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[www.ILAPmaine.org](http://www.ILAPmaine.org)

## 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.



## Trading Skyscrapers for Trees

**Describing her immigration experience**, Natalia explains “My journey hasn’t always been easy, but I know that life only gets better from here. I now have the freedom to work anywhere and more time to focus on enjoying life with my family. I am thankful for each day and I look forward to exploring the many doors that ILAP has opened up.”

Nearly sixteen years ago, Natalia\* found herself adjusting to an unfamiliar place. Along with her husband and young children, she had traded skyscrapers for trees. Gone were the big city lights; the dark stillness of small town life intimidated her. Although the shift from California to Lewiston, Maine came with some culture shock, this was not the first time Natalia had experienced a significant change in her surroundings.

Born in El Salvador, Natalia came to the U.S. when she was a child. She was sent to live with family in California, believing that in order for Natalia to have greater opportunities for growth and success, she would need to leave her home country behind. Growing up in California, Natalia put herself last, and spent her time outside of school helping out around the house. She often felt isolated, as she was raised to believe that Latinas must clean, cook, and care for their families above all else. Her relationship with her family in California was strained, and she longed to see her family in El Salvador.

In high school, she met her future husband. While they got to know each other, she noticed stark cultural differences between the two of them. She described him as a typical American student – he enjoyed watching sports and boxing after school. Their contrasted upbringings did not hinder their relationship, however, and eventually the pair got married and started a family. As their family grew, they knew that they wanted to raise their

\*not her real name

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**“Maine, the Way Life Should Be.”** We have all seen this sign as we cross into Maine, the placard that welcomes those returning home, and visitors alike. Maine is a special place, and that is why we have chosen to make our lives here. Some of us can trace our Maine roots back to Native cultures, or to great-grandparents, while others of us chose to move here later in life, and some are newly arriving in the country. No matter—this is our home. Together we are stewards of Maine’s future. What a privilege and a responsibility.



**SUE ROCHE**  
**Executive Director**

So, what do we want “Life in Maine” to be like in 25 years? This is a question we have been pondering here at ILAP, as we embark on strategic planning. In order to plan for ILAP’s growth over the next five years we must have a vision of where we want to be in 25. What kind of community do we want? What can *we* do to help get us there?

We want a welcoming community, filled with diversity and engagement, inclusion and opportunity, and enviable economic, educational and cultural growth. People and businesses from around the country and the world will be drawn to live in the vibrant demographic and physical beauty of this state.

Our immigrant community will be central to this growth. Refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants will continue to travel here, eager to use their energy, drive, and youth to join in building the Maine that we all want, and to create sustainable success that lifts everyone in the state.

ILAP will be their first step on this journey, because without legal status you cannot work, drive, take public transportation, obtain identity documents, qualify for safety net benefits, or move on – to successfully start your own business, become a productive part of a durable economic and civic life, and create a state with the kind of profile that attracts more success. It all starts with legal status.

When we complete our strategic planning process later this year, we will have a vision for the next five years. This summer we are reaching out to our community of clients, service providers, donors, business community partners, and funders to find out what is important to them, and for feedback on ILAP services and accessibility. If you would like to share your thoughts, please contact us at [Ilap@ilapmaine.org](mailto:Ilap@ilapmaine.org) to share your ideas and feedback.



SUE ROCHE  
Executive Director

**2015 | ILAP by the Numbers**

**1,952 Mainers** received direct legal assistance from ILAP

ILAP clients originated from all **16 counties in Maine**

**1,630 individuals** were served through ILAP’s Immigration Clinic

ILAP staff and pro bono attorneys provided full legal representation to **322 individuals**

ILAP served clients from **95 different countries**

1,183 immigrant community members and service providers attended ILAP outreach events

**140 pro bono attorneys** donated **4,008 hours of time valued at \$925,562** representing asylum seekers

## Trading Skyscrapers

Continued from Cover

children closer to her husband's mother, who had moved to Maine. They packed their belongings and moved their family across the country.

Besides her husband's family, Natalia didn't know anybody in Maine. Although her childhood was not without hardship, she still missed the familiarity of home. At first, she felt like she turned heads as she walked around town. Many of her neighbors had never met a Hispanic person before. However, Natalia did not let this deter her from settling into life in Lewiston. She found a waitressing job and quickly learned that she had the ability to speak openly with people about their perceived cultural differences. Rather than being judgmental, she realized that many folks were interested and intrigued above all else, and were "open to learning more about people who might not look like them."

A few years ago, Natalia faced a new hurdle – her work permit expired. She knew that she would not be able to help support her three children if she couldn't work. After carving out a space for herself in a new community, she felt a sense of isolation. Unsure of where to turn, she sought advice from a friend who had recently immigrated to Maine, who told her about ILAP.

ILAP was able to take her case. Her lawyer explained the immigration process to Natalia. Natalia's case was going to take some time, but her lawyer was confident that ILAP would be able to help her stay and work in Maine. Earlier this year, Natalia received her green card through the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA).\* She is now able to live and work in Maine without worry. Now that she is a Legal Permanent Resident, Natalia feels freer and



**What an amazing night it was!**

**CeleSoirée 2016**, March 18<sup>th</sup>, was ILAP's 12<sup>th</sup> annual celebration of immigration through the arts and our most successful fundraiser to date. Just as important to the evening was the gathering of people who support ILAP at the beautiful Ocean Gateway terminal on Portland's waterfront. We welcomed 14 community members whose tickets were donated by generous other guests, and once again hired caterers from immigrant-owned restaurants who served mouthwatering food. Volunteers included a group of wonderful teenagers from Casco Bay High and a group from Peak's Island among the crew responsible for making so much happen in the room that evening.

The African drum and dance performance by Akwaaba Ensemble was a crowd pleaser and included some dance along songs where both students and professionals showed their moves. Through the donations from many of the area's finest establishments, we offered overflowing raffle baskets that were very popular, including a Fine Wine Basket donated by our Board of Directors featuring a case of wine and accessories. And the raffle sellers wore the gorgeous, colorful original designs of Adele Ngoy.

The support of our sponsors is essential to the evening's success, as well as the volunteers, committee and our generous guests. Thanks to everyone for making CeleSoirée a night to remember! ■

more comfortable. Today, Natalia's children are 8, 11, and 17 years old. She can't wait to "continue to be a strong role model for [her] children." In thanking ILAP, Natalia expressed

that she would like to extend a special thank you to Andi Summers and Kate Chesney for their support. Her green card has brought her a sense of relief. ■

\*NACARA was enacted in 1997 and arose out of a class action lawsuit for Central American asylum seekers who were systematically denied asylum.

# BIENVENUE! BANKWANA!

Willkommen, Welcome!

Farewell and Well Wishes!



NADINE TWAGIRAYEZU



LISA SCALI



LESLIE SILVERSTEIN, ESQ.

■ **NADINE TWAGIRAYEZU** | Nadine joined ILAP's staff in March 2016 as the Legal Program Assistant. In addition to working part-time at ILAP, Nadine is a Reservations Agent at Auto Europe in Portland. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Portland Community Health Center and has volunteered with Justice for our Neighbors (JFON) as the Interpreters' Coordinator since 2012. Nadine has extensive interpreting experience and is fluent in French, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, and is conversational in basic Swahili.

■ **LISA SCALI** | ILAP welcomed Lisa Scali as a board member in January. Lisa is the Director of Marketing & Investor Relations for Treetops Capital, a local impact investment firm. She is fluent in French and provides volunteer translation and interpretation services to assist ILAP lawyers with their case work. She is also very involved in the francophone community in Portland. Lisa is thrilled to be able to help ILAP in advocating for the rights of Maine's immigrants.

■ **LESLIE SILVERSTEIN, ESQ.** | Leslie owns and operates her own firm in Portland, specializing in disability cases. Leslie is committed to providing pro bono legal services. She is a member of ILAP's pro bono panel as well as the Volunteer Lawyer's Project domestic violence pro bono panel, and the Justice Action Group pro bono committee. Leslie received the prestigious ABA Pro Bono Publico Award in 2015—as one of five recipients in the country, and the only solo practitioner to be selected. Leslie joined the ILAP Board because she passionately believes in improving legal status for all new Mainers.

■ **ADELE NGOY** | Adele is a fashion designer as well as the founder and president of the non-profit organization Women United Around the World. As an immigrant who has lived in Portland for 17 years, she is eager to share her experiences and advocate for those who have newly arrived in Maine. Adele is deeply committed to ILAP's mission and excited to use her organizational skills to bridge connections between Portland's community leaders. She strongly believes that when people are given a chance to flourish, anything is possible.

ILAP said a fond farewell to three board members since our last newsletter.

■ **Warren Evans, Lori Londis Dwyer, and Malual Mabur** stepped down from the Board of Directors and moved on to new adventures! We wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors and will be eternally grateful for their commitment to ILAP's mission.

■ Bon voyage to **Petra Lee** and **Carolyn Leigner**, our two law school interns. Petra assisted our Asylum Coordinator with asylum cases, drafting documents of support and researching country conditions. This summer she plans to serve as a Peer Mentor for the Maine Law PLUS Program, which gives historically underrepresented students a chance to explore careers in law. Carolyn worked in ILAP's Forms Clinic.

## 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.



## Gerda Haas Award



ILAP Board member Marie Umarange, former ILAP Board member Maxwell Chikuta, ILAP Executive Director Sue Roche with award and ILAP Board member Leslie Silverstein.

## Gerda Haas Award

ILAP is very appreciative of the Gerda Haas Award for Excellence in Holocaust and Human Rights Education and Outreach for 2016 from the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine, given June 5<sup>th</sup> at their annual lunch.

## World Refugee Day



Portland celebrated World Refugee Day on June 4<sup>th</sup> with a festival at King Middle School. This annual event commemorates the strength, courage, and resilience of refugees in our communities.

Maine College of Art (MECA) has extended the celebration with an exhibit called **Art in Exodus**, a

storytelling project that features the work of five refugee artists. The exhibit will be on display until June 24<sup>th</sup>.

## Phoenix Chorale

On April 30<sup>th</sup>, the Phoenix Chorale held a free concert in support of ILAP at St. Luke's Cathedral in Portland. The group, newly formed in 2014, is dedicated to promoting social justice through song.

Their special performance celebrated Portland's unification as a community by bringing forth music from different cultures across the globe. ILAP is grateful to all who attended for the voluntary donations that totaled \$1,200.

## Project Citizenship

Through a grant from Project Citizenship, ILAP collaborated with Pierce Atwood to conduct our first citizenship workshop. ILAP staff trained Pierce Atwood attorneys and paralegals on naturalization basics and how to complete the naturalization application. During the workshop, Pierce Atwood attorneys helped ten clients apply for citizenship. The applicants were pre-screened by ILAP. ILAP's grant with Project Citizenship supports our citizenship program, including the workshop. Project Citizenship is a nonprofit agency that works collaboratively with community-based partners, including ILAP, to help eligible, legal permanent residents overcome barriers to becoming U.S. citizens. Once eligibility has been determined, those who would like assistance completing their naturalization applications can receive application assistance free of charge.

## Milbridge Outreach



ILAP Senior Attorney Barbara Taylor, Machias Savings Bank's Sean Daye, and ILAP paralegal Sean Douglas.

## Milbridge Outreach

Thanks to grants from the Maine Justice Foundation's ESO Endowment Fund and Machias Savings Bank, ILAP has expanded our outreach in Milbridge. Instead of traveling to Downeast Maine once per year, staff members are now able to conduct bi-monthly outreach visits. Many residents who were once seasonal workers have now become established in the community, working in the seafood, construction, apple picking, and wreathing industries. Regular visits have allowed us to offer extended and more accessible drop-in hours to those who may need our services. We are grateful for **Mano en Mano's** generosity and partnership, as they have allowed us to use their office space during these visits.

## DHHS Rule Leaves Out Some Asylum Seekers and Other Vulnerable Groups

Some of ILAP's most vulnerable clients will be ineligible for general assistance benefits under a new rule issued by Maine's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

**Asylum seekers working with their lawyers to prepare asylum applications will lose eligibility after their temporary visa status expires.**

The immigration laws recognize how long it takes to prepare an asylum application, and give applicants one year to apply even if their temporary status has expired. ILAP *pro bono* lawyers will be faced with the difficult choice of filing their clients' applications prematurely with the risk of denial, or allowing their clients to become homeless. Asylum seekers will be more likely to file applications without a lawyer and without taking the time to properly prepare their cases. This will result in more cases drawn out in a lengthy immigration court process, and more cases denied due to avoidable mistakes.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, DHHS issued a final rule implementing Public Law Chapter 324 (PL 324). PL 324 expanded general assistance benefits to "those who are lawfully present and those who are pursuing a lawful process to apply for immigration relief." The legislative intent was to include those preparing their asylum applications for filing. Senator Amy Volk verified this in her testimony before DHHS during a hearing on the proposed rule. Despite her testimony, and that of other advocates including ILAP, the final rule was issued more narrowly to exclude asylum seekers who are in the process of preparing their applications.

Other vulnerable groups will be also be left out, because the rule interprets "lawfully present" more narrowly than intended. The rule leaves out vulnerable groups like children qualified under President Obama's DACA Program, certain victims of torture, and some domestic violence victims. As this newsletter goes to press, there is uncertainty about whether any municipalities will choose to provide benefits to those who are not covered by the DHHS rule.

### Immigration Fees to Increase

The fees for many immigration applications are proposed to increase. Some of the fee increases include: work authorization applications to increase by \$30 to \$410; the applications for someone married to a U.S. Citizen to gain residency would increase by \$270 to \$1,490; and the fee for proof of citizenship through a Certificate of Citizenship would increase by 95% to \$1,170. A new partial fee waiver for naturalization applications would be available for individuals with income greater than 150% but not

more than 200% of poverty. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) published the proposed fee increases in the Federal Register on May 4<sup>th</sup>. The comment period ends on July 5, 2016, and the increases will likely go into effect this fall. Since USCIS is almost entirely funded by immigration application fees, and not through Congressional appropriations, the application fees are high and usually increase every couple of years.

### Supreme Court Ruling Will Impact Mainers

In June, the Supreme Court will issue a decision in *United States v. Texas*. The ruling will determine whether the President's expanded DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and DAPA (Deferred Action for Parental Accountability) programs will go forward. The programs would expand temporary work authorization for some children who arrived in the United States at a young age, and for some parents of U.S. Citizen and lawful permanent resident children. ILAP conducted extensive statewide outreach and eligibility screening after the President announced the executive action programs in November of 2014. We identified many individuals who would qualify under the programs, and we are prepared to provide outreach, advice, and application assistance once the programs go into effect.



### Reduce Reuse Recycle

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

## PRO BONO PANEL UPDATE

### ■ Pro Bono Panel Successes:

Congratulations to the following *pro bono* lawyers, whose clients were recently granted asylum:

**Paul Greene, Esq.** of Global Sports Advocates, LLC

**Neil Fishman, Esq.**

**David Kreisler, Esq.** of Terry Garmey & Associates

**Susan Hopkins, Esq.**

**Robyn March, Esq.** of Lambert Coffin

**David Sherman, Esq.** of Drummond Woodsum

**Leslie Silverstein, Esq.**

### ■ Pro Bono Panel Trainings

A training covering the representation of asylum seekers before the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services was held on November 5, 2015. ILAP would like to extend **a huge thank you to Verrill Dana** for graciously hosting this event.

**ILAP will be holding another such training on June 30, 2016 at the AVESTA conference room.**

On **October 14, 2016**, The Honorable Paul Gagnon and Court Administer Robert Halpin of the Boston Immigration Court will once again join us for a training regarding the representation of asylum seekers before the Immigration Court. ILAP and our volunteer attorneys are quite thankful that Judge Gagnon and Mr. Halpin have routinely presented at our *pro bono* panel trainings. Their knowledge is certainly invaluable to all us. These trainings are open to any Maine attorneys interested in joining our *pro bono* panel.



## Remembering Cynthia Dresden



ILAP's long-time *pro bono* attorney Cynthia Dresden passed away on January 22nd. Cynthia was a solo practitioner with an office in Brunswick, Maine. She handled immigration matters and was a *pro bono* attorney on ILAP's asylum panel for many years. She represented dozens of asylum seekers and was well liked and respected by her clients. Cynthia was a kind and thoughtful advocate and a trusted attorney in the legal community. She will be missed by her colleagues and clients.



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Joann Bautista

Forms Volunteer



**Joann Bautista** began volunteering for ILAP in February 2016. She spends the majority of her time with the Clinic, meeting with clients to fill out forms. In addition to her work with the forms clinic, she also does Spanish translations and prepares packets for clients to send to USCIS.

As a daughter of Mexican immigrants in a rural, mostly-white town, Joann saw firsthand the

ways in which immigrants are often underrepresented and oppressed. By the time she obtained her degree in Journalism and International Studies from the University of Iowa, her passion for human rights and social justice had grown. Upon graduating, she worked at an immigration law firm which motivated her to attend law school.

Joann has now completed her first year at Maine Law and is interested in pursuing a career in Immigration Law.



**Volunteer Appreciation Event** | Mary Allen Lindeman of Coffee By Design, Sue Roche, Skeek Frazee, Mark Swann of Preble Street

**ILAP staff, pro bono panel members, and volunteers gathered for our annual Volunteer Appreciation Party on February 10<sup>th</sup>.** Our volunteers devote their time and energy to help ensure that ILAP can achieve its mission.

ILAP is deeply grateful for their support and dedication.

**Pro Bono Firm of the Year:** Pierce Atwood

**Pro Bono Attorney of the Year:** Lowell Turnbull, Esq.

**Intake Volunteer of the Year:** Anna Lopez Tous

**Clinic Volunteer of the Year:** Amber Attalla

**Development Volunteer of the Year:** Chris Kast

**Community Partner Award:** Preble Street

**ILAP Hero:** Skeek Frazee

**Business Community Partner Award:** Coffee By Design  
*Thank you to the Local Buzz in Cape Elizabeth for donating their space, as well as delicious appetizers!*



## IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

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## DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

ILAP is fortunate to have generous supporters who are essential to the organization meeting our mission every single day. Since we don't qualify for most federal funding, ILAP relies on grants and individual funding to help keep our excellently managed budget on track.

### *We can never thank those who support us enough, but let's try:*

**Matching Gifts:** ILAP received two matching gifts so far this year, one from the Cotsirilos Family Foundation and one from an anonymous donor. Together they account for \$30,000 that needs to be matched by new or increased gifts this year, which makes them worth \$60,000. Thank you!

**New Grants:** ILAP has been awarded or extended grants from the Maine Women's Fund, Bank of America Settlement Agreement, Broad Reach Fund, Key Bank and the United Way of Greater Portland so far this year. We have applications pending at all times and are always looking for new funding sources. *Thank you!*

**CeleSoirée 2016:** Sponsorship of our annual event is robust but in the past few years, ILAP has also been on the receiving end of some great generosity from our guests at the event. This year we had a goal of raising \$20,000 from our friends who attended with a partial match of \$5,000 from Imad Khalidi and Auto Europe if we met it. And we DID! So \$20,000 got us \$25,000 that evening. *Thank you!*

#### **How You Can Help**

ILAP has a Donate button on our website ([www.ilapmaine.org](http://www.ilapmaine.org)) that you can use anytime of the day or night. Whether it's for five or fifty thousand dollars, your donation is important and we are always available for a conversation or to answer questions. One of our newer initiatives is Planned Giving options. ILAP has always accepted gifts of stock or other investment vehicles, but we have recently completed a Gift Acceptance Policy that allows us to accept different types of Planned Gifts, such as bequests and others. Contact Loretta in Development for more information if you are interested in supporting ILAP in this way: 699-4407. And...*thank you!*