

IMMIGRANT PROTECTION UNIT

NEW YORK LEGAL ASSISTANCE GROUP
CREATING SOLUTIONS , CHANGING LIVES



IPU In the Community

Promising New Partnership

On Sunday, March 15, IPU paralegals Sebastian Sanchez and Franca Kaloko were invited to meet with the Board of Directors of the African People Alliance in hopes of creating a new partnership with the fledgling organization. Following a successful meeting, where the leaders of the APA expressed a strong interest in working with the IPU, Franca Kaloko hosted the first immigration help desk with the APA one month after the initial meeting.

The African People Alliance has been operating in the Bronx for the past three years. It is an umbrella organization, which represents African associations throughout the borough and its members hail from several countries across the continent. The APA is committed to serving the African community at large. Its dedicated leaders and diverse membership present the IPU with a unique opportunity of establishing a strong presence in the Bronx to offer much needed immigration assistance services to a wide-range of individuals in the African community.

New Queens In-Take Site off to an Auspicious Start

On Monday April 6, the IPU hosted the first of what will be a monthly immigration help-desk , with council member John C. Liu's office . Despite the inclement weather, there was a n admirable turn out and IPU staff attorney Tony Lu was able to consult with and offer legal advice to several of the councilman's Mandarin, Korean and Cantonese speaking constituents.

NYLAG Attorneys Take On The "Widow Penalty"

Under Federal law the spouse of a United States citizen can obtain permanent residency. However, the current policy of the United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) automatically denies an immigrant this privilege if their marriage has not existed for two years and their citizen spouse dies before their application has been processed . As a result of this policy, which has been coined the "widow penalty", many immigrants are being penalized by having their green card applications denied, due to the untimely deaths of their spouses and the lengthy bureaucratic visa processing time of the USCIS. Many of these individuals, who entered the United States legally subsequently find themselves in deportation proceedings.

NYLAG has recently filed a lawsuit challenging this unjust policy on behalf of Irina Gorovets, a Russian immigrant who has been placed in deportation proceedings after the tragic death of her husband due to kidney failure, while her green card application was awaiting approval.

Do you want a training for your staff on immigration?
Would you like to see an immigration help desk in your district?
Do your constituents need legal assistance?

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CHANGING LIVES BY CREATING NEW BEGINNINGS

True Stories

Although the Caribbean has been heralded as one of the most beautiful destinations on earth, in recent times it has also gained a reputation for its pervasive homophobic tendencies. Jamaica, one of the largest islands in the region, has gained widespread infamy for the country's continued persecution of its homosexual community. The sodomy laws in the country reinforce these homophobic practices, and have the effect of criminalizing homosexuality as an identity. Additionally, known participation in the island's only gay rights organization, the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians of All-Sexual and Gays (J-FLAG) is tantamount to an invitation for violent acts. For these reasons, J-FLAG is forced to operate in secrecy.

The Immigrant Protection Unit recently received a referral from Immigration Equality for a Jamaican man who was seeking asylum based on his membership in J-FLAG. The client had experienced police persecution in the past because of his sexual identity, and he was fearful of future persecution. IPU staff attorney Meeta A. Patel, working in collaboration with Virginia Goggin of NYLAG's LGBT Project was able to help this individual to obtain status as an asylee. Although the client had left U.S and returned to Jamaica on several occasions- which often casts doubt in the eyes of asylum officers as to whether or not the individual seeking asylum is truly fearful of persecution in their country of origin - NYLAG's attorneys were able to demonstrate that their client had legally compelling reasons for returning to Jamaica despite his fear, and that he had to change his appearance in order to return and leave safely.

The client's approval for asylum means that he has now received legal permission to work in the United States, the right to obtain a U.S. social security number, and will be eligible to apply for legal permanent resi-

ALL CLIENT INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL

NYLAG also provides:

General Legal Services, Matrimonial/Family Law, Holocaust Compensation Assistance, Special Litigation, Legal Health, Pro Bono