
2013 J.D. Candidate
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

As I was packing to go to the small town of Florence, Arizona the night after my last final exam, I wondered if I could make it through the summer in the Southwest. As a New Yorker, formerly Chicagoan, I was skeptical about the conservative reputation of the State and was concerned that my lack of knowledge of immigration law would make my experience sub-par. I was wrong.

Throughout the ten weeks that I worked with the Florence Project, I realized not only that there are plenty of people who care about the plight of the immigrant population in Arizona, but also that Arizona is a place full of wonderful people and landscapes.

As a first year law intern, I figured that I would be getting plenty of coffees for people in the office, helping attorneys with the most menial tasks that no one wants to do, or simply being at the mercy of my supervisor. That was, after all, what I used to do with my interns when I was in the corporate world. Once again, I was proven wrong.

I was assigned to the Eloy team, where I would be assisting the team with daily visits to the Eloy Detention Center. This year was somewhat different in Eloy because for most of the summer, there was only one staff attorney, rather than the usual two. This meant I was given the opportunity early on to present, under attorney supervision, the Know Your Rights presentations that inform the detainees of their rights and possible forms of relief. After those presentations we would have one-on-one "intakes" with those detainees that wished to learn more about their specific cases. Speaking with people from different countries and with different situations helped me understand that immigration law is not just about knowing specific immigration statutes. To be a good immigration attorney, it is important to be familiar with criminal laws of different states, decisions of the particular circuit in which the proceedings are being held, and also it is important to understand the exceptions, which turn out to be quite numerous, of immigration laws. It is not enough to know the law at present; a good immigration lawyer is an avid reader of new case law and is always waiting for any modifications of the existing statutes. As if that were not enough, there is also a human and psychological aspect to being in this line of work. The heartbreaking stories that one hears every day at detention centers across the nation could fill endless pages of a never-ending saga.

The Florence Project helped me internalize all of these feelings while at the same time allowing me to roll up my sleeves and get to work in the area of law that I am truly passionate about. I was able to assist the staff attorney writing motions and pleadings to immigration court, I got to observe Immigration Judges in action, I got to speak to government counsel and express my worries about a case I had just witnessed, I got to analyze adjustment of status cases, and I was able to assist in preparing a humanitarian parole case and a Casas bond case. By the time I realized it, my ten weeks in Florence were over.

Another great feature of the internship was the staff. Each person in the office made my time in Arizona spectacular. We enjoyed many great times together, including skydiving in Eloy, camping in Sedona, crossing the border at Nogales, hiking the Grand Canyon, holding chickens in Phoenix, riding monster trucks in Tucson and sharing dinners and lunches every day. As I sit in New York City writing this piece, I wonder – much to my surprise - if I could be an Arizonan. I can honestly say I had the best summer of my life.

Florence Project Summer 2011 Interns: Ashley Blum (University of Arizona), Ana Castillo (University of Arizona), Conor Gleason (Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law), Molly Kincaid (University of Arizona), José León (Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law), Claudia Vincze Turcean (University of Minnesota) and John Walters (University of Arizona).

Staff Updates

Since our last newsletter, we bid farewell to three colleagues and welcomed two newcomers. Eloy Staff Attorney **Rachel Kling** moved back to the east coast to join the Neighborhood Defender Service in Harlem, Asylum Fellow **Katherine Dick** completed her fellowship and is joining the Morgan Lewis & Bockius law firm, and Children's Staff Attorney **Alejandra Valdez** joined a private immigration law practice in Phoenix. In June, we welcomed new Eloy Staff Attorney **Eileen Sterlock**. Eileen made the move back to Arizona from Portland, Oregon where she interned with the Immigration Counseling Service and Executive Office of Immigration Review. In September, **Gladis Molina** joined us as our new Managing Attorney for the Children's Project. Gladis has worked as a pro bono coordinator with Kids in Need of Defense in Los Angeles and an attorney with ProBar in Harlingen, Texas. Thank you Rachel, Kate, and Ale, and welcome Eileen and Gladis!

Alé (far left) celebrates her asylum victory with her son, husband, friends, and pro bono attorneys Noel Fidel and Marki Stewart.

Recommended Reading

Several excellent media pieces and reports have been released about the impact of the Arizona detention and deportation system since our last newsletter. Florence Project staff and clients contributed to each of these pieces and we recommend them to anyone interested in advocacy and outreach around these issues.

» ***Disappearing Parents: A Report on Immigration Enforcement and the Child Welfare System,*** **University of Arizona (May 2011)**

» ***In Their Own Words: Enduring Abuse in Arizona Immigration Detention Centers,*** **ACLU of Arizona (June 2011)**

» ***Huddled Masses,*** **Phoenix New Times (cover story) (June 2011)**

Hats Off To Our Local Immigration Attorneys!

By Tally Kingsnorth, Pro Bono Coordinator

Private immigration attorneys in Arizona typically have a crushing caseload and many clients who are unable to make payments. Nevertheless, our local bar is so supportive of the Florence Project and almost never says 'no' to a request for assistance. The following are just a few examples of the generosity that our beloved colleagues have shown to us and our clients so far this year.

Last spring, **Judy Flanagan** began helping a single mother of five with her application for a visa as a victim of crime. Before Judy came on board, her client had endured eight months in immigration custody without an attorney and her children were declared dependent on the state due to their mother's detention. Judy persuaded law enforcement officials to sign her client's visa application and convinced the Immigration Judge to reduce her client's bond. With support from several American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Arizona Chapter members, we were able to raise money to pay her bond. She is now residing in a domestic violence shelter and pursuing reunification with her children.

Maurice Goldman is known as an indefatigable advocate locally and nationally for the passage of the DREAM Act. So, we naturally turned to Mo and **Victoria Trull** to seek a green card for a young man who came to the United States as a young child. Last month his client, the sole-caregiver to his disabled mother, was granted permanent residency status.

Vicenta Rodriguez-Banuelos always has at least one Florence Project pro bono case going at any time. At the request of the Florence Project, Vicenta accepted one of our most challenging cases yet. In what was a rare feat at the time, Vicenta had Citizenship and Immigration Service reinstate on humanitarian grounds an application filed by her client's deceased wife.

Luis Fernando Parra, a veteran of the Gulf War, instantly responded to our plea to help George Ybarra. George, like Luis, is a Gulf War Veteran and in all likelihood he acquired United States Citizenship through his grand-father, who was born in Tucson, AZ almost 100 years ago. George has been deported from the United States on numerous occasions even though the United States District Court of Arizona and several Immigration Judges have recognized that he is probably a citizen.

Matthew Green and **Jesse Evans Schroeder** often have the highest number of open Florence Project cases. With his background as Public Defender, Matt has been an invaluable resource to our staff attorneys who are learning about defending immigrants in criminal court. At present, Jesse is seeking legal status under the Violence Against Women Act for a victim of domestic violence and a visa for crime victims for a woman who testified at her abuser's trial.

Staff Corner

BECAUSE OUR FALL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN IS FOCUSED ON SUPPORTING OUR STAFF, WE WANTED TO SHARE THREE STAFF MEMBER PROFILES WITH OUR NEWSLETTER READERS TO GIVE YOU A SENSE OF WHO WE ARE.

MICHELE DANDO
OFFICE MANAGER
9+ years with the Florence Project

What is something about the Florence Project that most people don't know? I think people don't understand why the Florence Project exists or why we help people in detention centers, nor do they have thoughts about any rights these people may have. They don't know about what the people go through when coming to the United States. Society is society and it's hard for some people to adapt to change.

What achievement are you most proud of? My biggest achievement is that I am able to handle accounting procedures and the day-to-day operation of this office, which has doubled in size since I started! During my job interview, I was told that this position's main responsibilities were maintaining the financial database, staff payroll, and accounting policy and procedures. I was terrified because I was never good in math. During the first few months I was so nervous, but after nine years I know this stuff by heart and I'm pretty proud of myself.

What keeps you at the Florence Project all of these years? I stay because I believe in the cause and because I am able to speak about this cause to family members, to the community of Florence and others. Before I started here the Florence Project and its work was unknown to most people here, including me.

SARA LOFLAND
CHILDREN'S PRO BONO COORDINATOR
3 years with the Florence Project

What drew you to the Florence Project? I came to the U.S. as a young child and remember having little or no concept regarding differences in language, culture, etc. I remember feeling like an outsider, and not understanding why. I was drawn to the opportunity to work with children who find themselves in a very confusing situation, and try to explain what they are going through, attempting to empower them to feel they are in control of their situation.

What makes you stay? My wonderful colleagues. In such a high-stress environment it is nice to go to my little office and be excited to see my co-workers.

What achievement are you most proud of? Winning five Special Immigrant Juvenile Status cases, while working "part-time", and having returned from maternity leave only a few weeks earlier.

What is something about the Florence Project that most people don't know? I don't think most people understand just how limited our resources are. Also, we have a satellite office in Phoenix!

CHRISTINA VILLEGAS
FLORENCE LEGAL ASSISTANT
1+ year with the Florence Project

What drew you to the Florence Project? A strong commitment and interest in issues of access to justice and self-empowerment. A desire to focus on immigration and be more directly connected to and informed about the conditions and experiences of detained immigrants. Also, people I greatly admired and looked up to as professional mentors all had very formative experiences at The Florence Project.

What makes you stay? The daily interactions with clients. Working so hard with a client to keep his spirits strong enough to know he gave it a good fight. Feeling that if I keep myself in check and take care of me, I can keep providing the simplest things like a smile, an honest opinion, or interaction with someone who's been ripped of so much. I also value the connection and collaboration with other advocacy groups and various projects around immigrant rights.

What achievement are you most proud of? Recently leading the Florence team through a massive change in our operation and prioritizing to make sure clients don't get lost in the mix and that our resources are streamlined to improve our collaboration and efficiency.

What is something about the Florence Project that most people don't know? That we will do anything for free food! Also how much our staff commutes daily to work with people in all of the detention centers and shelters.

Florence Project Supporters 2011 (through aug. 31st)

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The Florence Project created the Torch of Justice Society to provide individuals with the opportunity to support the Florence Project at higher financial levels and supply donors with certain benefits at all giving levels.

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Florence Project Staff, October 2011

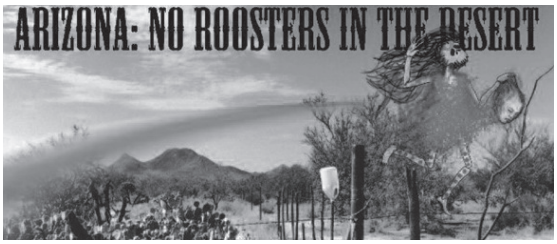
THE FLORENCE PROJECT EXISTS **BECAUSE:**

» Refugees and immigrants have legal and human rights

» Men, women, and children facing deportation have a right to be represented by counsel but not to a public defender system

» There is no other legal service provider for detained immigrants in Arizona

» Clients win their cases with the Florence Project's support



No Roosters – Back by Popular Demand!

"…equal parts tragic and magic…" – TimeOut Chicago

In 2010, Kara Hartzler penned **"Arizona: No Roosters in the Desert"**, a play based on field interviews of recently deported women who had trekked across the U.S. Mexico border. The play debuted in three cities (Tucson, Chicago, Mexico City) to sell out audiences and rave reviews. Luckily for those who missed it the first time, Borderlands Theater is bringing No Roosters back for special October performances: **Tucson (Zuzi's Theater, October 20-23)** and **Phoenix (ASU, October 29)**. For more information and to purchase tickets visit www.borderlandstheater.org.

Your Impact

PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A LARGER CONTRIBUTION SO WE CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR $50,000 MATCH OPPORTUNITY!

$100 =

Time for one staff attorney to meet with six detainees individually to prepare them for their final court hearings, where they are raising a defense to deportation.

$250 =

Government required fees for one detained child seeking special immigrant juvenile status, which provides a path to U.S. Citizenship.

$500 =

Time for our social services coordinator to prepare humanitarian parole requests to seek release from custody for ten asylum seekers.

$1000 =

Sixty hours of staff attorney time spent at detention centers or children's shelters screening clients for legal relief and assisting them with their cases.

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THE FLORENCE IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS PROJECT

FALL 2011

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.

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