

September 18, 2024

NIJC Pro Bono Case List: 70 cases need pro bono representation.

Immigrants do not have the right to appointed counsel and without pro bono representation, many of NIJC's clients would be forced to seek immigration relief on their own. NIJC pro bono attorneys defend the legal rights of immigrants, prevent permanent family separation and deportation to persecution and torture, and help ensure access to justice for all.

This case list is divided into sections based on the type of case. All cases that require priority placement are listed at the top of the list and organized by case type. When you select a case type, the headline will provide basic information about the case. Additional information is available in the drop-down options below the headline.

PLEASE NOTE: For asylum cases, this list includes cases that are scheduled for—or that we expect to receive—merits hearings within the next two years. Please note that the timeline for affirmative cases may be different. Not included on this list are numerous cases that are not yet scheduled for a hearing, and which could benefit from pro bono advocacy to secure a hearing date. If you are interested in working on a specific type of case that you do not see listed here, please email Lili Henkel (lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org) and Moisés López Soltero (mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org), and we will explore whether we have a case available that may be a good fit.

- **Asylum - Affirmative:** Represent an individual or family who is affirmatively applying for asylum and will present their case before the Asylum Office.
- **Asylum – Defensive:** Represent an individual or family who is applying for asylum as a defense to removal and will present their case before the Immigration Court.
- **Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS):** Represent the guardian of an immigrant minor in state court proceedings to obtain a predicate order.
- **U Visa:** Represent an immigrant survivor of a crime committed in the United States.
- **VAWA:** Represent an immigrant survivor of family or domestic violence.

NIJC staff provide [extensive training, resources and technical assistance](#) to pro bono teams through the life of the pro bono matter.

[Priority Matters – Defensive Asylum](#)

[Priority Matters – U visa](#)

[Priority Matters – VAWA](#)

[Defensive Asylum Matters](#)

[SIJS – Predicate Order Matters](#)

[U Visa Matters](#)

[VAWA Matters](#)

Priority Matters

Priority Matters - Defensive Asylum

1. L. is a bisexual cisgender man from Togo. His merits hearing is scheduled for February 10, 2025. He speaks French and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 2/10/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Languages: French, Other

Country of Origin: Togo

Client's Story

L. realized that he is bisexual as a teenager. In 2020, L.'s relationship with his male partner was discovered when he took his phone to be repaired, and the technician found photos of L. and his partner together. Not long after, L.'s brother and some neighbors surprised L. and his partner while they were being intimate. The brother and neighbors had the photos from L.'s phone and beat L. and his partner. L.'s mother intervened to help him escape, and L. fled Togo soon after.

Important Client Context

All affidavits and supporting documents for L.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing. His hearing is scheduled to be held remotely, over WebEx.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 22-0152805

2. M. is a man from Ecuador. His merits hearing is on February 24, 2025. M. speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 2/24/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

M. owned a small business in Ecuador where people could pay to use computers and printers. His shop was located near the local market where corrupt police officers frequently extorted vendors. Around August 2018, two officers left behind a flash drive after using computers in M.'s store. After they left, M. opened the flash drive and discovered evidence that they were overcharging market vendors. When the officers came back to retrieve the flash drive, they warned M. that he would have problems if he had looked at the contents of the flash drive and spoke out against them. Afterwards, M. began to receive threats from the police and a gang affiliated with the police. Around January 2019, gang members kidnapped M. and took him to a remote location where they beat and robbed him. After this incident, M. fled the country. People continued to look for him at his shop and threatened to harm his girlfriend and daughter, which led them to flee as well.

Important Client Context

NIJC filed M.'s asylum application with the immigration court in April 2021. Because his application was filed more than one year after he entered the United States, M.'s pro bono attorneys will need to argue that he merits an exception to the one-year filing deadline. NIJC will assist them in making this argument. All affidavits and supporting materials to M.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits

hearing on February 24, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 20-0145604

3. X. is a gay cisgender man from El Salvador. His merits hearing is scheduled for February 26, 2025. X. speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 2/26/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: El Salvador

Client's Story

While growing up in El Salvador, X.'s family and friends verbally abused him because they perceived him as feminine. As an adult, gang members broke into X.'s home, beat him and threatened him because he is gay. X. fears that if he is forced to return to El Salvador, he will be tortured or killed by the gang that harmed him in the past and other anti-LGBTQ people.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed X.'s asylum application. All affidavits and supporting documents for X.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his merits hearing, which is on February 26, 2025 via WebEx.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 19-0139973

4. R. is a woman from El Salvador. Her son, A., is a derivative on her application, and also has an independent application for asylum. R. and A.'s individual merits hearing is on March 14, 2025. R. speaks Spanish and lives in a northern suburb of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 3/14/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: El Salvador

Client's Story

During much of their relationship, R.'s ex-partner H., was verbally, physically, and sexually abusive. H. was a police officer in El Salvador. For some time, H. was able to hide his status as a police officer from the community and 18th Street gang members. Eventually, gang members took notice of his role. They began calling the family and sending pictures of R.'s daughter, threatening to kill the family if R. and H. did not pay the extortion fees. Although R. and her family repeatedly tried to relocate to other towns in El Salvador, the gang members continued to find them and targeted R.'s son A. for being the son of a police officer. H. fled to the United States and was granted asylum, but the gang continued targeting the family, particularly A., making it impossible for them to leave their home. Finally, R. fled to the United States with A. in late 2019.

Important Client Context

NIJC filed R. and A.'s asylum applications with the immigration court in November 2021. Since their applications were filed more than one year after entering the United States, their pro bono attorneys will need to argue that they meet an exception to the one-year filing deadline for asylum eligibility. NIJC will assist them in making this argument. All affidavits and supporting materials for R. and A.'s case will be due 15 days prior to their merits hearing, which is scheduled for March 14, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 21-0147562

5. R. is a man from Nicaragua. His individual merits hearing is on March 27, 2025. R. speaks Spanish and lives in northeastern Wisconsin.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 3/27/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: WI

Country of Origin: Nicaragua

Client's Story

During 2018, R. helped protestors that were part of an anti-government march by providing them with food and water. Law enforcement noticed R. and concluded he was anti-government. Consequently, pro-government Sandinista forces attacked, detained, and threatened R. The Sandinistas also threatened R.'s parents. R.'s cousin encouraged R. to flee the country for his safety; shortly after R. fled, the Sandinistas murdered R.'s cousin. R. entered the United States in July 2021.

Important Client Context

Because his application was filed more than one year after he entered the United States, R. may only be eligible for withholding of removal. All affidavits and supporting materials to R.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for March 27, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0165563

6. M. is a gay cisgender man living with HIV from Venezuela. His merits hearing is scheduled for April 17, 2025. M. speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 4/17/2025

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence, LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

As a child, neighbors called M. homophobic slurs, and peers beat M. because of his sexual orientation. M.'s ex-boyfriend abused him and threatened him with a knife. M. did not feel safe reporting his ex-boyfriend to the Venezuelan police because police are homophobic and do not protect gay men. Fearing for his life, M. fled to Peru in 2018. However, M.'s ex-boyfriend followed him to Peru, stalked him, threatened him, and attempted to poison him. In Peru, M. also tested positive for HIV. M. fears he will be denied access to healthcare and will be targeted for his HIV status if he is forced to return to Venezuela. M. also fears the Venezuelan government will label him as an enemy of the State for leaving the country without permission.

Important Client Context

M.'s asylum application was timely filed with the immigration court on August 4, 2023. His individual hearing is scheduled for April 17, 2025 at the Chicago Immigration Court. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior to his merits hearing.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0162590

7. J. is a woman from Ecuador. Her daughter, S. is a derivative on her application for asylum and is also independently eligible. Their merits hearing is on May 12, 2025. J. and S. speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 5/12/2025

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence, LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: English

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

When J. was a young woman, she met her first partner and the father of her first two children. He abused her for several years until they separated. She made multiple reports against him. A few years later, J. met the father of her third child, S. He also severely abused J. throughout their relationship. She finally separated from him after several years, but he continued to threaten her. J. then entered a relationship with a woman. She and her partner faced discrimination, harassment and threats for being together. J.'s second partner often called to threaten her, insult her, and even found her and beat her up again. J. and her partner received a letter at their home calling them lesbians and telling them they were going to be killed. They fled to the United States with J.'s daughter, S., as soon as they had the money to do so. J. and S. arrived in the United States in July of 2021.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed J. and S.'s asylum applications with USCIS. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for May 12, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 21-0150688

8. M. is a woman from Mexico. Her children, N., O., and P., are derivatives on her application for asylum. The family's merits hearing is on May 28, 2025. M. and her children speak Spanish and live in southeast Wisconsin.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 5/28/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: WI

Country of Origin: Mexico

Client's Story

M. operated a small business selling goods in a city in Mexico. Cartel members regularly extorted her and other vendors, so she supported a mayoral candidate who promised to provide additional security to business owners like her. M. attended political meetings for the candidate, passed out flyers, and more. After the candidate won, cartel members again attempted to extort M. and threatened to kill her children. M. went to the police, who did not help her.

Important Client Context

M. timely filed a pro se asylum application with her children as derivatives. All affidavits and supporting materials to M., N., O., and P.'s case will be due 30 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for May 28, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0167389

9. J. is a woman from Honduras. Her son, N., is a derivative on her asylum application and is

also independently eligible for asylum. Their merits hearing is on June 4, 2025. They speak Spanish and live in Indianapolis.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 6/4/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IN

Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

As a child, J. lived with an aunt and uncle. Her uncle molested her, and her aunt verbally abused her and forced her to work. One night in 2019, an armed man stopped J. while she was walking home and sexually assaulted her in a cemetery. J. believes her attacker was affiliated with a gang. J. became pregnant from the assault and fled because she feared that her rapist would come after her if he learned about the pregnancy.

Important Client Context

J. filed her asylum application in December 2020. Since this application was filed more than one year after J. entered the United States, her pro bono attorneys will need to argue that she merits an exception to the one-year filing deadline for asylum eligibility. NIJC will assist in making this argument. All affidavits and supporting materials to J.'s case will be due 15 days prior to her individual merits hearing on June 4, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 21-0145602

10. P. is a man from Angola. His wife Q., and children, R., S., T., U., and V. are all derivatives on his application for asylum. P., Q., R., S., U., and V.'s merits hearing is on June 24, 2025. USCIS has jurisdiction over T.'s case; she is awaiting her asylum interview date. P. and his family speak Portuguese and live on the Southside of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 6/24/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Portuguese

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Angola

Client's Story

P. was a teacher. As a government worker, he was expected to support the government in power, "the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola" (the MPLA). P. refused to participate in pro government marches and offer his support to the MPLA. P.'s wife, Q., occasionally showed support for the government's opposition and participated in anti-government marches. During one of these marches, security guards saw Q. and identified her as part of the opposition party. Soon after, P. and his family began to receive threatening phone calls in which they were accused of being traitors. P. believes that the MPLA was targeting them as anti-government. Over the next few months, P. was kidnapped, beaten, threatened with death, and persecuted. His wife and children were also victims of attempted harm including threats and attempted kidnapping. The family reported multiple instances of harm to the police, but they never received any protection. In September 2022, men on motorcycles followed and shot at P. and the children. Soon after, they obtained tourist visas to Brazil and fled Angola. From Brazil, they made their way north and entered the United States in February 2023.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed P., Q., R., S., U., and V.'s applications for asylum with the immigration court, and P.'s children are listed as derivatives on his application. All

affidavits and supporting materials to their case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing on June 24, 2025. NIJC timely filed T.'s application for asylum with USCIS. All supporting materials for T.'s case will be due one week prior to her asylum interview. If P. is granted asylum before his daughter receives an interview, he will be able to file an asylee relative petition for her.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0163395

11. K. is a gay cisgender man from Colombia. His merits hearing is scheduled for July 21, 2025. He speaks Spanish and lives in the western suburbs of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 7/21/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

Throughout K.'s childhood, he was frequently perceived as LGBTQ. He was sexually assaulted on numerous occasions. He was called anti-LGBTQ slurs and ostracized at school. Around 2022, members of a local gang saw K. with his boyfriend and shouted anti-LGBTQ slurs at them. From then on, gang members harassed K. and his boyfriend nearly every time they left house by shouting slurs and threats and by throwing stones and bottles at them. Later that year, gang members sent death threats to K. and his family. When the death threats began, K. and his siblings reported the threats to the neighborhood and city police but did not feel protected. A few weeks after the death threats began, K. and his family members left Colombia.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed K.'s asylum application with the Chicago Immigration Court. All affidavits and supporting documents for K.'s case will be due 30 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is on July 21, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0161283

12. X. is a transgender woman from Guatemala. Her merits hearing is scheduled for July 23, 2025. She speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 7/23/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Guatemala

Client's Story

X. fled Guatemala because she could not be open with her sexual orientation or gender identity. As a child, her cousin sexually abused X. Her family later rejected her after she came out as gay. As an adult, She suffered another sexual assault and sexual harassment at work, ultimately forcing her to quit her job and return home. At home, her childhood sexual abuser raped her again with a gun to her head. A group of homophobic people beat her so badly that she had to have her appendix removed and surgery on her intestines.

Important Client Context

In 2019, X. timely filed a pro se asylum application in ICE detention. At the time, she was afraid to disclose her trans identity and only shared her sexual orientation. After suffering a sexual assault in detention and disclosing her gender identity, a nonprofit

attorney helped her amend her asylum application. In Chicago, X. has struggled to feel comfortable presenting as a trans woman. X.'s merits hearing in Chicago is July 23, 2025. When a merits hearing is set, all affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 21-0145690

13. P. is a lesbian cisgender woman from Benin. Her merits hearing is scheduled for July 25, 2025. She speaks French and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 7/25/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Languages: French, Farsi

Country of Origin: Benin

Client's Story

P. understood that she was attracted to other women during her teenage years, but was too afraid members of her family or community would harm her and was not open about her sexual orientation. However, someone leaked photos of P. and her girlfriend around 2020 and members of P.'s community threatened and verbally abused her. In late 2020, members of P.'s church followed her to her family's home and told my father they needed to exorcize her to rid her of her attraction to women. They beat P. and locked her in a room in the house. P.'s mother helped her escape and P. fled to Togo and then Brazil. P. stayed in Brazil for 11 months until members of her church continued to threaten her, saying they knew where she lived. P. fled to the United States in January 2022.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed P.'s I-589. Pro bono counsel should be prepared to argue that P. was not firmly resettled in Brazil as she never received lawful status there. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior to P.'s merits hearing, which is set for July 25, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 22-0153154

14. N. is a woman from Ecuador. Both N. and her partner, S., have individual asylum applications. Their merits hearing is scheduled for August 20, 2025. N. and S. speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 8/20/2025

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

W., the father of N.'s son, abused N. both during and after their relationship. After W. verbally abused her and destroyed items in their shared home, N. filed a police report, went to court for domestic violence and moved out, taking their son with her. The police did nothing to help her. W. stalked and threatened N. When N. began a relationship with S., W. threatened S. W. also followed N. to her job, where he physically assaulted her and threatened her with a knife. W. also assaulted S. at his job, resulting in an injury to S.'s arm. When N. became pregnant with S.'s child, W. continued to threaten them, saying he would make sure that N. lost the child. N. and S. fled Ecuador to escape W., who has continued to send N. threatening messages.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed N. and S.'s asylum application with the immigration court. R. has traveled to the United States and is currently waiting to be reunited with N. while in ORR custody. N. and S.'s child is a United States Citizen. All affidavits and supporting materials for their case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for on August 20, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0162173

15. B. is a man from Mexico. His wife, S., and their child, R., are derivatives on B.'s asylum application and are also independently eligible for asylum. Their merits hearing is on August 25, 2025. The family speaks Spanish and lives in a western suburb of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 8/25/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Mexico

Client's Story

A married couple from Mexico, B. and S. operated a store. In December 2020, members of Los Oaxacos cartel began demanding extortion money from them in order to keep their store open. Cartel members then surrounded and monitored their store daily and called B. to threaten him if he did not pay the extortion money. The cartel members threatened that they would harm the couple's son and disappear the family if they defied the cartel. The cartel also indicated that they were specifically targeting him because he is Afro-Mexican. After a few months, the family fled to a different part of Mexico, but the cartel continued to contact and threaten B. The family fled to the United States and was placed in removal proceedings.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely the family's I-589 asylum applications. All supporting materials and affidavits will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for August 25, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 22-0153688

16. Q. is a transgender woman from Venezuela. Her merits hearing is scheduled for September 3, 2025. Q. speaks Spanish and lives in the northwest suburbs of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 9/3/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

As a child, Q's family members physically and verbally abused her for her effeminacy and because they perceived her to be gay. Q.'s classmates bullied her throughout school and called her anti-LGTBQ slurs. As an adult, Q. joined a political party in opposition to the government and was threatened by pro-government allies for her sexual orientation and political activism. Pro-government agents followed Q. home from work and physically and sexually assaulted her in her home. When Q. reported the threats and attack to the police, she was not taken seriously and was mocked for her gender identity.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed Q.'s asylum application. All affidavits and supporting documents for Q.'s case will be due 15 days prior to her merits hearing, which is on September 3, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0161994

17. K. is a woman from Ecuador. Her husband, L., and son, C., are derivatives on her asylum application. L. also independently filed for asylum. Their individual merits hearing is scheduled for September 18, 2025. K. and her family speak Kichwa and very limited Spanish. They live in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 9/18/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Languages: Kichwa, Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

K. and her husband, L., operated a general store in Ecuador. One day, two men vandalized K. and L.'s vehicle, demanded money from them, and threatened to kill them because of their indigenous identities. The same men later physically assaulted K. and L. at their business, and they had to seek treatment at the hospital for their injuries. After this attack, K., L., and C. went to live in hiding with L.'s family. The men found them and physically assaulted L.'s mother. K., L., and C. fled Ecuador and arrived in the United States around July 2023.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed K., L., and C.'s asylum applications. All affidavits and supporting materials for K., L., and C.'s case will be due 15 days prior to their merits hearing, which is scheduled for September 18, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0164427

18. P. is a man from Venezuela. His wife, Q., and daughter, R., are derivatives on his application and are also independently eligible for asylum. Their merits hearing is on September 26, 2025. P. and his family speak Spanish and live in a northwestern suburb of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 9/25/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

P., Q., and P.'s brother worked for the opposition party in Venezuela. In 2020, the Venezuelan government special action forces murdered P.'s brother for his political activity. Police searched, threatened, and interrogated P. several times because of his work to mobilize voters. Venezuelan police and government agents entered their home and stole valuables on three occasions. P., Q. and R. fled Venezuela and arrived in the U.S. in June 2022.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed their I-589s in March 2023. All affidavits and supporting materials for their case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing on September 25, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 22-0155558

Priority Matters - SIJS

19. L. is a 16-year-old-boy from Guatemala who lives with his aunt, who speaks Spanish, in northwest Chicago (Cook County).

Deadline: Predicate Order filed by 2/3/2025

Venue: Probate Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Guatemala

Client's Story

L.'s father was tragically killed in 2019, when L. was just 11 years old. After receiving threats from the same group responsible for his father's death, L. made the decision to seek safety with his aunt in Chicago and arrived in the United States in October 2023.

Important Client Context

A pro bono attorney will need to file a petition for guardianship on behalf of L's aunt. They will need an order finding that L's reunification with his father is not viable due death. This is to show that it is not in L's best interest to return to Guatemala.

NIJC Contact

Berenice Sanchez Ruiz, bsanchezruiz@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0181672

Asylum - Defensive

Expected Tasks: Legal research, Litigating in immigration court, Preparing affidavits, Preparing applications, Preparing client testimony, Working with vulnerable clients, Writing legal memos

20. C. and K. are lesbian cisgender women from Mexico. They speak Spanish and live in the Chicago suburbs. K.'s first master calendar hearing is August 8, 2024 and C.'s first master calendar hearing is November 14, 2025, but their cases can be consolidated.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 8/8/2024

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Mexico

Client's Story

Growing up, C.'s brothers beat her and her partner K. for being lesbians. The couple attempted to relocate to another part of Mexico, but C.'s colleague threatened, drugged, and sexually assaulted her. He said he wanted to teach C. to like men. He threatened to kill both C. and K. They tried to report the colleague to the police, but the police refused to help them because they are lesbians. C. and K. tried to move again but continue receiving threatening messages. They fled to the United States in 2022.

Important Client Context

C. and K. timely filed for asylum. C. has prior removal order, but it does not impact her asylum eligibility. K.'s first master calendar hearing is August 8, 2024. C.'s first master calendar hearing is November 14, 2025. Pro bono counsel may discuss consolidating the cases with clients. When a merits hearing is set, all affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior. Pro bono counsel may request a

merits date at the scheduled master calendar hearing or file a motion to set for merits at an earlier date.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Numbers: 22-0160453, 22-0160531

21. H. is a gay cisgender man from Venezuela. His first master calendar hearing is scheduled for November 19, 2024. He speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 11/19/2024

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

From a young age, H. faced abuse, harassment and bullying for being more effeminate. His father told H. he "would rather have a dead son than a gay son." H. learned to hide his sexual orientation out of fear. As an adult, H. was fired from his government job after his boss found out H. is gay. H. also believes he was fired because he refused to support President Maduro. H. relocated to another part of Venezuela out of fear of political retaliation and other government sponsored violence. However, outside of the capital, he felt even more fear of being outed, attacked, and even killed because of his sexual orientation and political opinion.

Important Client Context

H.'s asylum application was timely filed with the Chicago Immigration Court. H.'s first master calendar hearing is November 19, 2024. When his merits hearing is set, all affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior. Pro bono counsel may request a merits date at the scheduled master hearing or file a motion to set for merits at an earlier date.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 22-0157128

22. D. is a gay cisgender man from Ghana. His master calendar hearing is scheduled for December 12, 2024. He speaks Twi and English and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 12/12/2024

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Languages: Twi, English

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Ghana

Client's Story

D. began to question his sexual orientation and entered into a relationship with a business owner in his community. They dated for about seven years but were not open about their relationship. Around April 2021, they started to be more affectionate with each other in public. A few month's later, D.'s sibling walked in on D. and his partner being intimate together. Word spread about D. and O.'s relationship. A group of men broke into their home and attacked them. D. was afraid to report the attack to the police for fear he would be arrested because same sex intercourse is criminalized in Ghana.

Important Client Context

D. timely filed for asylum. His master calendar hearing is scheduled for December 12, 2024 at the Chicago Immigration Court. When his merits hearing is set, all affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior. Pro bono counsel may request a merits date at the scheduled master hearing or file a motion to set for

merits at an earlier date.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 22-0159379

23. O. is a man from Sudan. His master calendar hearing is on December 16, 2024. O. speaks Arabic and lives in Indianapolis.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 12/16/2024

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Arabic

Location: IN

Country of Origin: Sudan

Client's Story

O. grew up in Darfur, Sudan. When O. was a child, the Sudanese government bombed his town because the townspeople belonged to the Zaghawa tribe. Later, while in university, the Muslim Brotherhood tortured and threatened O. for being Zaghawa and for refusing to join the organization. Years later, the Muslim Brotherhood detained O. several times—once for participating in a peaceful anti-government protest, the other times for being Zaghawa. During his stints in detention, O's captors beat him, held him in solitary confinement, and deprived him of food and water. O. fears harm at the hands of the Sudanese government, government militias, and the Muslim Brotherhood if forced to return to Sudan.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed O.'s asylum application with the immigration court. All affidavits and supporting materials to O.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0162501

24. E. is a gay cisgender man living with HIV from Venezuela. His first master calendar hearing is scheduled for January 6, 2025. He speaks Spanish lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 1/6/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

E. has hidden his sexual orientation from a young age out of fear of homophobic violence. He was fired from his government job after he refused to participate in marches supporting President Maduro. He ultimately fled Venezuela after he was he was denied medical treatment in August 2022 because of his HIV status. E. felt he had no recourse because if he sought legal action, more people would know his HIV status, which he feared would lead to losing his job and facing further discrimination and violence.

Important Client Context

E.'s asylum application was timely filed on August 11, 2023. All affidavits and supporting materials for E. will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing. If client and pro bono counsel agree, counsel can file a motion to set the case for merits.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0161398

25. L. is a lesbian cisgender woman from Colombia. Her first master calendar hearing is scheduled for January 16, 2025. She speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 1/16/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

L. faced violence and discrimination for dressing and acting in ways considered masculine. She was sent to the school psychologist to cure her "gay tendencies." When she came out to her mother, her mother rejected L. and beat her. A group of men then drugged, kidnapped, and raped L. because she dressed like a lesbian. Years later, a different group of men tried to grab and attack L. and a friend to "teach them how to be women." L. and her friend ran to the police, but the police refused to help them.

Important Client Context

Since 2017, L. mostly lived outside of Colombia because she could not tolerate the homophobia. She spent several years in Brazil and briefly lived in Chile and Ecuador, but she did not request or have legal status or a work permit in any of these countries. Pro bono counsel will need to argue, with NIJC's support, that L. was not firmly resettled in any of these countries. L.'s asylum application was timely filed with the Chicago Immigration Court on July 10, 2023. When her merits hearing is set, all affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior. Pro bono counsel may request a merits date at the scheduled master calendar hearing or file a motion to set for merits at an earlier date.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 23-0161948

26. T. is a lesbian cisgender woman from Ecuador. She speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago. Her master calendar hearing is scheduled for February 4, 2025.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 2/5/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

T.'s family shunned her when she came out as lesbian at age 24. People called T. and her girlfriend homophobic slurs and verbally threatened them when they went out together. T. has had close friends who have been murdered for being openly LGBTQ in Ecuador. The police have refused to investigate crimes against her friends. Separately (and before she came out), T. was raped by a serial rapist. He was prosecuted and convicted but was released in 2021. T. saw him watching her at work not long before she and her girlfriend fled Ecuador.

Important Client Context

T.'s asylum application was timely filed. Her first master calendar hearing is February 4, 2025. This hearing is currently scheduled on the IAD docket. Though counsel should prepare to proceed as scheduled, these cases often do not move forward and may require advocacy to ensure this client receives a hearing date. All affidavits and supporting materials for T.'s case will be due 15 days prior to her individual merits hearing. If T. and pro bono counsel agree, counsel can file a motion to set this case for merits. NIJC also represents T.'s girlfriend, a Venezuelan national.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0162210

27. R. is a man from Colombia. His wife, M., and children, J., G., and S., are derivatives on his application and are also independently eligible for asylum. Their next Master Calendar hearing is on February 24, 2025. R. and his family speak Spanish and live in a southwestern suburb of Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 2/24/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

R. owned a computer repair business in Colombia. While doing a job in 2022, he accidentally discovered an organization that stole motorcycles and overheard an official's name. After finishing the job, he and his family received numerous threats. A police officer stopped R., placed him in the police car, and threatened him to stay silent about what he saw on the computer. Later, men kidnapped and beat R., threatening the life of his pregnant wife and disabled son. R. and his family fled Colombia and arrived in the US July 2022.

Important Client Context

Their next Master Calendar hearing is on February 24, 2025. All affidavits and supporting materials for their case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0161686

28. X. is a bisexual cisgender man from Benin. His master calendar hearing is scheduled for February 25, 2025. He speaks French and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 2/25/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: French

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Benin

Client's Story

When X.'s extended family found him with a male partner, they chased him, threw stones at him, and beat him. They took him several times to a voodoo priest to "cure" him and X. continued to suffer regular verbal and physical abuse because many people knew about his sexual orientation. Eventually X. understood that he could not continue to live in Benin and be himself. X. left Benin in 2018 and spent approximately two and a half years in Brazil before travelling to the United States.

Important Client Context

X. timely filed an I-589 application. His master calendar hearing is scheduled for February 25, 2025. X. received an ID and work permit in Brazil; although he does not remember filing an asylum application, it is likely that he did and did not realize. Pro bono counsel should be prepared to argue that X. was not firmly resettled or that an exception applies to his resettlement in Brazil.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 21-0151564

29. J. is a gay cisgender man from Colombia. His master calendar hearing is on March 5, 2025. He speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 3/5/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

J. knew he was gay from a young age. His family tried to change his sexual orientation by beating him, and his teachers and peers psychologically tormented him. As an adult, the Rastrojos paramilitary cartel extorted and threatened to kill J. because of his sexual orientation. On one occasion, cartel members held a knife to J.'s throat while calling him anti-LGBTQ slurs and asking for money. J. went to the hospital, where police met him, but they did not investigate the crime. J. fled to Bogota. In Bogota, an employee at J.'s new job revealed himself as a member of Rastrojos and threatened J. J.'s friend found a pamphlet published by the Rastrojos threatening gay locals to change their ways or face dangerous lives. Consequently, J. fled to the United States.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed J.'s asylum application. J. has a master calendar hearing scheduled is on March 5, 2025. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior to J.'s merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 23-0161539

30. D. is a woman from Ecuador. Her daughter, C., is a derivative on D.'s claim and has an independent asylum application on file. D. and C.'s master calendar hearing is on March 25, 2025. Their case is on remand from the BIA for a de novo merits hearing. D. and C. speak Spanish and live in Connecticut.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 3/25/2025

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: CT

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

In 2019, D. and her daughter C. fled D.'s husband who severely abused D. based on her gender, mixed race status, and Catholic faith. Upon entry to the U.S., they were placed in the MPP/Remain in Mexico program and thus returned to Mexico where they were twice kidnapped. Their first merits hearing was by video at the Laredo Tent Court. Although the Immigration Judge found D. wholly credible, he denied asylum and withholding but granted D. and C. protection under the Convention Against Torture (CAT). Since then, D. and C. have been before the Fifth Circuit twice and before the Board of Immigration Appeals three times. The BIA overturned the CAT grant and the case is now on remand to pursue all three forms of relief: asylum, withholding of removal, and CAT. With the assistance of NIJC and prior pro bono counsel, D. and C. finally obtained a remand for a second de novo merits hearing.

Important Client Context

D.'s and C.'s master calendar hearing is scheduled for March 24, 2025, before the Hartford Immigration Court. NIJC will share prior briefs, research, materials, and affidavits with new pro bono counsel. All affidavits and supporting materials to their case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 19-0139102

31. R. is a woman from Angola. Her sons, S. and T., are derivatives on her asylum application and are also independently eligible for asylum. Their Master Calendar hearing is on April 7, 2025. R., S., and T. speak Portuguese and live in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 4/7/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Languages: Portuguese, Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Angola

Client's Story

R. was a doctor in Angola during the COVID-19 pandemic. She refused to falsify documents and participate in the corruption in which her employer and the Angolan government were involved. R. participated in public protests against this corruption, and police detained her as a result. Unknown individuals attacked and sexually assaulted R. because of her opposition. R.'s son, S., was kidnapped by individuals who told R. that this had happened because of her political opinions. S. was later returned to R., and she fled with her children to the United States in March 2023. R. is also a domestic abuse survivor. Beginning in 2019 and lasting until she left Angola, R.'s former husband, from whom she is now separated, physically and emotionally abused her.

Important Client Context

R. has one U.S. citizen child, U. R. timely filed her asylum application with the immigration court in December 2023. NIJC timely filed independent asylum applications for S. and T. in February 2024. All affidavits and supporting materials for R., S., and T.'s case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled. Pro bono counsel may request a merits date at the scheduled master hearing or file a motion to set for merits at an earlier date.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0166536

32. A. is a man from Nigeria. His Master Calendar hearing is on April 16, 2025. A. speaks English and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 4/16/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: English

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Nigeria

Client's Story

A. is Christian. In Nigeria, A. dated a woman named G. who was Muslim. A. and G. had a child together. G's father was a religious leader and therefore did not approve of A.'s relationship with G. He hired a group of men to threaten and attack A. in order to scare him into ending the relationship. During a second attack, the men kidnapped A. When the men released him, they told A. that they would kill him if he did not end his relationship with G. A. did not comply with the demands. The men kidnapped A., G. and their child, but held A. separately. A. never saw G. or his child again. He escaped his kidnappers after police discovered and helped him escape. The men continued to attack A., even after he moved and changed his phone number. Fearing for his life, A. fled Nigeria. His attackers threatened via phone and text message to find him and kill him if he ever returned.

Important Client Context

A previous attorney timely filed A.'s asylum application with the immigration court. A. is scheduled for a Master Calendar hearing on April 16, 2025. This hearing is currently scheduled on the IAD docket. Though counsel should prepare to proceed as scheduled, these cases often do not move forward and may require advocacy to ensure this client receives a hearing date. All affidavits and supporting materials to A.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 24-0174575

33. R. is a woman from Honduras. Her two children, S. and E., are derivatives on her application for asylum. Their next Master Calendar hearing is May 07, 2025. The family speaks Spanish and lives in Northern Indiana.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 5/7/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IN

Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

When R. was a child, the director of her school molested her several times. As a teenager, a much older man forced her into a relationship in which he verbally and sexually abused her. R. left him after several years of abuse. Later, R. became involved in politics. The local gang told R. to help their gang leader get into her political party and threatened kill her otherwise. R. refused and fled the country with her children.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed their asylum applications. R.'s next Master Calendar Hearing is on May 07, 2025. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 22-0153250

34. L. is a man from Cuba. His Master Calendar hearing is scheduled for June 16, 2025. L. speaks Spanish and lives in the Western suburbs of Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 6/16/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Cuba

Client's Story

L. attended anti-government protests in July 2021. A few days later, police arrived to his house and began threatening him. They told him that unless he paid 200 pesos, he was going to be jailed. Eventually, L was put in jail and was detained for several days. Afraid to be jailed again, L. fled for the United States.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed his asylum application USCIS. L.'s first Master Calendar hearing is on June 16, 2023. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior to his merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 22-0155448

35. E. is a young man from Guatemala. He has a Master Calendar hearing is on August 6, 2025, but because he was a designated unaccompanied child, the asylum office has jurisdiction over his pending asylum claim. E. speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 8/6/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court, USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Guatemala

Client's Story

When E. was in high school, local gang members began to demand that E. help them with their illegal activities. E. refused, and the gang members pushed him to the ground. The gang members continued demanding that E. assist them. Each time, E. refused, and the gang members beat him. The gang then killed E.'s cousin for defying their demands. The gang's threats escalated to the point that the gang members threatened him with a gun in late 2020 or early 2021. E. fled Guatemala soon afterwards. Immigration officers apprehended E. and placed him in ORR custody.

Important Client Context

As a previously designated unaccompanied child, the asylum office has initial jurisdiction over E.'s case even though he is scheduled for a Master Calendar Hearing in immigration court on August 6, 2025. NIJC timely filed E.'s skeletal asylum application with USCIS. Affidavits and other supporting documents will be due one week prior to his interview at the asylum office, which could be scheduled at any time.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 21-0150685

36. R. is a woman from Ecuador. R. and four of her children have a merits hearing on August 28, 2025. R.'s husband, H., and their eldest child, C. have asylum applications pending with USCIS. R. and her family speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 8/28/2025

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court, USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

H. witnessed a gang engaging in suspicious activity at a neighbor's house. Law enforcement arrived shortly after, leading the gang to assume that H. reported them to the police. Following this incident, the gang terrorized the family on numerous occasions by extorting them, attacking them, and assaulting the two eldest children. The family also suspects that the gang murdered R.'s nephew by staging a fatal car accident in which he was killed. C. suffered domestic abuse at the hands of her former partner who had ties to the same gang that targeted the rest of the family. The second eldest child has an additional claim based on a sexual assault that the gang committed against her.

Important Client Context

NIJC filed asylum applications on the family's behalf. The four youngest children are listed as derivatives on R.'s and H.'s applications, and R. and H. are also listed as each other's derivatives. All family members also filed individual asylum applications.

Because their applications were filed more than one year after they entered the United States, pro bono attorneys will need to argue that the family merits an exception to the one-year filing deadline. NIJC will assist them in making this argument. All affidavits and supporting materials to R. and the four youngest children's case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for August 28, 2025. All supporting materials to H. and C.'s case will be due one week prior to the asylum interview. If R. is granted asylum at her hearing before H. and C. are called for asylum interviews, she can file an I-730 petition for them to be granted asylum as her derivatives.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0165269

37. P. is a bisexual cisgender man from Ghana. His merits hearing is scheduled for October 2, 2025. He speaks English and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 10/2/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Languages: English, Twi

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Ghana

Client's Story

P. understood his attraction to men and women around secondary school. Although he had a relationship with another boy, he felt he needed to hide it to avoid violence and rejection from his family and society. P. joined an LGBTQ rights organization in Ghana and campaigned for social services for the LGBTQ population. When P. left to study for his master's degree in Hungary, he continued his advocacy online through his Twitter account. When P. returned to Ghana after his studies, groups of men attacked and beat him in his home and at a market while yelling anti-LGBTQ slurs. P. understood he was not safe in Ghana and fled to the United States in 2023.

Important Client Context

P. timely filed an I-589 application pro se. His individual hearing is scheduled for October 2, 2025 and will take place via WebEx. All materials must be filed 15 days in advance of the hearing. P. has a young child in Ghana for whom he would like to petition if he is granted asylum.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 24-0171832

38. K. is a man from Ecuador. His wife, L., and daughter, M., are derivatives on his asylum application, and L. is also independently eligible for asylum. K., L., and M.'s merits hearing is on October 9, 2025. K. and his family speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 10/9/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Languages: Kichwa, Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

K. and his wife, L., operated a fruit stand in Ecuador. K. and L. were approached by gang members who threatened their lives if they did not give them the money they demanded. K. was physically beaten and robbed by the gang members while trying to protect L. K. and L. paid the gang members for a month up until they ran out of money. K. and L. fled Ecuador with their daughter, M., and arrived in the United States around June 2023.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed their asylum applications with the immigration court. All affidavits and supporting materials for K., L. and M.'s case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for October 9, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0164144

39. P. is a woman from Guatemala. Her daughters, Q., R., and S. are derivatives on her application. S. is also independently eligible for asylum. Their merits hearing is on October 10, 2025. P., Q., R., and S. speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 10/10/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Guatemala

Client's Story

Members of an organized criminal group in Guatemala tried to force P.'s daughter, S., into prostitution. When S. and P. refused, the criminal group threatened to kidnap S. Fearing for her life, S. fled to the United States. After S. fled, the same people who had targeted S. threatened to force P. into prostitution and to kidnap her other daughters. P., Q., and R. fled to the United States to seek safety.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed P.'s asylum application, which includes S., Q., and R. as derivatives. NIJC also filed an independent asylum application for S. All supporting documents to P., Q., R., and S.'s case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for October 10, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 20-0141426

40. S. is a man from Colombia. His merits hearing is October 24, 2025. S. speaks Spanish and lives in a suburb of Indianapolis.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 10/25/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IN

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

S. was known as a community leader because of his work helping young men in his neighborhood stay away from drugs and violence. He collected money and used it to share food with local youth. Members of La Cordillera armed group targeted and sent death threats to S. for his community work. They attacked S. while on his motorcycle and later kidnapped and physically assaulted him. S. fled to the United States in 2023.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed S.'s asylum application with the immigration court. All affidavits and supporting materials for S.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is October 24, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 24-0167176

41. R. is a man from Venezuela. His wife, S. is a derivative on his application for asylum and has an independent application on file. R. and S.'s cases are consolidated, and their individual merits hearing is on November 15, 2025. R. and S. speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 11/25/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

R. and his brother worked together in construction. The colectivos, pro-government paramilitary groups, oversaw their work and took a portion of all the construction workers' paychecks. They killed R.'s brother when he complained about this policy. R. quit his job, but the colectivos demanded that he return to work, attacked him, and threatened to kill him if he did not obey. R. joined a political opposition group and participated in protests against government corruption. The colectivos' attacks and threats intensified, so R. and S. fled to Chile. They later returned to Venezuela after they were harmed by the Tren de Aragua gang. R. and S. tried to relocate within Venezuela, but the colectivos found them again. The attacks and the threats continued to escalate, and R. and S. fled to the United States. S. also experienced persecution for her political opinion prior to R.'s problems with the colectivos. Police threatened her and her family while holding her in detention for her participation in a university student protest.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed R. and S.'s asylum applications. Affidavits and supporting materials for R. and S.'s case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for November 25, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0168308

42. D. is a gay cisgender man from Honduras. His merits hearing is scheduled for January 9, 2026. D. speaks Spanish and lives in Indianapolis.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 1/9/2026

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IN

Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

While in Honduras, a group of five people on the street approached D., beat him with a bat, cut him with glass and attempted to rape him while calling him anti-LGBTQ slurs. When D. went to the police, they mocked him with homophobic slurs and extorted him. D. fled Honduras after finding a note near his home threatening to kill him if he did not leave the country within 24 hours.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed D.'s asylum application. All affidavits and support documents for D.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his merits hearing, which is on January 9, 2026.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 22-0160116

43. U. is a man from Togo. His merits hearing is on January 13, 2026. U. speaks Ewe and lives

in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 1/13/2026

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Languages: French, Mina

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Togo

Client's Story

U. spent approximately fifteen years working as an organizer for an opposition Togolese political party, the Patriotic Movement for Democracy and Development. While campaigning for the party during the leadup to the 2020 presidential election, soldiers arrested U. and tortured him, criticizing his political activities. U. escaped and lived in hiding until his uncle—who is affiliated with the right-wing party in power in Togo—told soldiers his whereabouts. U. then fled the country. Shortly after he did so, the party in power in Togo arrested and tortured U.'s father because of his political affiliations.

Important Client Context

U. timely filed a pro se asylum application. All affidavits and supporting materials to U.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for January 13, 2026.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 22-0160226

44. M. is a man from Guatemala. His merits hearing is on May 28, 2026. M. speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 5/28/2026

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Guatemala

Client's Story

M. lived in Guatemala with his wife, who has HIV. M.'s former employer knew that M. was receiving medical treatment to prevent the transmission of HIV from his wife to him. His employer assumed that M. was living with AIDs, publicized this to his co-workers, and stated that M. would transmit HIV to his colleagues. M.'s employer terminated his employment and listed information on a public database stating that M. has a medical condition that prevents him from being able to work so that others will not hire him. M. initiated a civil rights lawsuit against his former employer, after which he began receiving death threats. Separately, M. and his family have been attacked because of his wife's HIV status and because of an assumption that M. is gay.

Important Client Context

M. timely filed his I-589 pro se. All affidavits and supporting materials for M.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for May 28, 2026.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 23-0162812

45. H. is a bisexual cisgender man from Benin. His merits hearing is scheduled for June 24, 2026. H. speaks French and lives in Chicago, IL.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 6/24/2026

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court
Location: IL

Languages: French, Other
Country of Origin: Benin

Client's Story

H. fled Benin after he suffered several attacks related to his sexual orientation. The attacks began when neighbors walked in on him and a same-sex partner and beat them both. Soon after this first attack, several men approached and beat H. while threatening to kill him because of his sexual orientation. H. then began receiving threatening messages and left the city where he was living in order to be safe. When H. was chased and threatened because of his sexual orientation in this second town, he fled the country because he did not believe he could be safe anywhere in Benin. H. fled Benin in May 2021 and entered the United States in September 2021.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed H.'s I-589 on September 2, 2022. All affidavits and supporting materials for H.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing. H. married a woman in 2019, feeling obliged to hide his sexual orientation. He and his wife have one child; his wife and child reside in Benin.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 22-0154068

46. O. is a bisexual cisgender man from Colombia. His merits hearing is scheduled for November 19, 2026. He speaks Spanish and lives in a suburb of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 11/19/2026

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

Around 2020, guerrilla militants barged into U.'s family's home and sexually assaulted him, forcing him to perform oral sex and anally penetrating him while making homophobic comments to him. U. attempted to hide his sexual orientation out of fear of violence. However, in March 2023, three men drugged and kidnapped U., called him homophobic slurs, and took turns raping him. U. tried to report this to the police after the men released him, but the police laughed in his face and refused to take down the report. When U. started receiving death threats from his kidnapers, where they said they knew U. attempted to report them to the police, U. fled to the United States.

Important Client Context

U.'s asylum application was timely filed with the immigration court. All affidavits and supporting materials for U. are due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is on November 19, 2026.

If U. is granted asylum, U. would like to petition for his son, who remains in Colombia.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0164200

47. S. is a gay, gender-fluid person from Haiti. S.'s merits hearing is scheduled for August 10, 2027. S. speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 8/10/2027

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence, LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court
Location: IL

Language: Spanish
Country of Origin: Haiti

Client's Story

S. started to identify as bisexual as a teen and occasionally dressed in women's clothing. After this, children and neighbors threw rocks and insults at S. and threatened to kill S. In order to survive, S. learned they must hide their LGBTQ identity. In 2021, S. attempted to enter the United States but was removed to Haiti after a negative credible fear determination. After returning to Haiti, S. attempted to better hide their LGBTQ identity, but experienced insults, extortion, and threats from both gangs and local police. In early 2023, police detained, beat, and sexually assaulted S. while using anti-LGBTQ slurs. S. fled Haiti soon after the assault.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed S.'s asylum application. All affidavits and supporting materials to S.'s case must be filed 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for August 10, 2027. The Judge has requested evidence be split into separate files as such: filings and affidavit in one electronic file, evidence such as newspapers and corroborating in another file, and country conditions in a separate file.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0166636

48. R. is a man from Ecuador. His individual merits hearing is on November 9, 2027. R. speaks Spanish and lives in a western suburb of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 11/9/2027

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

R. was business owner in Ecuador. He has two children who live in Ecuador with their mother, from whom R. is separated. A gang approached R. at his business and demanded that he pay them and give them information about his customers so that they could extort his customers as well. R. told the gang that he would help so that they would leave without harming him, but he didn't follow through on his promises. When the gang didn't get what they asked for, they attacked R. and injured him so badly that he had to receive medical attention. R. did not report the attack to the police because the police are corrupt and work with the gang. After spending a few days in recovery, R. decided to leave Ecuador. R.'s neighbors say that the gang is still looking for him. R. believes that if he returns to Ecuador, the gang will find him and kill him because of his refusal to comply with their demands.

Important Client Context

NIJC helped R. timely file his asylum application with the Chicago immigration court. All affidavits and supporting materials for R.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for November 9, 2027.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 24-0167419

49. V. is a transgender woman from Honduras seeking protection under the Convention Against Torture (CAT). Her case is on remand from the Board of Immigrant Appeals and is venued in Chicago. V. speaks Spanish.

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+
Venue: Immigration Court
Location: LA

Language: Spanish
Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

V. suffered severe physical and emotional abuse in Honduras because of her gender identity from both family members and strangers. V. first fled Honduras in 1994 and entered the United States as an unaccompanied minor. As there were no protections for unaccompanied minors at that time, V. was ordered removed without an opportunity to speak to an attorney. Alone and vulnerable, V. then ended up in a trafficking situation, which led to a drug-related conviction and eventually V.'s deportation in 2019. Fearing for her life, V. fled Honduras again as soon as she could. When V. re-entered the United States in 2019, she was detained in federal custody and charged with illegal re-entry. After serving her sentence in federal custody, she was transferred to ICE custody in rural Louisiana in March 2022. Unable to secure representation, V. proceeded pro se before the Immigration Judge, who denied all relief.

Important Client Context

NIJC represented her on appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). The Board reversed and remanded V.'s case, however, the same IJ denied all relief a second time. NIJC again represented V. on appeal to the BIA. The BIA reversed and remanded V.'s case a second time. In May, V. was granted bond; she was released from DHS custody.

Although V. currently lives in supportive housing in New Orleans, Louisiana, her case is venued with the Chicago Immigration Court to allow NIJC and its pro bono partners to continue representing her in her proceedings. V. currently has no future hearing date. V. is willing to travel to Chicago for her merits hearing.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 22-0155449

Asylum - Affirmative

Expected Tasks: Legal research, Preparing affidavits, Preparing applications, Preparing client testimony, Working with vulnerable clients

50. B. is a gay cisgender man living with HIV from Nigeria. He speaks English and lives in southwest suburbs of Chicago.

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence, LGBTQ+

Venue: USCIS

Language: English

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Nigeria

Client's Story

From a young age, B. was ostracized from his family because of his feminine characteristics. When he was 10 years old, he was sent to live with his Uncle who promised to cure him, but instead beat B and forced him to fast and pray. When he was 15, a man he met on a dating app extorted B and threatened to expose B if he did not pay him. B experienced further discrimination and mistreatment after his HIV diagnosis, and realized Nigeria was not a safe place for him. B left Nigeria to study in Spain, but struggled to assimilate. B entered the United States in December 2022 on an F1 student visa and is currently taking courses at a community college. He timely filed for asylum and is awaiting an interview with the Chicago Asylum Office.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0165571

51. B. is a lesbian cisgender women from Venezuela. She speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

B. knew she was a lesbian from a young age but always felt she had to keep her sexual orientation a secret. Her peers in school bullied her, calling her anti-LGBTQ slurs. Around 2017, B. attended protests against the Maduro government. She was arrested and detained for around six months for her participation but no formal charges were brought against her. After she was released, she received death threats over text message for her anti-Maduro political opinion. B. attempted to relocate for safety and moved back and forth between her sister's house in Colombia and her father's house in another state of Venezuela. In Colombia, she began dating K. K. is also seeking asylum but has a separate case. When B.'s father found out she was dating a woman, he sent her nasty messages and disowned her. B. and K. experienced discrimination in Colombia because they are a lesbian couple.

Important Client Context

B. and K. entered the United States together in December 2022 and timely filed for asylum with USCIS. Although B. and K. have separate claims, their cases would ideally be accepted together. B. has a tender-age daughter she included as a derivative on her asylum application.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Numbers: 23-0161512, 23-0162629

52. D. is a gay cisgender man from Nigeria. He speaks English and lives in Northeast Indiana.

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: USCIS

Language: English

Location: IN

Country of Origin: Nigeria

Client's Story

Shortly after D. was forced into an arranged marriage, his wife caught him being intimate with a man. D. feared for his life, as LGBTQ relationships are criminalized in all of Nigeria. While D.'s wife did not tell others of his sexual orientation, he was later outed by an ex-partner. Since then, he has received numerous threats and had a police report filed against him for being LGBTQ.

Important Client Context

D. entered the United States in July 2023 on an F1 student visa and is currently taking courses at a community college. NIJC timely filed his asylum application on December 21, 2023, and he is awaiting an interview with the Chicago Asylum Office. Affidavits and other supporting documents will be due approximately one week prior to his interview at the asylum office. Because interview timing can vary, NIJC recommends pro bono counsel plan to work up this case within 12 weeks of case acceptance.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0165369

53. D. is a man from Colombia. His wife W., son P., and daughter F. are derivatives on his asylum application. Individual asylum applications have also been filed for W., P., and F. and for D.'s stepdaughter, B. The family speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

D. was a high-ranking police officer in Colombia. In 2015, the state transferred D. to a different district. He began to work with the Local Branch of the Judicial and Investigative Police (SIJIN) to help identify and capture individuals who were involved in micro trafficking. In 2018, the court called D. to testify as a witness in a hearing against accused micro traffickers. About a month after the hearing, D. noticed individuals on motorcycles watching and following him after work. In early 2020, D. stopped doing operational fieldwork and transferred to an administrative position after a serious car accident left him with physical impairments. Although D. was in a new position, W. and B. noticed men on motorcycles frequently watching their house. Unknown, suspicious individuals began to approach D. in public and ask him personal questions including about his past employment. Later that year, D. learned that a number of police officer's home addresses, including his own, had been shared in a group chat that included numerous micro trafficking affiliates. Around late 2021 or early 2022, D. and his family received a threatening note at their house. D. reported the harassment and threats to the police, but nothing came of it. D. and his family stopped leaving their house unless necessary. In spring 2023, they fled to the United States on tourist visas.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed D., W., P., F., and B. 's individual asylum applications with USCIS. Affidavits and other supporting documents will be due one week prior to the family's interview(s) at the asylum office. Because interview timing can vary, pro bono counsel should plan to work up this case within 12-16 weeks of case acceptance.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 23-0166261

54. J. is a woman from Honduras. Her son, R., and two daughters, A. and W., are derivatives on her application for asylum. J., R., A., and W. speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

J. lived with her partner, Z., and their son, R. Z. physically and verbally abused J. after he heard that another man touched her. J. was hospitalized as a result of the abuse. After this happened, J. told her parents of the harm. J. and R. left to live with J.'s parents, but Z. found her and threatened to harm J. and her parents if they went to the police. Fearing for their safety, J. began living with Z. again, and he continued to abuse her. Sometime after this, J. gave birth to A. Several years later, J. left Z. He retaliated by taking R. and A. He kept them for months and did not allow J. to see or contact her children during this time. R. and A. eventually escaped and returned to J. In 2019, J. fled the country, but Mexican immigration officials deported her back to Honduras. She had become pregnant on her journey and gave birth to her youngest daughter, W., in Honduras. J. and her children lived with J.'s parents because she received death threats from Z. In 2021, J. fled Honduras with W. to escape Z. About

six months later, R. and A. traveled to the United States separately in order to join them.

Important Client Context

NIJC filed J.'s asylum application with her children as derivatives with USCIS in November 2023. Because the application was filed more than one year after the J.'s arrival, the family's case may be referred to the immigration court. Pro bono attorneys will need to argue that they meet an exception to the one-year filing deadline. NIJC will assist them in making this argument. All supporting materials will be due one week prior to the asylum interview. Because interview timing can vary, pro bono counsel should plan to work up this case within 12-16 weeks of placement.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0162595

55. K. is a lesbian cisgender women from Venezuela. She speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence, LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: USCIS

Languages: Spanish, Portuguese

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

Beginning at a very young age, K. suffered multiple instances of rape and sexual abuse throughout her life. Her family often kicked her out of the house as a child because she is a lesbian. Her brother threatened K. at gunpoint. The father of K.'s daughter physically, sexually, and verbally abused her. K. tried to get a protective order against him, but it was not enforced. He began custody proceedings against K., during which he outed K. as a lesbian and the judge granted sole custody of their daughter to the father.

Around 2017, K. became politically active through her support of Capriles, an opposition party to the Maduro government. She organized people online, worked on voting campaigns, and attended protests. She also went to Gay Pride marches. The Venezuelan police detained her twice for her activism. While she was detained, the police said they would make her and her lesbian partner-at-the-time straight and teach them "how to be women." No official charges were filed against K. But after she was released the second time, Venezuelan officials came looking for K. to arrest her again.

K. fled to Colombia around 2018. K. obtained legal residence in Colombia. In Colombia, she met her new partner, B. B. is also seeking asylum but has a separate case. K. and B. did not feel safe as lesbian women and experienced housing and job discrimination because of their sexual orientations.

Important Client Context

K. and B. entered the United States together in December 2022 and timely filed for asylum before USCIS. Although K. and B.'s claims are separate, their cases would ideally be accepted together.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Numbers: 23-0162629, 23-0161512

56. M. is a woman from Nicaragua awaiting an asylum interview. She speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Nicaragua

Client's Story

M. began attending anti-government protests frequently in 2018. Police often followed and harassed her for her political activism. In late 2019, police arrested M. for her connections with a prominent activist and held her in prison for about a week. During this time, police subjected her to routine interrogations in which they beat and sexually assaulted and her. M. still suffers from the permanent injuries that she sustained during this time. The government released M. on the condition that she provide a false testimony in trial against another activist. She refused to comply, and in early 2021, the government falsified drugs and arms trafficking charges against M. in order to arrest her again. Police kept M. jailed and drugged for nearly two weeks before transferring her to a penitentiary. M.'s mother contacted a civil rights attorney to defend her, but though the accusations were false and the government never produced hard evidence, a judge sentenced M. to 18 years in prison. Prison officials denied M. medical treatment and prescription medication. They forced her to spend one year in solitary confinement. After two years as a political prisoner, the Nicaraguan government exiled M. in February 2023 and sent her to the United States.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed M.'s affirmative asylum application. All supporting materials will be due one week prior to the asylum interview. Because interview timing can vary, pro bono counsel should plan to work up this case within 12-16 weeks of placement.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0163953

57. O. is a transgender woman from Colombia. She speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

O. grew up absorbing transphobic messages and consequently hid her gender identity. O. later created a magazine that showcased transgender artists and promoted LGBTQ diversity. In 2023, a man approached O. while holding a knife, called her transphobic slurs, and threatened to kill her. She went to the police, but they mocked her and refused to take her report. Then, a group of people stalked O. and physically attacked her near her home, while calling her transphobic slurs. When she attempted to report them again, the police again refused to help her. She tried to file a complaint with the Ombudsman office. O. has since learned her report was closed without further investigation.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed O.'s asylum application, and she is awaiting an interview with the Chicago Asylum Office. Affidavits and other supporting documents will be due approximately one week prior to her interview at the asylum office. Because interview timing can vary, NIJC recommends pro bono counsel plan to work up this case within 12 weeks of case acceptance.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 24-0167484

58. R. is a man from Honduras. His spouse, S., and child, C., are derivatives on his asylum application and have also independently applied for asylum. R., S., and C. speak Spanish and live in a western suburb of Chicago.

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

R. was a university student in Honduras. He and his family lived in an area with frequent gang activity. The gang in their neighborhood wanted R. to sell drugs at the university. After he refused, the gang attacked R. and threatened him. R. stopped attending school, but the gang continued to pressure him to sell drugs at the university. R. started working as a mototaxi driver; the same gang charged renta to the drivers. R. shared a mototaxi with another man, and together they refused to pay the renta. One day, gang members attacked R. and his coworker, stole the mototaxi, and killed R.'s coworker in front of R. That day, R. went into hiding in another area. Gang members looked for R. at his house and his mom's house. They threatened to kill R. and his spouse for not paying the renta. R. and his family fled Honduras to claim asylum in the United States.

Important Client Context

NIJC helped R., S., and C. file their asylum applications with USCIS in May 2024. R., S., and C. did not file within the one-year deadline, but they may be eligible for an exception due to ineffective assistance of counsel, as a person claiming to be an attorney defrauded the family prior to them contacting NIJC. All supporting materials will be due one week prior to the asylum interview. Because interview timing can vary, pro bono counsel should plan to work up this case within 12-16 weeks of placement.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0167216

59. R. is a woman from Pakistan. Her children S., T., and U., are derivatives on her asylum application. R. and her children speak Urdu and live in Chicago.

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence

Venue: USCIS

Language: Urdu

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Pakistan

Client's Story

R. married Y. about 15 years ago. Y. abused R. physically, verbally, emotionally, and financially. The abuse worsened after R. gave birth to their three children, S., T., and U. R. sought the assistance of her family, but Y. refused to allow R. to leave the relationship or grant her a divorce, even though he was frequently absent. R. and her children fled to the U.S. in 2023.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed R., S., T., and U.'s applications for asylum with USCIS. S., T., and U. are also SIJS eligible and are represented by NIJC in their SIJS predicate order case. If desired, pro bono counsel may provide representation for the predicate order as well (see: case number 24-0186784). Affidavits and other supporting documents will be due one week prior to the family's interview at the asylum office. Because interview timing can vary, NIJC recommends pro bono counsel plan to work up this case within about 12 weeks of case acceptance.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 24-0168067

60. S. is a man from Nicaragua awaiting an asylum interview. S. speaks Spanish and lives in the Indianapolis area.

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IN

Country of Origin: Nicaragua

Client's Story

In 2016, S. began attending community meetings regarding the police's ongoing poor treatment of civilians. Community leaders, including S.'s uncle, organized these meetings. Police learned of the meetings by having some of their associates attend. In February 2020, S. was working at home when the police arrived asking for his uncle. When S. told them that he did not know where his uncle was, they beat him. They then took S. and three other relatives to prison on accusations of being against the police. Prison officials deprived S. of medical attention and food. At times, the police did not allow his family to visit him. S. spent approximately three years as a political prisoner before the Nicaraguan government exiled him.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed S.'s asylum application. All supporting materials will be due one week prior to the asylum interview. Because interview timing can vary, pro bono counsel should plan to work up this case within 12-16 weeks of placement.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0163522

61. V. is a gay cisgender man from Senegal. He speaks French and lives in Chicago.

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue:

Language: French

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Senegal

Client's Story

V. is a member of the minority ethnicity Soninke and grew up in a very religious and traditional family. After having a short relationship with another boy as a teenager, he tried to convince himself to not be gay because he had been told same sex relationships are wrong, and he was afraid of being harmed if people discovered his attraction to men. When he was in his 20s, he dated a man, but V.'s father caught them together and beat and stabbed V. He stopped only when V.'s mother intervened. She took V. to the emergency room. About a year or so later, V.'s father forced him to marry a woman. When they did not have a child together after several years, V.'s father tortured him. V. eventually moved into an apartment with a gay friend. One night, they came home and found the apartment had been broken into. Someone chased them down the street shouting that they are gay. V.'s mother warned him that his father was looking for him and instigated the attack. V. fled to the United States.

Important Client Context

V. timely filed his asylum application in April 2023. Affidavits and other supporting documents will be due one week prior to his interview at the asylum office. Because interview timing can vary, NIJC recommends pro bono counsel plan to work up this case within about 12 weeks of case acceptance.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org

SIJS - Predicate Order

Expected Tasks: Litigating in state court, Preparing affidavits, Preparing applications, Preparing client testimony, Working with vulnerable clients

62. D. and A. are siblings aged 14 and 12, from Honduras. They live with their mother, who speaks Spanish, in northern Illinois (Lake County).

Deadline: Predicate Order filed by 12/1/2024

Venue: Family Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

D. and A.'s father was physically abusive to their mother, and both children witnessed this abuse. As a result, their mother decided to separate from their father. Shortly thereafter, she immigrated to the United States. During this transition, D. and A. stayed with their aunt. D. arrived in the United States in July 2023, and A. arrived in August 2023. They were able to reunify with their mother at that time. Since their parents' separation, their father has contacted them only once and has not provided financial or emotional support to D. and A.

Important Client Context

A pro bono attorney will need to file a petition for sole allocation of parental responsibilities on behalf of D. and A.'s mother and obtain an order finding that D. and A.'s reunification with their father is not viable due to abandonment, neglect, and abuse, and that it is not in D. and A.'s best interest to return to Honduras.

NIJC Contact

Berenice Sanchez Ruiz, bsanchezruiz@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0167073

63. J., C., and A. are young siblings from Guatemala. They live with their mother, who speaks Spanish, in a northwest suburb of Chicago (Kane County).

Deadline: Predicate Order filed by 12/1/2024

Venue: Family Court, Probate Court

Canjopal, Spanish

Location: IL

Languages:

Country of Origin: Guatemala

Client's Story

The children's mother separated from their father when J. was 9, and while she was pregnant with twins C. and A.. Their father stopped emotional and financial support after the separation, and the younger siblings have never had any contact with their father. The children were raised by their mother until she came to the U.S. in 2021 to find work, leaving her children in the care of their grandparents. In their mother's absence, J. was attacked and threatened by his father and father's family, so he fled to the U.S. in October of 2022 to reunify with his mother. C. & A. also arrived in the U.S. as unaccompanied children in July of 2023, and were able to reunite with their mother.

Important Client Context

A pro bono attorney will need to file a petition for sole allocation of parental responsibilities on behalf of J., C. & A.'s mother and obtain an order finding that the children's reunification with their father is not viable due to his abandonment, and that it is not in their best interest to return to Guatemala.

NIJC Contact

Berenice Sanchez Ruiz, bsanchezruiz@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0166102

64. K. and D. are half-brothers from Mexico, aged 13 and 9. They live with their mother, who speaks Spanish, in northwest Chicago (Cook County).

Deadline: Predicate Order filed by 1/5/2025

Venue: Family Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Mexico

Client's Story

K. and D. share the same mother but have different fathers. Both K. and D.'s fathers split from their mother when she was pregnant with each of them. K. and D. were never supported emotionally or financially by their fathers, and they do not have relationships with them. K. has had no contact with his father since he was five years old. D. has not had contact with his father since he was three years old. D.'s mother came to the United States after fleeing gang threats, and K. and D. followed shortly afterward.

Important Client Context

A pro bono attorney will need to file two separate petitions for sole allocation of parental responsibilities on behalf of K. and D.'s mother and obtain orders stating that reunification with K. and D.'s respective fathers is not viable due to abandonment, and that it is not in K. and D.'s best interest to return to Mexico.

NIJC Contact

Berenice Sanchez Ruiz, bsanchezruiz@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Numbers: 24-0167057, 24-0167055

65. A. is an 18-year-old boy from Honduras. He lives with his uncle, who speaks Spanish, in western Illinois (Rock Island).

Deadline: Predicate Order filed by 2/3/2025

Venue: Probate Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

A.'s parents separated when he was five years old. Subsequently, he was raised by his paternal grandparents. He maintained daily contact with his father, while his mother visited him only twice a year and communicated with him sporadically via text. A.'s mother did not provide him with financial or emotional support.

Important Client Context

A pro bono attorney will need to file a petition for guardianship on behalf of A.'s uncle. They will need an order finding that A.'s reunification with his mother is not viable due to her neglect and that it is not in A.'s best interest to return to Honduras.

NIJC Contact

Berenice Sanchez Ruiz, bsanchezruiz@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 24-0167052

66. S. is a 7-year-old girl from Colombia who lives with her mother, who speaks Spanish, in a northwest suburb of Chicago (Cook County).

Deadline: Predicate Order filed by 2/3/2025

Venue: Family Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

S. was a year old when her parents separated. After their separation, S.'s father only

provided her with money for 3 months. Since then, S. has not seen her father, and he has not attempted to contact her or provide any financial or emotional support. S.'s mother fled Colombia in October 2022 after receiving threats from guerrillas. S. was left behind with an aunt who is part of the LGBTQ+ community, and because of that, both S. and her aunt received threats. S. fled shortly afterward and joined her mother in the United States in July 2023.

Important Client Context

A pro bono attorney will need to file a petition for sole allocation of parental responsibilities on behalf of S.'s mother and obtain an order finding that S.'s reunification with her father is not viable due to his neglect and abandonment, and it is not in S.'s best interest to return to Colombia.

NIJC Contact

Berenice Sanchez Ruiz, bsanchezruiz@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0164380

VAWA

Expected Tasks: Preparing affidavits, Preparing applications, Working with vulnerable clients

67. A. is a woman from Mexico. A. is eligible to file a VAWA self-petition concurrently with an application for adjustment of status and employment authorization. A. speaks Spanish and resides in Chicago. There is no set deadline.

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Mexico

Client's Story

A. has been the victim of emotional, financial, and physical abuse by her U.S. citizen son. On one occasion, A.'s son tried hitting her and threw objects at her. A. fled to another room to escape, and her son fled the home. As A. went outside, she witnessed her son damaging the windows of her other son's car. A. called the police and filed a report. A. received counseling to seek support for the violence she has suffered from U.S. citizen son.

NIJC Contact

Jackie Mares, jmares@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0165133

68. A. is a woman from Mexico. A. is eligible to file a VAWA self-petition concurrently with an application for adjustment of status and employment authorization. A. speaks Spanish and resides in Chicago. There is no set deadline.

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Mexico

Client's Story

A. has been the victim of emotional, financial, and physical abuse by her U.S. citizen son. On one occasion, A.'s son tried hitting her and threw objects at her. A. fled to another room to escape, and her son fled the home. As A. went outside, she witnessed her son damaging the windows of her other son's car. A. called the police and filed a report.

NIJC Contact

Jackie Mares, jmares@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 24-0167679

69. E. is a woman from Mexico. E. is eligible to file a VAWA self-petition concurrently with an application for adjustment of status and employment authorization. E. speaks Spanish and resides in Chicago. There is no set deadline. (24-0167718)(24-0186524).

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Mexico

Client's Story

E. has been the victim of physical, verbal, and emotional abuse by her U.S. citizen daughter. On one occasion, E.'s daughter came home intoxicated and demanded E. to hand over daughter's baby. E. refused because E.'s daughter was intoxicated. Daughter hit E. twice in the face while E. was holding the baby. E. kicked daughter out of the house, however, daughter sneaked back inside the house through the door and windows. The last time daughter was getting inside the house through the window, E. was able to not let daughter in by closing the window. The window was caught in daughter's arms, so E. opened the window concerned with her safety and daughter bit E.'s finger severely. Once the daughter let go, she waited outside the front porch and E. called the police and daughter was arrested. E. got an order of protection against her daughter. E. has sought counseling to heal from the abuse she endured by U.S. citizen daughter.

NIJC Contact

Jackie Mares, jmares@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0186524

70. M. is a woman from Mexico. M. is eligible to file a VAWA self-petition concurrently with an application for adjustment of status and employment authorization. M.'s daughter will be a derivative on the VAWA self-petition. M. speaks Spanish and resides in Chicago. There is no set deadline. (24-0191929)(24-0168236)

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Mexico

Client's Story

M. has been the victim of verbal, physical, and psychological abuse by her U.S. citizen husband. M.'s husband insulted her, threatened her, and pushed her on separate occasions. M.'s daughter was also verbally and physically abused by him. M. lived in fear and called the police against him for his violent behavior. M. left her husband, and she fled to a domestic violence shelter with her daughter for safety. M. and her daughter received therapy to overcome the trauma they experienced and hope to secure immigration relief.

NIJC Contact

Jackie Mares, jmares@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0191929