

## Inside this issue:

A Message from Our Executive Director..... 2

Board of Directors ..... 2

Supporter Spotlight ..... 3

*Sigh Gone*: India Street Society Celebrates ..... 4

Anti-Racist Resources ..... 4

*Pro Bono* Panel & Asylum Update ..... 5

Legal News & Advocacy..... 6

ILAP During the Pandemic ..... 7

Around 207..... 8

Volunteer Program..... 8

Bienvenue! Bankwana! ..... 9

CeleSoirée 2021..... 9

ILAP Annual Report..... 9

Get Legal Help ..... 10

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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.



Ben McCanna, Portland Press Herald

## Francine Ngabu: From ILAP to the Wider Community

**F**rancine Ngabu, ILAP’s Intake Paralegal, is a familiar face around Portland. At ILAP, she is a valuable resource for clients, guiding them through the intake process, providing support, and answering questions – all in six different languages. “By the fact that I’m there, I’m helping people a lot because I understand them very well, I have the same background and the same culture,” says Francine, who holds a law degree from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and immigrated to Maine in 2011.

Recently, Francine collaborated with other ILAP staff to launch a multilingual online intake system, making it even easier for immigrants seeking legal help to connect with ILAP. Supervising Attorney Melissa Brennan says, “Francine is an enormous asset to ILAP. Her language skills, legal training and knowledge, compassion, and humility are among the many strengths she brings to her role.”

“My pleasure, my joy is help[ing] others,” shares Francine, whose commitment to helping her community extends far beyond ILAP. She volunteers her time to serve as General Secretary for the Congolese Community of Maine (COCO Maine) and President of the Maine Association for New Americans (MANA), among other projects. In all of her roles, she draws on her lived experience and professional knowledge to support local immigrant communities.

**Francine Ngabu** / Continued on Page 3

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### We have a vision of a future in which our systems provide real justice and equity for all.



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

The global pandemic, and public outcry in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many other Black people killed by police, have turned 2020 into a call to action for systemic change. ILAP has joined many other people, organizations, businesses, and public entities in committing ourselves to internal reflection and external action.

Racism permeates our immigration laws and their enforcement. Black immigrants and other immigrants of color face the racial injustices of our criminal justice, education, labor, and healthcare systems. As a result, they also have a more difficult path towards legal status and citizenship.

A race-based traffic stop can lead to deportation, family separation, and sometimes a life-threatening return to your home country. Being furloughed from a job can mean losing the opportunity to keep your spouse and children with you in the United States.

At ILAP, we will continue to help clients navigate the complexities of the immigration system that we have. At the same time, we will work with Black and immigrant-led organizations and other partners towards structural change. We have a vision of a future in which our systems provide real justice and equity for all. Life will be better for everyone as we live up to the true ideals of our country.

While our offices remain closed to the public right now to keep staff and clients healthy, we continue to help clients remotely. In this newsletter you can read about our work to provide important information to migrant farmworkers in rural Maine, our virtual asylum trainings in multiple languages, and a new online intake system that makes it easier for clients to request an appointment with an ILAP lawyer.

To stay informed on immigration updates, and to access ILAP's online intake system, new advisories and self-help materials, visit our website at [ilapmaine.org](http://ilapmaine.org). As always, you can also sign up for our monthly "Golden Door" email newsletter at [signup.ilapmaine.org](http://signup.ilapmaine.org) and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Roche".

SUE ROCHE  
Executive Director

## Francine Ngabu

*Continued from Cover*

Shortly after moving to the Maine, Francine connected with other Congolese immigrants through COCO Maine. “The community helped me to fit in and feel at home,” she says. Now, as the organization’s General Secretary, she’s helping others feel at home too.

COCO Maine supports a network of over a thousand Congolese immigrants across the state, helping newcomers find resources and build community. COCO Maine responded quickly last summer when a large group of families seeking asylum arrived from the southern border and this spring when the COVID-19 pandemic spread to Maine. They are important partners to ILAP, helping us share legal information among immigrant communities.

This fall, COCO Maine collaborated with a Jewish organization to organize a diaper drive for families (see cover photo). “I don’t think we even realized how important it was for the community,” says Francine about the diaper drive. “At the distribution I was so surprised by the number of people.”

Francine also serves as the Board President of MANA, an immigrant-led organization that promotes the social and personal empowerment of immigrants in Maine through mutual sharing of resilience-building skills and stories, with a specific focus on the impact of individual and collective trauma.

“So many times, the immigration process makes people feel unseen and unheard,” says Danny Muller of ILAP. “Francine recognizes the importance of everyone’s stories and their right to dignity.”

Despite the hardships 2020 has ushered in, Francine remains hopeful. “In order to get to tomorrow, we need to fight today. That’s my motivation,” she reflects. “That’s why I’m involved in all this work in helping people, to empower them, to be strong.”

ILAP is part of a larger community and each of our staff members has their own extensive network of connections, reminding us of our community’s collective strength. In Francine’s case, she’s able to connect immigrants seeking help at ILAP with support networks like COCO Maine and MANA, while spreading the word about ILAP’s immigration services to people she meets in her volunteer work.

“A few years ago, I was not liking to be in newspapers and things like that,” shares Francine. “But now, with so many people coming to Maine, I think that maybe, to hear my story can encourage them, give them strength.”



### **To learn more and support the organizations mentioned:**

- COCO Maine @CongoleseCommunityofMaine on Facebook
- MANA at [mana-maine.org](http://mana-maine.org) and @MaineMANA on Facebook

## SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT: JONATHAN LEE

Jonathan Lee was born and raised in Lewiston and, although he has lived in New York City for many years, he still has strong ties to Maine.

It was Jonathan’s sister Cathy who first introduced him to ILAP, telling him simply that “they do really good work.” And as he learned more, our mission resonated with his own upbringing and values.

“My grandparents were immigrants on both sides—they didn’t face the same challenges as today’s immigrants, of course—but they came [to the United States] and built lives. And my father was always very active in the community. These are the people that I’ve known and I’ve come from,” he reflects.

As the Administration’s policies became more hostile toward Black and immigrant community members, Jonathan felt compelled to act: “It was clear to me that the cause that ILAP is very much a part of—advocating for immigrants and refugees—is really important.”

Since then, he has become an ardent supporter of ILAP at a time when our immigration system is becoming more and more unjust. Over the years, his partnership has helped us open a Lewiston office, expand asylum legal services, and more.

Jonathan explains, “Inspired by my brother Adam, I decided to support organizations doing valuable work on the ground in Maine. The impact is clear and there’s a strong personal connection.”

Looking ahead, he hopes Mainers can come together to address the economic and racial injustices that hold people back. And he sees ILAP as playing an important role in building a brighter future for our state.

**“The more we can reduce inequality, the better things will be for all of us,” he says.**

*Learn more about joining Jonathan and ILAP’s community of supporters at [ilapmaine.org/donate](http://ilapmaine.org/donate).*

## SIGH, GONE:

## India Street Society Celebrates Virtually

### On October 22, ILAP's

community of supporters, volunteers, and partners gathered virtually for a **Zoom conversation with Phuc Tran, Portland-based educator, classicist, tattooer, and author of the memoir *Sigh, Gone***. The event, generously sponsored by our friends at cPort Credit Union, may have felt different than in years past, but we hope our sincere appreciation and thanks for our community of supporters came through just as strongly.

Thank!  
**YOU!**

India Street Society  
**2020**  
Member



**ILAP**

IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

Jeff Roberts Imaging

## ANTI-RACISM RESOURCES

### Keep Learning

The immigrant justice movement is inseparable from other liberation movements, including the Movement for Black Lives. To stand against injustice of any kind, we need to educate ourselves and then put our values into action.

Check out these resources that we've found useful. This is by no means a complete list. Consider compensating educators and organizations for their teaching and reporting.

#### ■ **Vera Institute of Justice and Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI): Centering Black Voices in the Struggle for Immigrant Rights**

Overview of intersecting systems of oppression and the importance of centering Black voices. (Article)

#### ■ **Freedom for Immigrants: IMM Print [imm-print.com](http://imm-print.com)**

"Publication by and for people affected by immigration detention." (website)

#### ■ **The San Diego Union-Tribune: Returned**

"A multi-part series that takes a deep dive into the U.S. asylum system." (interactive tool)

#### ■ **Reveal: Detained and Exposed**

A project of The Center for Investigating Reporting hosted by Al Letson, covering immigration detention during the COVID-19 pandemic. (podcast)

#### ■ **BAJI and NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic: The State of Black Immigrants**

"A statistical snapshot of the Black immigrant population, drawing upon recent studies and original analysis." (report)

# PRO BONO PANEL & ASYLUM UPDATE

## Pro Bono Panel Wins Amid COVID-19 Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic caused chaos and closures in Immigration Court and US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) this spring and summer. Several *pro bono* attorneys who had been waiting for years to argue their client's asylum cases faced sudden cancellations.

Through it all, Panel members showed their resilience and mettle. ILAP *pro bono* attorneys Matt Schaefer, Jane Makela, Roger Clement, Tom Studwell and Rich Bayer were all able to get asylum applications filed for their clients despite the unexpected challenges.

In September, attorney Eliza Mette won permanent residency in Immigration Court for a Rwandan asylum seeker who is married, has one child and another on the way. Thanks to Eliza, the client is now headed toward U.S. citizenship and his growing family remains united.

*Pro Bono* attorney Eileen Frazier, a former defense attorney in Chicago, exhibited incredible endurance in her representation of her asylum client who was detained during the height of the pandemic. In total, she appeared in Immigration Court 12 times between February and September! She and her client are now awaiting the judge's decision. ILAP is grateful and impressed with her fearless advocacy.

**Join Our Work!** An asylum seeker is five times more likely to win their case in Immigration Court if they have a lawyer. Contact Asylum Program Director Jennifer Bailey at [jbailey@ilapmaine.org](mailto:jbailey@ilapmaine.org) to get involved.

## Community Workshops and Legal Support

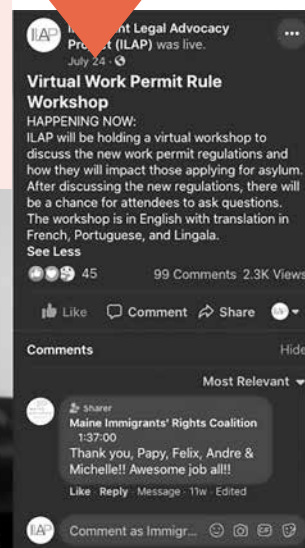
ILAP Asylum Outreach Attorney Felix Hagenimana took to Facebook Live to explain the changes in employment eligibility for asylum seekers that went into effect in August. The workshop, with live translations in French, Portuguese, and Lingala, provided an overview of the changes and answered community members' questions.

You can find a recording of this event on ILAP's Facebook page. ILAP is currently hosting weekly online asylum workshops, which include a detailed presentation and time for general questions.

The presentations cover a wide range of topics and will be presented in 5 different languages. Check our Facebook page and website for the schedule and more information.

The Asylum Team also continued consultations and change of venue assistance for asylum seekers who crossed the Southern Border and are now living in Maine.

**Felix Hagenimana and Michelle Gentry** from ILAP's Asylum Team joined translators Papy Bongibo from COCO Maine and Andre Hiltner for a virtual workshop in July to discuss how the new work permit regulations will impact asylum seekers here in Maine and answer questions.



## BOSTON Asylum Office Has Moved!

The Boston Asylum Office moved locations and has plans to expand its number of officers.

As of September, the office has a new address and contact information.

Visit our website at: [ilapmaine.org/asylum-self-help](http://ilapmaine.org/asylum-self-help)

## DACA Victory Celebrated by Advocates, Flouted by USCIS

**In June, ILAP celebrated the Supreme Court's ruling to uphold the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program!** The Court found that the current Administration's actions to terminate DACA were arbitrary and capricious, meaning they failed to give any good reasons to shut down the program. ILAP is proud to stand alongside Dreamers, immigrants, and activists who led the way to this hard-won victory.

In the weeks and months leading up to the Court's decision, ILAP's Forms Program worked with DACA-eligible Mainers to ensure their applications and renewals were filed before any changes occurred. We pledge to continue our advocacy work, because while the Court's decision may safeguard DACA recipients' futures for now, it does not move the country toward a permanent solution.

In response to the Supreme Court's ruling, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) issued guidance that rejects all first-time DACA applications and limits renewals, defying the Supreme Court's ruling. A group of young immigrant activists has sued the government, asking a court to block the Administration's efforts to limit DACA.

## Erosion of Rights for Asylum Seekers

Two new rules went into effect in August that seek to limit asylum seekers' ability to work. The first rule removes the requirement that USCIS decide work permit applications within 30 days, while the second more than doubles the waiting period for a work permit (from 180 days to 365) and adds additional restrictions.

**Together, these rules aim to deny asylum seekers the right to work.** We are hopeful that litigation will stop these rules from going into effect.

Around the same time these work permit rules went into effect, the Administration proposed a regulation that is a clear attempt to end asylum in the United States. ILAP urged

### Take Action Today!

To discover specific actions you can take to advance the immigrant justice movement visit ILAP's Take Action page at [ilapmaine.org/take-action](http://ilapmaine.org/take-action).

*Thank you for making a difference!*



our large network of supporters to oppose this new rule. Nationally, over 90,000 comments were submitted.

## Continued Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

Immigrants and their families are on the front lines of the pandemic, yet have been left out of economic relief, COVID-19 testing, and support on state and federal levels.

ILAP joined over 40 Maine organizations in writing a letter to our congressional delegation to **push for the inclusion of immigrant families in COVID-19 relief.** The HEROES Act passed the House of Representatives on May 15, but as this newsletter goes to print, the Senate has still not passed a single piece of relief legislation inclusive of immigrant families.

## Advancing Racial Equity

ILAP stands with Black leaders in Maine and nationally to demand systemic changes that **dismantle white supremacy and advance racial equity.**

This summer, ILAP joined over 450 immigrant rights organizations in issuing a statement of solidarity with Black communities, testified before the Portland School Board about the negative immigration consequences of police officers in the district's schools, signed onto a letter from the Maine Black Caucus that called for the appointment of someone from Maine's Black community to the Economic Recovery Committee, and

*Continued on next page*

publicly committed to centering anti-racism in our external and internal work, among other actions.

In our anti-racist advocacy work, we have been learning from Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project (BLMP), and UndocuBlack Network, among many others. Check out our list of resources on page 4 to continue learning with us.

## Reports From Georgia Facility Expose Systemic Medical Neglect in ICE Prisons

A brave nurse came forward in September to expose the violent health practices of Irwin County Detention Center, a privately-run Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility in Georgia. Nurse Dawn Wooten made public the facility's alarmingly high rate of hysterectomies performed without consent and a pattern of medical neglect.

Representative Jamie Raskin, who chaired the committee leading the investigation into private ICE facilities said their findings "make clear that the shocking mistreatment of immigrant detainees is far more pervasive than one doctor or one facility. An epidemic of medical neglect and mistreatment at detention centers has caused undue suffering and even death."

ILAP strongly condemns the inhumane treatment and continued detention of immigrants.

## Cruel Fee Rule Blocked by Court

**A federal court has issued a nationwide preliminary injunction, temporarily stopping a fee rule** that would have had a devastating impact on our immigrant and asylum-seeking communities, especially low-income individuals and families.

The fee rule would have hiked fees, created new ones, and eliminated many fee waivers. Fee waivers allow low income and vulnerable immigrants to improve their legal status despite not having the funds to pay high immigration fees.

This ruling means that, for now, the government cannot enforce the new fee rule. Even though this could change, it is still a big win.

Check [ilapmaine.org/ilap-news/fee-increase](https://ilapmaine.org/ilap-news/fee-increase) for updates.

### STAY INFORMED:

■ Visit [signup.ilapmaine.org](https://signup.ilapmaine.org) to receive ILAP's "Golden Door" email updates on laws and policies affecting immigrants in Maine.

ILAP

## Remote Operations and New Resources

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot about the way our organization functions and the ways in which we interact with clients, each other, and our community. Yet our commitment to justice and our mission of bringing immigration legal aid to low-income Mainers has remained unchanged.

Since March, ILAP staff have worked diligently to:

- **Launch a robust online intake system** for people looking for legal help;
- **Create multilingual self-help guides** with simple, step-by-step instructions for common immigration concerns; and
- **Record informational videos and host online community events** in multiple languages to help Mainers understand the never-ending issuance of new rules and policies.

Amid this year's changes and challenges, our staff has continued fighting tirelessly for our clients. While working remotely, ILAP attorneys have secured a T visa for a survivor of human trafficking, celebrated the approval of a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petition for a client, provided legal representation for an LGBTQ+ asylum seeker, secured green cards for two victims of domestic violence, a college student, and a child fleeing violence in their home country, among other legal victories.

ILAP has continued to thrive during the pandemic thanks to our clients' resilience and flexibility, the staff and board's dedication to our clients, and our mission to advance justice and equity for immigrants and their families.

New resources and translations are added to our website as they become available. Find our self-help guides at [ilapmaine.org/self-help](https://ilapmaine.org/self-help) and support for asylum seekers at [ilapmaine.org/asylum-self-help](https://ilapmaine.org/asylum-self-help).



## Advocates Distribute Information and Resources to Migrant Farmers

ILAP's Rural Maine Project (RMP) shifted gears in March as the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Maine. RMP's model of providing in-person outreach to immigrants and service providers in rural communities was interrupted, just when thousands of essential seasonal workers were arriving in Maine, despite the pandemic, to fill blueberry and, later, apple jobs.

RMP and our service provider partners **collaborated to reach these migrant farmers with important health, labor, and immigration information.** Barbara Taylor, Senior Staff Attorney for ILAP's Rural Maine Project, took on the job of collecting and assembling over 500 information packets in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole and transporting them to key partners, including Maine Mobile Health Program and Mano en Mano, who then distributed them to workers.

One of the most moving distributions was organized at Mano en Mano in Milbridge. A caravan of local vehicles festooned with banners, welcoming seasonal workers and thanking them for their labor, paraded to local blueberry worker housing with music, food, packets, and posters of gratitude as people returned from work.

RMP is now creating updated packets for hundreds of seasonal wreath workers, mostly from Haiti, who will be arriving Down East in the fall.

### Lewiston's Office Grows

ILAP's physical location in Lewiston has been quiet, yet the office has been busy providing vital legal services to immigrants through the Lewiston/Auburn area. We are excited to announce that ILAP Lewiston recently **hired a second staff person, expanding the office's capacity!**

Throughout the summer, ILAP Lewiston held virtual outreach events and continued providing immigration forms assistance along with full representation for asylum seekers and immigrant survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence. ILAP Lewiston collaborates with the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine (IRC), one

of our many partners who provide referrals. At a time when survivors of abuse face far fewer options due to the pandemic, we are grateful for the IRC's work and partnership.

In August, Lewiston's Supervising Attorney Alice Kopij gave a virtual presentation to a group of community service providers about the new work permit rules for asylum seekers. She continues to provide ongoing support to the community as these harmful rules go into effect, working closely with the Trinity Jubilee Center.



### Learn more about our partners and support their work!

- Maine Mobile Health Program ([mainemobile.org](http://mainemobile.org))
- Mano en Mano ([manomaine.org](http://manomaine.org))
- Immigrant Resource Center of Maine ([ircofmaine.org](http://ircofmaine.org))
- Trinity Jubilee Center ([trinityjubileecenter.org](http://trinityjubileecenter.org))

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

ILAP Program Assistant Emily Burns spearheaded the coordination of ILAP's language volunteer program this year to ensure our clients, regardless of language, have full access to immigration legal aid and representation.

Since April, our volunteer network has risen to the challenge of remote work, providing 35+ hours of interpretation for consults and appointments and completing 47 different translation projects in five different languages.

"All the good feedback I witnessed from members of my community who benefit from ILAP services brought me to volunteering as a way to say thank you...and to support their tremendous work. I have peace in my mind knowing that immigrant families can rely on true and public lawyers and immigration service so easily," says ILAP volunteer Nadine Pembele.

We want to **thank our volunteers, from Maine and beyond,** for their hard work, flexibility, and willingness to donate their time and skills in support of our clients.

### Volunteer with ILAP!

ILAP is looking for mental health professionals willing to provide *pro bono* mental health evaluations to support ILAP clients' legal cases. We also continue to welcome volunteer interpreters and translators. Visit [ilapmaine.org/volunteer](http://ilapmaine.org/volunteer) to learn more and fill out our interest survey. Contact Emily at [EBurns@ilapmaine.org](mailto:EBurns@ilapmaine.org) if you have questions.



# BIENVENUE!

Wilkommen, Welcome!



■ ILAP welcomed **Nolwenn Robison** in August as Lewiston office's new Legal Program Assistant. A recent graduate of Bates College, Nolwenn brings valuable administrative experience and French language skills. Nolwenn will support ILAP's growing Lewiston office with translation, case research, and administrative support. Welcome, Nolwenn!



■ After volunteering and subsequently interning with ILAP while in law school, **Maggie Loeffelholz** officially joined our staff this fall after graduating from Boston University School of Law. Maggie will draw on her experience representing children in immigration proceeding at BU's Immigrants' Rights Clinic and her past work with students from Portland's immigrant communities to spearhead the launch of our new Immigrant Children's Project.

## BANKWANA! Farewell & Well Wishes!

■ ILAP welcomed several summer interns this year, each of whom braved the challenges of remote work to support ILAP. Thank you to **Hannah McKenzie** from Bates College, **Nina McKay** from Bowdoin College, and summer law school intern **Cecilia MacArthur** from Northeastern University School of Law for your flexibility, passion, and hard work this summer!

## STAFF NEWS

**August marked 20 years at ILAP for Sue Roche**, our dedicated and fearless Executive Director! Sue joined ILAP as the organization's first Staff Attorney in 2000 and has led the organization as Executive Director since 2013. Over the last 20 years, Sue has helped ILAP grow to a state-wide legal immigration services organization reaching over 5,000 people each year. ILAP wouldn't be what it is today without Sue's dedication, passion, and vision. From all of us, thank you!



**ILAP is proud to highlight several recent staff promotions.** **Julia Brown** was promoted to Advocacy and Outreach Director, **Francine Ngabu** to Intake Paralegal, **Chelsea Russell** to Legal Program Associate, and **Sarah Barton** to Development and Communications Associate. Congrats to all!

2021



## Looking Forward to CeleSoirée 2021

ILAP remains committed to helping keep our community safe and healthy. As we look ahead to 2021, we have made the difficult decision to postpone CeleSoirée.

Instead of our usual late March date, we hope to host an outdoor event in the fall. We will have more updates in the new year and look forward to celebrating with you when it is safe to do so!



## 2019 Annual Report Now Available

Read ILAP's 2019 Annual Report to learn more about our impact last year and the many supporters who make our work possible.

*The report is now available on our website at [ilapmaine.org/impact](http://ilapmaine.org/impact).*



IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY  
PROJECT

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## Get Legal Help

### **ILAP staff are working remotely and we are here to help!**

To get legal help while our offices are closed to the public, you can:

#### **Call (207) 780-1593, ext. 0**

Leave a voicemail message. Please include your full name, contact information, and a brief description of your legal problem.

#### **Fill out our online intake request form.**

You can find the form at [ilapmaine.org/get-legal-help](http://ilapmaine.org/get-legal-help). It is available in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

We will do our best to contact you within three business days.

Please note that ILAP is a small organization and we are not able to help everyone who asks for assistance.

Thank you for your understanding.

## SUPPORT ILAP

### **Advance the cause of justice for immigrants in Maine by supporting ILAP today:**

- **Visit [ilapmaine.org/donate](http://ilapmaine.org/donate)** to give online or begin your monthly gift
- **Sign up to volunteer** at [ilapmaine.org/volunteer](http://ilapmaine.org/volunteer)
- **Transfer a gift of stock** to ILAP or make a legacy gift. Contact Laura for more details at [LSimocko@ilapmaine.org](mailto:LSimocko@ilapmaine.org)
- **Send a gift** via check to:  
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
P.O. Box 17917  
Portland, ME 04112
- **Members of the Maine Bar** can contribute to ILAP's work by donating to the Campaign for Justice, a special collaborative fundraising effort by Maine's legal community to support legal aid. Visit [campaignforjustice.org](http://campaignforjustice.org)