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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.



Our clients feel that Maine communities care about them and want to help.

The Long Road Ahead:

An Interview with ILAP Asylum Outreach Attorney Felix Hagenimana

In the spring and summer of 2019, hundreds of individuals seeking asylum arrived in Maine from the southern border in the span of just a few weeks, prompting the City of Portland to open a temporary shelter at the Expo Center. With an outpouring of support from the community, ILAP’s Asylum Team, led by Asylum Program Director Jennifer Bailey, implemented a rapid response and hired Felix Hagenimana in the new role of Asylum Outreach Attorney.

Since July, Felix has been coordinating legal orientations and initial procedural assistance for individuals with asylum cases in immigration court, including the families who were staying at the Expo Center and have now relocated across Maine. In this interview, he talks about their legal needs so far and the long road ahead of them.

What legal needs did you see immediately after families arrived in Maine?

In the beginning it was very chaotic. Our immigration system is very complicated for anyone. But for those families who came from the southern border, it is even more complicated. Part of the work that we had to do is give people an idea of what their paperwork means and help them understand where they are in their immigration process. We also assist with

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ILAP is investing resources to expand our asylum services so we can provide legal guidance and full representation to more asylum seekers...



SUE ROCHE
Executive Director

This summer, as a result of this administration’s inhumane policies at the southern border, more than 400 new asylum seekers arrived in Portland in the span of just a couple of weeks. Maine welcomed these arriving families with an outpouring of support from individuals, communities, organizations, and state and local governments. ILAP is proud to have been a part of this effort.

With robust financial and volunteer support, ILAP has responded swiftly to provide legal orientations and ongoing procedural assistance to meet this urgent need while continuing work on our ongoing cases.

We are especially grateful to the Maine attorneys who have stepped up to join our *Pro Bono* Panel in recent months, and to the other volunteers, donors, and supporters who have recognized that without legal status, our new neighbors will not be able to fully integrate and build their lives in Maine.

Like thousands of others seeking asylum, this group now faces a long immigration process that is complicated by new federal policies and procedures making it more difficult to obtain asylum protection. They also face various legal scenarios with their cases being sent to different immigration courts around the country, requiring careful navigation to get to the point where they can submit an asylum application and begin the wait for work authorization and their hearing before a judge.

Recognizing the multi-year and complex nature of these cases, ILAP is investing resources in the expansion of our asylum services so we can provide legal guidance and full representation to more asylum seekers, including those who arrived this summer and others who have come to Maine from the southern border.

In this newsletter, you can read more about our work with asylum seekers and immigrants throughout the state. If you would like to stay informed on immigration and ILAP updates as they happen, **sign up for our “Golden Door” monthly email newsletter** at signup.ilapmaine.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

SUE ROCHE
Executive Director

The Long Road Ahead

Continued from Cover

completing forms so that people can move their cases forward and avoid procedural complications.

One example is that people need to provide the government with an address where they can be reached. You can imagine how difficult this can be for people who are moving all the time. You can receive a deportation order and the only reason being that you were not able to be reached at your last address on file.

What legal services is ILAP providing for asylum seekers with cases in immigration court? We assess and explain their immediate legal situation, such as assisting them with the change of address or requesting to transfer their case to the nearest immigration court. We provide ongoing community workshops (there are many scheduled this fall—check our website for upcoming dates) and meet with people individually for more in-depth consultations. Many people do not yet have cases in the system. They need to check in with ICE and immigration court regularly to see if they have an upcoming court appointment; it can be very tiring and stressful. Due to our challenging immigration system, people feel helpless a lot of times.

I came here in 2010 in almost similar circumstances and, eventually, I was able to work at night and go to college and then continue to law school. It may seem very hopeless in the beginning, but it is important not to rush things as that can hurt their cases. I tell them that if they can be patient, things can get better. I stay in solidarity with our clients and guide them through the very long, complicated asylum process.

What questions do you hear most often?

“When can I be allowed to work?”

“How can I find an attorney?”

People want to work immediately. They want to provide for their families here and at home, so I always get asked about work authorization. The asylum process does not let people work for many months, so you can imagine how depressing that can be for people who have the skills, ability and motivation to work. There are hundreds of people who are not going to be allowed to work for some time, and therefore they cannot afford things like a private lawyer. And ILAP is the only organization that provides free legal assistance for people in the asylum process.

The Long Road Ahead / Continued on Page 7

DONOR SPOTLIGHT



Photo by: Tom Couture

Goodfire Brewing Co.

“From the beginning, we always wanted to do more than just beer. We wanted to serve our community,” says Goodfire Brewing Co.’s Operations Manager, Kelly Scharf, about their approach to philanthropy.

“So when the news broke about the asylum-seeking families staying at the Expo, we knew we had to do something to show our support for their journey and welcome them,” Events & Community Outreach Coordinator, Seyha Chea, said.

The result was *Asylum*, a music showcase on September 7th, that benefitted ILAP and the Maine Immigrants’ Rights Coalition (MIRC) in our legal and advocacy work with asylum seekers.

For their first foray into throwing a fundraiser, Goodfire enlisted the help of their entire team, a group of enthusiastic volunteers, and an energetic emcee. They recruited four bands who donated their time and talent to entertain the crowd throughout the evening. And, reaching out in partnership to local businesses, received 42 donated raffle items valued at more than \$8,000.

For Seyha, the highlight of the night was “seeing the amount of support and energy that the people of Portland brought. It was so positive.”

“Everyone was proud to be a part of it,” echoes Kelly.

In the end, *Asylum* was a resounding success and brought in more than \$10,000!

Now, Goodfire plans to make benefit events a regular part of their work. And Seyha’s message for other local businesses who want to make a difference in their communities? “If we all just did a little bit, think about how much we could do.”

Thank you, Goodfire, for your generosity and dedication to Maine’s immigrant communities!

Rapid Response for Asylum Seekers

In June, *Pro Bono* Panel members and students from UMaine Law's Refugee & Human Rights Clinic generously volunteered their time to help the families staying at the Portland Expo Center and other local shelters understand their legal situation and change their address with immigration. ILAP is incredibly grateful for their support with this rapid response, which ensured that asylum seekers quickly received the legal assistance they needed to navigate our increasingly complex immigration system shortly after their arrival in Maine. Thank you!

Successes

- After years of tireless advocacy and an immense investment of time and financial resources, Berman & Simmons attorneys Alicia Curtis, Adam Arguelles and Dov Sacks won an asylum case in immigration court for a Burundian couple who had to flee their country for political reasons.
- Maura Melley, Esq., successfully stepped in to represent a Djiboutian survivor of female genital mutilation. USCIS was attempting to terminate her asylum status and Maura was able to prove that the grounds were erroneous. Her client now has a pending application for permanent resident ("green card") status and will be able to stay together with her family in safety.
- Drummond Woodsum Attorney Toby Dilworth won a complicated adjustment of status case for a woman from Somalia who needed a waiver for criminal convictions. Toby made a compelling argument in Boston Immigration Court and the judge approved the case. His client can now remain in Maine with her US citizen children and husband who runs a small business employing nearly a dozen people.

Trainings

In July and September, Michelle Gentry of ILAP's Asylum Team provided affirmative asylum trainings for *Pro Bono* Panel members to hone their asylum skills and learn how to present the strongest possible case before the USCIS

Asylum Office. A big thank you to Bernstein Shur for hosting September's event! Please keep an eye out for future trainings.

In October, we welcomed Ilana Greenstein, Esq., Senior Technical Assistance Attorney with the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), for a defensive asylum training. Graciously hosted by Pierce Atwood, Ilana explained how to file and win a defensive asylum case in the Boston Immigration Court. She also assured our volunteer attorneys that they have what it takes, even if they're not normally a litigator.

Community Workshops

Felix Hagenimana, ILAP's new Asylum Outreach Attorney, spent the summer at the Portland Expo Center and in various southern Maine locations to reach out to individuals with asylum cases in immigration court. In these workshops, he provided vital information and answered questions about the status of their cases and next steps in the legal process. He will continue this work throughout the fall with workshops on the defensive asylum process and eligibility, submitting an asylum application, and representing oneself in immigration hearings.

ILAP also teamed up with students from UMaine Law's Refugee & Human Rights Clinic to provide six informational workshops for individuals who are applying for asylum on their own but are not yet in

immigration court. Special thanks to Hope Acts and Portland Adult Education for hosting these sessions!

An up-to-date list of ILAP's upcoming asylum workshops, for

both affirmative and defensive cases, is available on our website at ilapmaine.org/asylum-self-help.

Are you a lawyer?

Many of Maine's asylum seekers are proceeding with their cases on their own because there are not enough lawyers to provide free legal representation for everyone who needs it. An asylum seeker is five times more likely to win their case in immigration court if they have a lawyer, and the result can often mean the difference between life and death for themselves and their families. To find out more about joining ILAP's *Pro Bono* Panel, contact Asylum Program Director Jennifer Bailey at jbailey@ilapmaine.org.

"I am in awe of [my clients'] strength, resilience, and hopefulness...My *pro bono* work is truly the most important and rewarding thing I have done as a lawyer, and I enjoy my regular work. I am so grateful to ILAP for providing me the training and support to be able to do this work."

—Volunteer Attorney

Advocacy Victory!

ILAP is proud to announce that LD 1596, "**An Act To Enhance the Long-term Stability of Certain At-risk Youth**," has been enacted into Maine law! ILAP worked with UMaine Law, ACLU of Maine, Maine Business Immigration Coalition, and expert immigration and family law attorneys to get this bill drafted and passed. LD 1596 fixes the age gap between Maine and federal law regarding the age of someone applying for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). SIJS is a pathway to permanent status for vulnerable abused, neglected, or abandoned noncitizen children in the United States.

While federal immigration laws provide SIJS protection for children under age 21, there was previously no way for a child between 18 and 20 in Maine to get the special state court order needed to apply for SIJS. The enactment of this law means that dozens of young people in Maine will be able to access permanent legal status and move forward with their lives without fear. It is truly life-changing legislation.

Census Victory!

In June, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the **citizenship question will NOT be included on the 2020 Census**. In a complicated, multi-part decision, the Court determined the Department of Commerce did not have a good reason for adding the citizenship question. Make no mistake, this is a huge victory. Getting an accurate count in the 2020 census is critical to Maine communities, and many people would have been too scared to answer, regardless of status. This is a win for democracy and all Mainers.

Expanded Expedited Removal

In July, **the administration announced that it is significantly expanding the number of people in the United States who can be deported without a hearing**. As this newsletter goes to print, a federal court has issued a preliminary injunction against this new rule, so it will not yet go into effect. Known as "expedited removal," this fast track process for deportation applies to some undocumented individuals. This procedure previously only applied to individuals who had been in the United States less than two weeks and were in the "100-mile zone" along the border (which includes the entire state of Maine). Now, the government is attempting to extend expedited removal to the entire country for some undocumented immigrants who have been in the country up to two years.

We are concerned that any person who is stopped by immigration enforcement officers, anywhere in the country, would have the burden of proving to the immigration official that they are not subject to expedited removal or that they have been in the United States for two years. Many expedited removal decisions by a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) employee are not reviewable by a judge, which we fear may lead to erroneous deportations.



There can be no doubt that at least part of the intent of this change is to increase fear and anxiety in immigrant communities. If you would like to request Know Your Rights outreach about this change, please go to ilapmaine.org/o-r.

Victory for Immigrant Families!

In a wave of rulings before the October 15th start date of the administration's new public charge rule, several federal courts issued preliminary injunctions preventing the rule from going into effect.

"Public charge" is a test to see if someone is likely to become dependent on specific government programs. The government uses this test when an individual applies for a family-based green card or certain visas. If this new rule had been allowed to go into effect, it would have had a devastating impact on millions. We should be defined by how we contribute to our communities—not by how much money we have.

While the fight is far from over, these rulings mean that the new, wealth-based test for family immigration will not take effect anytime soon. Families should continue to use programs to which they are entitled without fear.

We are still worried about the chilling effect—that is, people taking themselves off of life-saving programs out of fear of jeopardizing their status. Providing accurate information is the best way to counter the administration's harmful intentions. ILAP has partnered with Maine Equal Justice to produce community education materials, which can be found at ilapmaine.org/public-charge.



INDIA STREET SOCIETY members immerse themselves in *A Shared Space: Lewiston*

On October 16, ILAP welcomed our most committed supporters to the US Customs House in Portland for our 9th annual India Street Society Gathering. Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and refreshments generously donated by Harbor Fish Market, RSVP Discount Beverage and Whole Foods Market. They then had the opportunity to view *A Shared Space: Lewiston*, an immersive 360° film created by Daniel Quintanilla, Shuab Mahat and Hilowle Aden.

After the 2016 election, Daniel approached Shuab and Hilowle, who grew up in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp and are now raising families in Lewiston, about creating a virtual reality experience rooted in their lives. The idea was to document being young fathers living in Maine against the backdrop of political upheaval and rising anti-immigrant sentiment.

"I live, at least mentally, in both the US and Mexico," Daniel shared, "so I'm always trying to think of ways to bring up topics and themes that relate to those who are living in a place where they might be thought of as from 'away,' whatever that may mean."

Wearing special headsets, India Street Society members weaved between the different scenes in *A Shared Space: Lewiston*, such as breakfast at Shuab's house and a Travel Ban protest at Portland jetport. When viewed together, these moments invited guests to ask questions about the spaces we inhabit and reflect on what we lose when we are out of contact with one another.

As Daniel explained: **"Virtual reality can transport people to a place so they can experience it from the point of view and perspective of another.** In this case, there is a level of intimacy because Shuab and Hilowle took cameras to places where we wouldn't normally be allowed to go."

Building on the success of *A Shared Space*, a collection that also includes the films *At the Periphery* and *Maine to Dadaab*, Daniel and Shuab would like to expand to help more filmmakers use virtual reality to tell stories from their communities. You can view their work, and access a free download of *A Shared Space: Lewiston*, at sharedspacevr.com.



■ **The 2019 Hon. Edmund S. Muskie Access to Justice Award** presented to ILAP's founding Executive Director. **On May 29, Beth Stickney, Esq., was honored with the 2019 Hon. Edmund S. Muskie Access to Justice Award.** Beth was recognized for her leadership in advancing access to justice for immigrants in Maine, as ILAP's founding Executive Director and for her current role as the founder and director of the Maine Business Immigration Coalition. Congratulations, Beth, and thank you for everything that you have done to advance access to justice in Maine!

■ **ILAP attorneys Alice Kopij and Michelle Gentry attended the American Immigration Lawyers' Association national conference in Orlando** and brought back a week's worth of trainings and seminars on video to share with legal staff and *pro bono* attorneys. Michelle also travelled to Nashville for a removal defense training to learn more about defending clients in immigration court.

■ In August, **Asylum Program Director Jennifer Bailey presented at the annual meeting of the American Bar Association's Commission on Immigration in San Francisco** on the legal needs of asylum seekers in Maine.

■ Each year, **ILAP hosts the Mexican Consulate** for a day so that Mexican nationals in Maine can access consular services without traveling to Boston. The Consulate processes passport renewals and other identity documents. This year the Consulate used ILAP's office on June 15 and ILAP staff took time out of their Saturdays to ensure that everything ran smoothly.

■ On September 19, **Staff Attorney Melissa Brennan presented at "The Intersection of Forced Migration and Human Trafficking,"** a daylong training and forum convened by Catholic Charities and Preble Street to raise awareness and build knowledge among local community leaders, social service providers, law enforcement and others.

■ In July, ILAP's two **DOJ Accredited Representatives, Treva DeMaynadier and Christina Starr, attended a three-day workshop in Manchester, NH on family-based immigration** and how to navigate these cases during a time of increased enforcement. They also toured the National Visa Center in Portsmouth, NH, which is not normally open to the public.



Mark your calendar for CeleSoirée 2020!

Join us on **Friday, March 27** for ILAP's 16th annual celebration of immigration through the arts. Ticket sales start in January—**follow @ILAPMaine on Facebook for updates.** We look forward to celebrating with you!

The Long Road Ahead

Continued from Page 3



What's happening now? What's next?

As families have relocated from the Expo to communities across Maine, many local people have been supportive and welcoming. Our clients feel that Maine communities care about them and want to help even if the federal immigration policies are complex and distressing. People have been so excited to have their kids start school; these are children who may have had no access to education before. I can say the support they have received locally is overwhelmingly positive.

But because it has become more difficult to seek asylum over the last two years, ILAP is seeing many people who are in the removal process and need to make their case in immigration court. Once you listen to their stories and hear what people have had to endure, it is truly heartbreaking. We know that people are going to need a lot of legal help and assistance for a long time. We hope that ILAP's supporters and other people of goodwill can continue to support them in this process. ■

BIENVENUE!

Wilkommen, Welcome!



Francine Ngabu joined ILAP in October as our Legal Program Assistant! Francine was a prosecutor and judge in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and co-founded and was the Deputy National Coordinator for the League for Peace and Human Rights in Kinshasa. She is the General Secretary of the Congolese Community of Maine and speaks French, Lingala, Swahili, Kikongo and Ciluba.



In July, **Felix Hagenimana, Esq.**, became ILAP's new part-time Asylum Outreach Attorney. Felix has previously worked as a linguist, a Bible translator and a consultant for the British Broadcasting Corporation. While at UMaine Law, he was a student attorney in the Refugee & Human Rights Clinic and interned with ILAP. Felix has his own immigration practice in Portland and speaks French, Kirundi and Kinyarwanda.



Blanca Santiago joined ILAP's Board this summer. Blanca is a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) with Portland Public School's Multilingual & Multicultural Center. She is a longtime advocate of social justice for immigrant, refugee, asylee and undocumented people in the state of Maine and has worked on several immigration reform campaigns.



ILAP also welcomed **Thomas Douglas, Esq.** to our Board. Tom is an experienced litigator who has successfully argued cases in state and federal courts throughout Maine, including the Maine Supreme Court. He has his own practice in Westbrook and serves on the Boards of My Place Teen Center and Maine Inside Out.



Diane Mutagoma Diane is currently working with CIEE as an Administrative Coordinator. Prior to moving from Rwanda, she worked for the U.S Embassy for twelve years as a Protocol / Event Coordinator. She has also served as an Administrative Assistant to the Rwandan Prime Minister and in the Ministry of Defense. She has a bachelor's degree in Travel and Tourism Management and an International Diploma in Office Management and Administration.

BANKWANA!

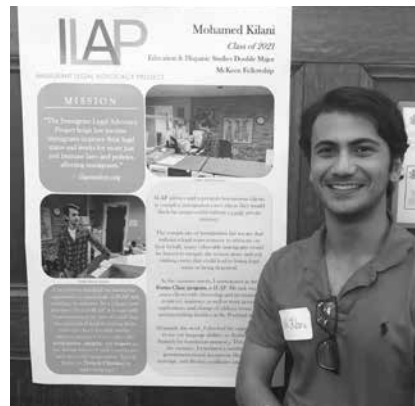
Forewell and Well Wishes!

Since our last issue, ILAP has said goodbye to Lewiston Interpreter/Legal Program Associate **Vanessa Stasse**, Legal Program Assistant **Sarah Corsico** and Jesuit Volunteer **Rachel Schwarz**. We thank them for their dedication to ILAP's work and mission. They will be greatly missed by staff, volunteers and clients alike!

Riikka Morrill, Esq., also recently left our Board after serving for nine years, including in leadership roles as secretary, vice-president, and chair of the governance committee. As a prior ILAP staff member, Riikka's passion for

ILAP was unparalleled. Thank you for everything, Riikka!

We had an impressive team of interns this summer: **Mo Khilani** from Bowdoin College's



Mo Khilani

Maine Community Fellowship, **Maggie Loeffelholz** from Boston University School of Law, and **Erin Peterson** and **Elliot Brake** from Bernstein Shur's Summer Associates Program.

STAFFNEWS

Treva DeMaynadier has been accredited by the Department of Justice and promoted to Immigration Forms Program Supervisor. She can now represent clients in matters before the Department of Homeland Security. Well done, Treva!

Melissa Brennan, Kate Chesney, and **Barbara Taylor** have been promoted to the role of Senior Staff Attorney in recognition of their expertise and leadership at ILAP.



AROUND 207

Seasonal Workers and 7,000 Miles of Outreach

ILAP's Maine Rural Project was busy this summer, helping plan and taking part in seven resource fairs for hundreds of Maine's seasonal agricultural workers. ILAP attended two fairs in Kennebec County for dairy and vegetable farm workers, and five fairs in Washington and Hancock counties for blueberry workers.

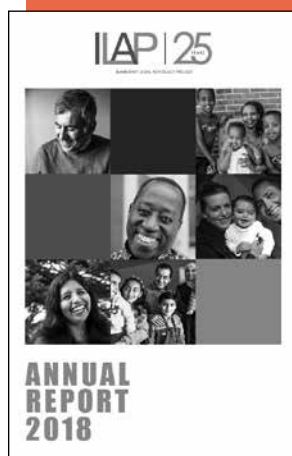
These fairs give ILAP an opportunity to share information and answer questions in places where seasonal workers gather to access local resources and support services. As immigration policies and rules change dramatically, they generate wide-spread confusion and uncertainty in the immigrant community. ILAP staff are playing an important role in publicizing and clarifying these changes for Maine immigrants, as well as for service providers and concerned residents state-wide.

The Rural Maine Project is now wrapping up its pilot year, having covered almost 7,000 in-state miles in eight rural counties from York to Aroostook, where it conducted outreach events, took part in service provider sessions and provided dozens of individual legal consultations.

2018 Annual Report

Congratulations, all!
ILAP's most recent Annual Report is now available on our website at ilapmaine.org/financials.

Learn more about our impact in 2018 and the many supporters who make our work possible.



STAY INFORMED:

■ Visit signup.ilapmaine.org to receive ILAP's "Golden Door" email updates on laws and policies affecting immigrants in Maine.

Our Highest Demand in Lewiston: Asylum

At our Lewiston office, asylum remains the area of highest demand, including meeting with families who stayed at the Expo over the summer to change their address with immigration and explain how to prepare to apply for asylum.

To help meet this need, this fall we welcome interns Olivia Giles from Bowdoin and Emma Wheeler from Bates, as well as nearly a dozen Bates students who will provide French interpretation to ILAP clients throughout the school year.

On September 23, ILAP participated in the Lewiston-Auburn Community Resource Fair, hosted by Pine Tree Legal Assistance and held at the Lewiston Public Library. As one of more than thirty local organizations in attendance at this lively event, we were able to meet many community members and spread the word about ILAP's services in Lewiston.

In October, we also hosted a Lunch & Learn for local members of our *Pro Bono* Panel. Thank you to Berman & Simmons for hosting this time networking and discussing updates in asylum law, case strategies, and case preparation.

How Can You Help ILAP?

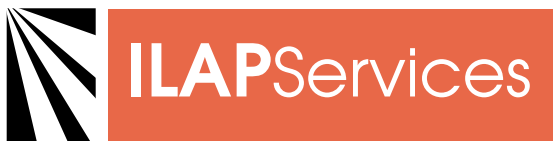
Join us in fighting for the rights of Maine's immigrants! Make a gift to ILAP by:

- **Send a check** to PO Box 17917, Portland ME 04112 (gifts of \$300 or more include India Street Society membership)
- **Visit ilapmaine.org to donate** or begin a monthly gift
- **Transfer a gift of stock** to ILAP; contact Danny at dmuller@ilapmaine.org for instructions
- **Make a legacy gift.** Call Laura at (207) 699-4407 to learn more.



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INTAKE for new clients, or former clients with new matters, takes place by appointment.

Appointments for 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. 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 with immigration forms..

■ ILAP offers extended attorney consultations on immigration legal issues 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 helps people to understand, fill out, document, file and follow the progress of their immigration applications. We also assist 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 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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