



The Immigrant BEACON

IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

FALL 2016

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Our Mission:

The **Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project** helps low-income immigrants improve their legal status and works for more just and humane laws and policies affecting immigrants.



KIFAH
Abdulla

Activist, artist, teacher, volunteer: a voice in our community.

If you live in Portland, you may have heard of Kifah Abdulla. Perhaps you’ve heard him perform his original poetry in front of an audience. Maybe you’ve seen his original works of art in a local gallery. If you’ve heard of Kifah Abdulla, you know that he’s an activist, a teacher, a volunteer, and an important voice in our community. Kifah has built a home for himself in Maine, but his journey to the United States was not without personal sacrifice.

Early Life

Kifah was born in the mid 1950’s in Baghdad, Iraq. Growing up, he often thought of himself as an “International Citizen” as his mother was Kurdish and his father was Arabic. He was open minded and made a point to learn as much as possible about other cultures across the globe, often through literature and music. Kifah eventually attended the College of Science at the University of Baghdad and graduated with a degree in biology. He planned to continue to work as a scientific researcher after obtaining his degree, but those dreams came to an abrupt halt due to circumstances beyond his control.

A Difficult Path

The Iraq-Iran war sent Kifah down a new, unimaginably difficult path. The conflict of war was complicated and did not pair well with his social views and moral convictions. Nearly a decade after earning his degree, Kifah had endured compulsory service as a soldier and spent more than eight years as a POW in Iran. Following his harrowing experience, he traveled to the

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Legal Program Associate

How can we counteract the negative rhetoric in the media and national discussions about immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers?

Fear and misinformation are a dangerous combination. They lead to discrimination and isolation, creating a less cohesive community and eroding the core values we stand for as a country.



SUE ROCHE
Executive Director

Two things can help counter this momentum: empower the immigrant community so they can engage as equal participants and educate the public so they see immigrants through the lens of humanity and not through the lens of fear.

ILAP plays an important role in both of these efforts. Our core work is to help clients gain legal status, work authorization, and citizenship. Status enables someone to get a social security number, a driver's license, safety-net benefits, the security of knowing they will not be deported, and for those who gain citizenship, the right to vote. If these essential human needs are unmet, equal participation is not possible.

ILAP's systemic advocacy also helps empower Maine's immigrant community with better access to civic engagement. We work in collaboration with our partner organizations to preserve and improve laws and policies that impact immigrants in Maine. Our staff provide their expertise so that decision makers have accurate information when action is taken that will affect immigrants.

We also help to educate the public with truthful explanations of our immigration laws and by sharing the human side that we see every day in our offices. We educate through outreach to government agencies, service providers, schools, and the public; through interviews with the media; and by testifying before the state legislature and city councils.

ILAP is one small part of a larger community working to overcome the rhetoric of fear with a focus on humanity. We are grateful to work alongside many partner organizations and groups, to be supported by close to 200 volunteers, and for our dedicated donors and funders who ensure that we can continue to do this work. Thanks to all of you for your part in this important effort!

SUE ROCHE
Executive Director

Mark Your Calendar!

March 24, 2017

We are already looking forward to
CeleSoirée 2017, **Portland's best fundraiser!**

Check our website and Facebook page for
CS17 news in the coming months.

In the meantime, save the date:
March 24, 2017, will be here before you know it!



Kifah Abdulla

Continued from Cover

Netherlands as a refugee, where he lived for four years, separated from his two sons. As a young man, Kifah's life was not easy, but his spirit was resilient. He learned to express his devastating experiences through poetry, literature, and art.

"It's difficult to carry the weight of the label 'refugee' on your back. For a long time I lived in great fear with this burden—it was certainly a big theme in my life. But I knew I was in safe hands when I arrived in Maine."

A New Path

Kifah arrived in the United States in July of 2011, where he was reunited with his two sons. He learned about ILAP through some friends and soon made an appointment to speak with a lawyer in order to obtain his Green Card. In addition to gaining legal status, Kifah also knew that it was important to establish himself in Portland. He delved into Portland's art scene and focused on his writing, artwork, and poetry. Kifah also decided to volunteer with The Telling Room, where he mentors young writers and leaders. More recently, he became an Arabic Language instructor for students of all skill levels.

Citizen and Author

In June of 2016, Kifah returned to ILAP to attend a Project Citizenship workshop held in collaboration with Pierce Atwood—his next step to become a U.S. citizen. At the workshop, a lawyer helped Kifah complete his naturalization application for filing with the immigration authorities. Kifah became a U.S. citizen on September 16th during a Citizenship Ceremony held at USM.

"[Citizenship] is the greatest gift of all. I have freedom and I have my family and friends who love me. A huge burden has been lifted. I did not give up hope and now everything is clear."

2016 has been a big year for Kifah. In addition to becoming a

One Light, Many Candles



One Light, Many Candles — Pictured (l-r) ILAP Board member Ron Stegall, ILAP Executive Director Sue Roche, Rev. Betty Stookey, Noel Paul Stookey

DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

We have had a busy summer in development! Thanks to our friends at Congregation Bet Ha'am, Noel Paul and Rev. Betty Stookey, and Oak Hill Beverage for bringing a spectacular evening together June 9. The Stookey's **One Light, Many Candles** program was such a breath of fresh air given the political rhetoric and other divisive messages we are bombarded with every day. Thanks also to our donor who launched a pledge gift at that event, where our guests contributed enough to meet more than 60% of the match!

We are grateful to our online donors in July who helped raise the remaining amount of the \$10,000 match started in June as well. ILAP is thankful beyond words for this kind of support from the community.

ILAP is fortunate to have another matching gift in play for our annual appeal in November. Look for details in the mail, you could double the impact of your gift this year!

Throughout June, July, and early August, ILAP had the help of **Lily Woodward**, an intern from Bowdoin College, to coordinate stakeholder outreach for our strategic planning process. This included organizing and assisting at six community meetings with immigrant groups and surveys of donors and partner agencies. Lily's intelligence, interest, and dedication to this project provided ILAP with some deliverables that helped inform our way forward tremendously. Thanks Lily! The whole process has been exciting, informative, transformative and a little scary. We appreciate the focus and time of all who contributed and the partnership of **Maine Community Foundation's People of Color Fund** and **Community Building Grant**.

And in mid-August, ILAP started **weekly attorney visits to Lewiston** to help with an overwhelming number of asylum applications there. The community in Lewiston has been very accommodating and generous to help see this through. We want to thank the business community for setting the foundation, especially Androscoggin Bank, Lamey Wellehan Shoes, and Gene Geiger. And thanks to our local donors who understand the importance of this work for the future of their cities.

One more thank you—to our **Donor Spotlight author, Steven Biel**, for his words and his vision for ILAP.

citizen, Kifah published his first book, *Dead Still Dream*, which he wrote here in Portland. It's a dual language book that reflects on his experiences as a

refugee. He would like to thank ILAP for helping him achieve his dreams. He reflected, "With services like ILAP, we make the world a family." ■

BIENVENUE!

Willkommen, Welcome!

Welcome to ILAP's newest staff members!



Linnea Brandt

joined ILAP as the new Legal Program Assistant, a year-long placement through the

Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Linnea is a recent graduate of the College of the Holy Cross where she studied both sociology and religion. Originally from Rochester, NY, Linnea is looking forward to learning more about immigration in Maine. We are happy to have you, Linnea!



Meg Moran, Esq., joined ILAP's staff in August as a staff attorney for asylum clients in Lewiston. In addition to

her part-time position at ILAP, Meg has been a member of ILAP's *Pro Bono* Panel and has assisted ILAP clients as a volunteer attorney since 2012. Meg also represents clients of the Immigration Unit of Greater Boston Legal Services as a volunteer attorney and previously worked with another non-profit organization, New England Justice for Our Neighbors, where she represented asylum applicants living in the Portland, Maine, area and others seeking immigration legal services in the greater Boston, Massachusetts, area.

BANKWANA!

Farewell and Well Wishes!

This summer, ILAP was fortunate to have three student interns from Bowdoin College.

Evan Baughman came to ILAP through the Community Matters in Maine Fellowship, part of the McKeen Center for the Common Good. He assisted with TPS applications and worked in the Forms Clinic. Evan is grateful to our lawyers for "answering endless questions and ensuring that [his] experience was both educational and rewarding."

Isaac Merson, a Bowdoin Faculty Scholarship recipient, worked mainly in the Forms Clinic, but also assisted with Naturalization appointments. Isaac most enjoyed learning about the impacts of immigration policies and laws on individuals.

Lily Woodward, a part-time intern, worked closely with the Development Director to assist in ILAP's Strategic Planning process. Lily compiled and assessed comprehensive survey data from ILAP's donors and coordinated all of the focus groups with immigrant community members which will help ILAP better understand access to and impact of our services.

We wish Evan, Isaac, and Lily the best of luck as they enter their final year at Bowdoin!

Deirdre Kerins, our Jesuit Volunteer for 2015-2016, has relocated to Boston. Deirdre will be sorely missed. We can't thank her enough for her patience, dedication, and organizational skills. We wish her the best of luck as she starts fresh in a new city. Thank you for working tirelessly to support ILAP's mission, Deirdre!

Marni Maynard worked closely with ILAP attorney Phil Mantis, as an Asylum Extern through the University of Maine School of Law. She spent much of her time researching country conditions and case law but also assisted with outreach and intake throughout the summer. Marni has always been passionate about human rights and social justice and she hopes to get involved with immigration law again in the future. We wish Marni the best of luck as she completes her final year in law school!

Felix Hagenimana spent his summer at ILAP as a MAPIL Fellow through the University of Maine School of Law. Felix has a strong interest in human rights and immigration and enjoyed learning more about the intricacies of immigration law during his time at ILAP. Felix assisted with Friday Intake and helped clients with work permits during our EAD Clinic, in addition to conducting legal research. We are grateful for Felix's diligence and enthusiasm.



Reduce Reuse Recycle

Please pass along your copy of *The Immigrant Beacon* after you've enjoyed it, and remember to recycle. ILAP cares.

■ CLE for a Cause

ILAP staff designed and presented a **3-hour Continuing Legal Education** training for over 80 Maine attorneys and judges. Registration fees for the training were donated to Maine's Campaign for Justice.

■ Summer Outreach

ILAP offers Outreach services to other Maine service providers on immigration basics and the laws that particularly affect Maine noncitizens. These events allow ILAP staff to connect with the staff of our sister agencies and to answer questions. This summer, **ILAP did outreach events for staff at Tri-county Mental Health in Lewiston, the Frannie Peabody Center in Portland, and Maine Department of Health and Human Services** child protective staffs in Lewiston and Portland.

■ JFON Video Series

ILAP, The University of Maine School of Law's Refugee and Human Rights Clinic and Justice For Our Neighbors will be completing production of **a video series intended to provide guidance to pro se asylum seekers in Maine.** The video is a five-part series and will be available online once production is complete. It will be available in French and English.

A big thank you to David Bruggink, the videographer, for generously donating his time and expertise to this production. We also thank Cheryl Francis Bubar and Hamet Ly for their work in translating the script and serving as on-screen talent.

Also, thank you to Emily Atkins and Daniel Keenan of the University of Maine School of Law for their hard work on the production and for also serving as on-screen talent!



Remembering Peter DeTroy

At ILAP, we were deeply saddened by the death of **Attorney Peter DeTroy.** Peter was a member of ILAP's *Pro Bono* Asylum panel and encouraged members of his firm to participate. Peter's leadership in the legal community, his dedication to his clients, and his commitment to equal access to justice were inspiring. He will be greatly missed throughout our community.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT Steven Biel

On August 12, Khalid Jabara, a 37-year-old Lebanese-American, was shot dead on his front porch in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He

was shot by his neighbor, Stanley Majors, a man who for years had harassed him and his family, calling them "dirty Arabs," "filthy Lebanese," and "Mooslems." (In fact, the Jabara family are Lebanese Christians.) Earlier this year, harassment escalated into violence when Majors hit Khalid's mother with his car. (Thankfully, she recovered from her injuries.) But despite the family's pleading, he was released on bond and the local Tulsa police took no meaningful action to protect the family.

This tragedy is just the latest in an escalating pattern of anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant violence that has been sweeping the country, whipped up by race-baiting politicians. In the last year, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant violence has spiked to levels not seen since the days after 9/11. Mosques burned. Students beaten. Small businesses attacked. This summer here in Maine, notes threatening violence against Muslims were posted all over a Westbrook apartment complex.

The reason for the surge in hate crimes is clear. You see, when leaders demonize immigrants and asylum-seekers as disease-carrying "aliens" ripping off taxpayers and bringing terrorism, we cannot be surprised when some people take matters into their own hands.

Khalid Jabara's parents brought him to the U.S. in the early 1980s. His brother is a lawyer, and his sister works in marketing. Khalid himself ran the family catering business with his mom. The Jabara family is the living embodiment of the American dream. Like so many other millions of Americans, they came to the United States to build a new life. We're living in an era of anti-immigrant backlash like we haven't seen in decades. I fear that unless people of conscience speak out, donate, and do everything else we can, it'll get worse before it gets better.

That's why I can't think of a more important organization to donate to than ILAP, the organization in Maine doing the work day in and day out to welcome the immigrants who make America the great country it is.

■ Update on General Assistance for Asylum Seekers and Other Immigrants

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)'s final rule implementing Public Law Chapter 324 (PL 324). PL 324, has gone into effect and is impacting asylum seekers. **The rule interprets who will qualify for general assistance benefits, and leaves out many whom the law was intended to cover.**

Under the new DHHS rule, noncitizens will qualify for general assistance if they are either lawfully present or if they have an application for an immigration benefit that is pending with immigration authorities (like an asylum application). "Lawfully present" is defined in the rule to include individuals who are "qualified aliens" which includes permanent residents; individuals with refugee or asylum status, in addition to other limited statuses; individuals who are in valid nonimmigrant status (like a visitor or student visa); or someone who has been paroled into the country for less than one year.

The rule notably leaves out asylum seekers who are still working to prepare their asylum applications, but whose temporary visas have expired. Portland has decided to provide supplemental benefits to those who fall into this gap in the rule, but some municipalities are cutting off all benefits for individuals still working on preparing their applications once their visas expire.

This new rule is impacting ILAP's asylum program.

Asylum seekers are anxious to file their applications quickly in order not to lose their safety-net general assistance benefits and they are hesitant to take the time for their applications to be properly prepared by an attorney (which can take over 100 hours). This increases the risk that applications will be filed with errors and that asylum cases will be denied and lead to deportation. We are responding to these concerns with increased outreach and guidance on filing a *pro se* application. We will continue to tweak our *pro bono* project to address the changing environment while we work with our partners on advocacy efforts to try to address the issue on a systemic level.

■ Provisional Waiver Expanded

U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) has issued **a rule that will help some families spend less time separated during the immigration process.** The rule expands eligibility for a "provisional waiver," which allows individuals to wait in the U.S. while USCIS is processing their application for a waiver instead of spending years in their home country while the case is processing. A waiver is required when someone is eligible for permanent residency ("Green Card" status) but requires special permission because they spent time in the U.S. without legal status. This is called a waiver of inadmissibility.

The new rule does not provide a new path to legal status. It is an administrative fix that helps more families stay together during the process, which is often delayed by immigration case backlogs.

Over the years, ILAP has represented many clients who required a waiver to gain permanent residency. For example "Manuel" entered the U.S. as a child with his parents. Later, he met and married his wife, who was a legal permanent resident, and they had two children together. Manuel's wife suffered from a serious medical condition that would have made it very difficult for her to move to another country and she relied on Manuel for help.

Under the immigration laws at that time, Manuel had to return to his home country of Honduras to apply for permanent residency because he originally entered without a visa. Once in Honduras, he had to wait for two years while immigration authorities processed his "waiver" application to pardon the time he spent in the U.S. without status. Finally, he was able to return to his family in Maine when the application was approved. But his family faced great hardship during that time. Under this new rule, Manuel could have waited in the U.S. with his wife and children during the time that USCIS was processing his application.

How You Can Help ILAP

When you support ILAP, you support diversity in our communities, a brighter economic outlook for our state, and social justice for all Mainers. We can't do what we do without you! By donating to ILAP, you help fuel our essential work in Maine. **It's easy!**

- Write a check to "ILAP" and mail it to our address on the back page
- Donate online at ilapmaine.org, just click the **Donate Now** button
- Become a recurring donor with monthly or quarterly donations
- Give a gift of stock by contacting Olivia Orr (oorr@ilapmaine.org / 699-4406)
- Support ILAP's Strategic Plan or discuss a planned gift by contacting Loretta Prescott (lprescott@ilapmaine.org / 699-4407)

Meg Moran, Esq. met with community leaders in Lewiston earlier this summer, to discuss how ILAP can best serve the needs of immigrants in the area who may need immigration assistance.



■ Lewiston

The *pro bono* program would like to welcome Meg Moran, Esq., our new staff attorney who will work primarily out of Lewiston. Meg has been traveling to Lewiston once a week for consultations with asylum seekers residing in the Lewiston/Auburn area. Prior to joining our staff, Meg has volunteered with ILAP for years as a *pro bono* attorney and previously worked as a staff attorney with Justice for Our Neighbors, where she also represented people going through the asylum process. We are excited about our new presence in Lewiston and look forward to expanding our services there. We are grateful to the Lewiston Adult Education center for their hospitality in allowing Meg to use their space to meet with clients, and to Bates College for its collaboration in providing work study students from the French Department as interpreters for this project.

■ Successes

Thank you to Jamie Wagner, Esq. for a stunning success in the Boston Immigration Court. His advocacy in the immigrant community has been invaluable and he's an esteemed *pro bono* attorney.

■ Trainings

A training covering the **representation of asylum seekers** before the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services was held on June 30. Thank you to Jennifer Archer, Esq. for her presentation on substantive asylum law and to Eileen Frazier, Esq. and Arnie MacDonald, Esq. for their insight on what it's like to be an ILAP volunteer attorney. Attendees certainly appreciated your unique and valuable perspectives! Thank you to AVESTA for allowing ILAP to use their conference room for this training.

ILAP will be holding another such **training on October 14th at 9:00 AM at Verrill Dana**. The Honorable Paul Gagnon and Court Administrator Robert Halpin of the Boston Immigration Court will once again join us for this training which will cover the representation of asylum seekers before the Immigration Court. We'd like to thank Judge Gagnon and Mr. Halpin as they have both routinely offered their thoughtful insight at our *pro bono* panel trainings.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Louise Stone, Forms Volunteer



ILAP depends heavily on volunteers, who all play a crucial role in assisting ILAP staff members to better serve our clients. **For almost two years, Louise Stone has offered her skills to ILAP as a committed and dependable volunteer.** Louise learned about ILAP's services during her time at Maine Medical Center, where she worked as

an LCSW, a position from which she has recently retired. Through her work there, she came to understand some of the struggles that many immigrants and refugees face upon arriving in Maine. Her commitment to social justice, coupled with a desire to continue to serve her community, drove Louise to seek a volunteer role at ILAP.

Originally from NYC, Louise feels fortunate that she

was able to grow up in such a diverse city, surrounded by people from all walks of life. She came to Portland in the mid 1980's, a time in which Portland was not very diverse, and has since watched the city change. She strongly believes that immigrants have played a large part in helping Portland transform into a more vibrant, welcoming, and exciting city. Louise believes that it's important to learn about other cultures, and hopes that all Mainers will one day recognize the valuable perspectives and talents that immigrants bring to our communities.

Initially, Louise assisted with Friday Intake, meeting with potential clients to gather basic information about their legal situations. Last year, Louise stepped in when she was needed to cover the front desk which is the first point of contact for clients when they come to ILAP. More recently, she has become involved with the Forms Clinic. Louise has great respect for the work that ILAP does and looks forward to continuing to broaden her skills as a volunteer.



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ILAP Services

“INTAKE” for new clients or former clients with new matters, takes place every Friday by appointment.

Appointments for Friday Intake can be made any weekday except Wednesday by calling the ILAP office at **207-780-1593** or by coming to the office between 9 and 5. Friday Intake appointments can be done in person or by phone. **Everyone must first have an Intake appointment** before consulting with an ILAP attorney or getting help in our Forms Clinic.

■ ILAP offers extended attorney consultations on immigration legal issues each month in Portland and Lewiston, as well as bi-monthly in Milbridge, for those who have gone through Intake. For those who cannot travel to those locations, we offer consultations by telephone or Skype. ILAP also offers emergency consultations for clients referred by other service providers and for those with pressing issues of safety. ILAP attorneys may also provide full representation to vulnerable clients with complex cases before Immigration hearing officers and courts.

■ ILAP’s Forms Clinic helps people to understand, fill out, document, file, and follow the progress of their immigration applications. The Clinic also assists applicants who must progress through additional complicated steps on their way to a final result.

■ ILAP assists asylum seekers to find lawyers through its Asylum *Pro Bono* Panel. ILAP also collaborates with the Justice for Our Neighbors program and the University of Maine School of Law to offer regular classes for asylum seekers who have no lawyer and are filing their own asylum applications.

■ ILAP offers education and outreach programs, by request, to organizations and service providers on a range of immigration topics. We take part in training programs for legal, medical, law enforcement, or other personnel who work with immigrant communities. We also participate in advocacy to improve laws and policies that affect Maine’s immigrants.

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