

FLORENCE
IMMIGRANT
& REFUGEE
RIGHTS PROJECT

Annual Report 2008

Mission Statement

The Florence Project provides and coordinates free legal services and related social services to indigent men, women, and unaccompanied children detained in Arizona for immigration removal proceedings. The Project strives to ensure that detained individuals have access to counsel, understand their rights under immigration law, and are treated fairly and humanely by our judicial system.

A Message from the Executive Director

The Florence Project's work of providing access to justice for refugees and immigrants detained in Arizona continued to be critical in 2008. A recent report released by the Inspector General's office of the Department of Homeland Security found over 108,000 parents of U.S. Citizen children were deported over the last decade, most of whom also spent time in detention separated from their children. We continue to see aggressive enforcement against immigrants in our communities, resulting in an emergency need for legal assistance for individuals who are isolated in remote prison facilities and can not afford to hire private counsel. Over the last year, the Florence Project completed its first formal strategic plan, recommitting ourselves to our mission and vision and articulating a road map for the coming three years. We enter 2009 with a carefully scaled back budget and detailed fundraising plan with hopes we can navigate the difficult financial climate by relying on surplus funds from past years and expanding our individual donor base to avoid having to substantially scale back our programs. Our experience providing legal services with limited resources to thousands through innovative programming and partnerships will prove especially useful in the coming year, which is also the year we celebrate our 20th Anniversary. It is a privilege to share a snapshot of our work with our friends and supporters.

A Summary of our Services

The People We Serve

Our constituency consists of over 3,000 immigrant and refugee men, women and unaccompanied children detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on any given day in facilities in Florence, Eloy and Phoenix, Arizona. The majority of our clients are monolingual Spanish speakers with limited to no formal educational background. While most are from Mexico and Central America, we served people from 89 different countries in 2008. Our clients include long term lawful permanent residents, asylum seekers, survivors of torture, individuals suffering from mental illness, victims of domestic violence, U.S. Citizens, unaccompanied minors and unadjusted refugees. Because there is no right to government appointed counsel in immigration proceedings, an estimated 90% of detainees appear alone in their immigration court hearing. The Florence Project's work seeks to address this inequity and provide due process to this vulnerable population.

Florence Project Services

The Florence Project provides a full range of legal services for our constituents including:

- ◆ Live **rights presentations** regarding people's rights and remedies in removal proceedings. In 2008 we provided rights presentations to 10,077 men, women, and unaccompanied children.
- ◆ Individual **case assessment** for all who request it. In 2008 we provided individual case assessment to 3,342 people.
- ◆ **Direct representation, pro se assistance, and pro bono referrals**, as resources allow. In 2008 we gave intensive pro se assistance to 3,568 people, assisted 278 people in their merits hearings for legal relief, provided 26 workshops on the topic of cancellation of removal for 145 detained lawful permanent residents, and referred 81 cases to pro bono counsel.
- ◆ Assistance with raising **issues of deportability or eligibility for relief** before the immigration judge and the Board of Immigration Appeals either through pro se brief preparation or full representation.
- ◆ **Application preparation and documentation gathering** to support legal claims. We work with clients' families to prepare affidavits and supporting documentation.
- ◆ Pro se **bond assistance** with some limited representation in Florence and Eloy, and assistance with family reunification for children. In 2008 we provided direct bond representation to 23 people seeking release from custody.
- ◆ **Assistance with supervised release and habeas corpus petitions** in Florence and Eloy. In 2008 we helped 28 people in their custody review process or to file habeas petitions.
- ◆ **Trainings and consultations to public defenders** on the overlap of criminal and immigration law through our Arizona Defending Immigrants Program. In 2008 we provided 22 trainings to 723 practitioners and provided 519 consultations to public defenders and defense attorneys.

Child Victim of Gender-Based Violence Granted Asylum

Anna was just sixteen years old when she was drugged, kidnapped, repeatedly beaten, raped and threatened with death by assailants in her native Guatemala. Anna's captors held her for ransom, despite her upbringing in extreme poverty, when her wounds and injuries grew so serious it was determined she would not be able to earn money in the sex trade. After her parents paid her ransom, Anna was released and reported the crime to the police. The assailants were put to trial where Anna courageously testified as a witness. Within days of their conviction Anna's assailants were pardoned and released; Anna's life was put in immediate danger and she faced condemnation in her community for cooperating in the prosecution. Anna fled to the United States and after a perilous journey, including an additional rape; she was caught by Border Patrol in the Arizona desert and was placed in a shelter and in removal proceedings before the Phoenix immigration court. The Florence Project's Children's Project represented Anna in her claim for asylum, successfully arguing that her membership in the particular social group of Guatemalan survivors of gender-based violence who participate in the prosecution of their abusers entitled her to protection from persecution. Anna was granted asylum by the Phoenix immigration court and was released from ICE custody on her own recognizance with family in Portland, Oregon, after staying temporarily with a Florence Project volunteer in Phoenix. The government has appealed the immigration judge's decision granting Anna asylum and a pro bono attorney is representing her case on appeal.



Significant Accomplishments in 2008

- ◆ **Stronger Programs** - We strengthened and expanded our services by securing funding from the Executive Office of Immigration Review to provide Legal Orientation Program services at the Pinal County Jail in Florence, by continuing the Arizona Defending Immigrants Program through its second year and beyond the pilot phase, and by securing funding to maintain and strengthen our Integrated Social Services Program.
- ◆ **Legal Victories** - In addition to our core pro se services, we achieved numerous legal victories in 2008. We helped more than 30 adults terminate their cases on U.S. Citizenship grounds and a record 18 unaccompanied immigrant children win lawful permanent residence through Special Immigrant Juvenile Status visas based on abandonment, abuse and neglect in their home countries.
- ◆ **Advocacy and Outreach** - We participated in several important advocacy projects in 2008, including testifying before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Immigration on due process violations during detention and deportation and U.S. Citizens in detention, participating on the U.S.-Mexico Border Policy Task Force, providing comment to ICE's draft performance based detention standards and signing on to several amicus briefs and initiatives impacting detained immigrants. Florence Project staff continued to collaborate with the media in 2008, including contributing to the Washington Post's investigative series on medical care in detention and a piece by The Nation on U.S. Citizens in deportation proceedings. We provided training or spoke about our work at 54 national and local conferences and events, including the Arizona State Bar Convention.
- ◆ **Collaborations** - We continued our collaboration with partner organizations by, for example, serving on the steering committee of the Detention Watch Network and assisting Human Rights Watch and the University of Arizona's Southern Institute for Research of Women with research projects on detention. We relied on the help of approximately 130 volunteers in 2008, including pro bono attorneys, physicians with Doctors of the World-USA, interpreters and country conditions researchers. We also hosted 14 student interns throughout the year from the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, Stanford University, University of Michigan, Northwestern University, Boston College, Northeastern University, University of Minnesota, and Vassar College and hosted visits to Florence from the Earlham College for Border Studies and the Lutheran Immigrant & Refugee Service Board of Directors.
- ◆ **Strategic Plan** - After a year of planning and work with outside consultants, our Board of Directors adopted our first formal Strategic Plan in October 2008. The Plan identifies the Florence Project's customers, refines our mission, articulates our strengths and weaknesses identified through the planning process, enumerates our goals and sets forth a set of objectives and action items to fulfill those goals.

Assistance to Vulnerable Populations

As aggressive immigration enforcement practices continue, Florence Project staff encounter more vulnerable people in detention. One such group consists of refugees living in communities in Arizona who have failed to "adjust status" (apply for a green card) after being present in the United States for more than one year. Arizona continues to stand alone across the nation in detaining these refugees for the adjustment process. These refugees find the prolonged process of applying to U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Service in Phoenix to adjust their status extremely difficult from detention as it involves steps such as making arrangements for vaccinations and medical exams from an outside provider. In 2008, the Florence Project assisted over 20 detained unadjusted refugees from countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Laos, Vietnam, Burundi, Bosnia, Iran and Liberia. With Florence Project help, 6 unadjusted refugees were released from detention on humanitarian grounds in 2008.



Goals for 2009

- ◆ At the close of 2009 the Florence Project will complete twenty years of service to detained immigrants and refugees in Arizona. We plan to commemorate this achievement by hosting two fundraising events to celebrate our anniversary, expand our individual donor base, and educate prospective individual donors about the Florence Project. We will also publish a small book commemorating our founding and anniversary in the coming year.
- ◆ We will continue to work towards the goals outlined in our 2008 Strategic Plan. In addition to expanding our individual donor base, emphasis in 2009 will be placed on continuing to expand our pro bono attorney network, developing an outreach and advocacy plan, strengthening our written public relations materials, and assessing our organizational structure and legal programs to ensure we maximize our efficiency and effectiveness.
- ◆ We expect 2009 to be a year where collaborations and leveraging our limited resources will be more important than ever. We will continue our critical long time collaborations and will strengthen newer collaborations such as with the public defender offices through our Arizona Defending Immigrants Program, social service providers through our Integrated Social Service Programs and advocacy and outreach partner organizations on a local and national level.

2008 Major Public Donors

Arizona Public Service Foundation
AZ Foundation for Legal Services & Education
Brelje & Associates
Clinical Legal Education Association
Paul & Florence Eckstein
Fennemore Craig
Florence Project Board of Directors
Greenberg Traurig
Larry & Frances Hammond
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Hispanics In Philanthropy Funders Collaborative
Holland & Knight
JFRCO, Inc.
Karuna Foundation
Lodestar Foundation
Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service
Lynn Marcus
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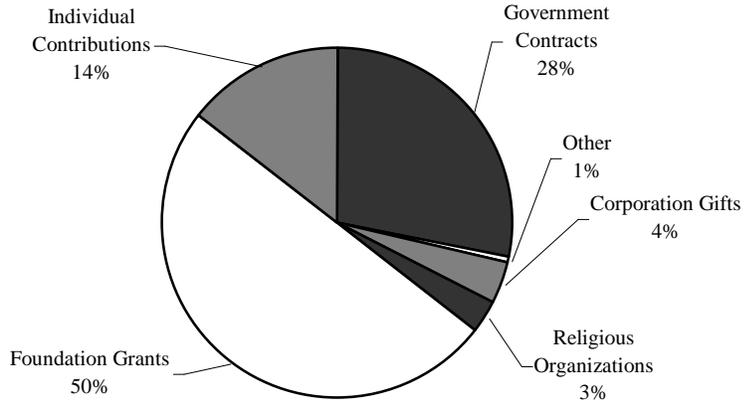
Osborn Maledon
Perkins Coie Brown & Bain
Presbyterian Church USA
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Roberto A. Reveles
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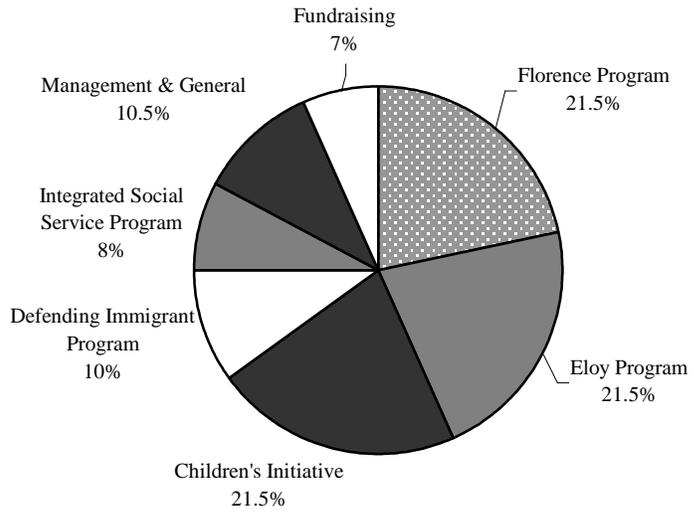
Financial Information

Year Ended December 31, 2008

**Total Revenue
\$837,726.32**



**Total Expense
\$904,049.64**



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Lindsay N. Marshall, Esq.
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Christina L. Powers, Esq.
Staff Attorney

Sarah Plastino
Legal Assistant

Marco Acevedo, Esq.
Staff Attorney

FLORENCE
Katie Ruhl, Esq.
Staff Attorney

Christopher Stenken
Legal Assistant

** As of March 2009*

Administrative Office
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
2601 North Highway 79
P.O. Box 654
Florence, AZ 85232
Phone: 520.868.0191
Fax: 520.868.0192
Email: firrp@firrp.org
Website: www.firrp.org

