



Winter 2009

Celebrating 10 years of service

This year, New York Annual Conference – Justice For Our Neighbors (NYAC-JFON) is proud to be celebrating its 10th year of service to impoverished immigrants in our communities. During these past 10 years, we have served over 5,000 clients from over 70 countries residing all over Metro NY and beyond.

Our clients are among the most vulnerable populations – women, victims of domestic violence, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and the impoverished. Cases range from advice and counsel to affirmative applications for asylum, self-petitions on behalf of domestic abuse victims, special immigrant juvenile petitions, and defensive representation of people in removal proceedings and detention.

We have engaged countless volunteers – many of whom have been with us since our inception – in service to our immigrant clients. The change we have seen (and experienced) as volunteers is perhaps the most powerful aspect of our ministry. Our volunteers have become more passionate about immigrant justice as well as their faith. We have been blessed by their commitment and kindness.



Special thanks to all our dedicated volunteers who interviewed clients, translated conversations and documents, provided food and refreshments, played with client's children and helping to that make our clients feel safe and cared for. This year alone, our volunteers have dedicated over 1,000 hours of their time.

Year in Review

2009 has been a year of transition and growth. Three significant developments were: opening a fourth clinic at South Presbyterian Church in Yonkers, losing the funding for our Church and Community Worker Attorney (CCW) position – which left us with a single attorney – and hiring a part-time Regional Coordinator.



Client Story

Assisting a Burmese activist

Moethee Zun has played a central role in Burma's struggle for democracy, first as organizer of the Burmese underground student movement and later as co-founder of Burma's second-largest political party, the Democratic Party for a New Society. He also publicly supported Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Prize winner who was democratically elected to be Burma's Prime Minister in 1990. However, the results were nullified, the military refused to hand over power, and Dr. Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest.



Moethee (middle) speaking at a pro-democracy rally with Dr. Suu Kyi (right)

In March 1989, Moethee fled to Thailand. On May 29, 2001 he was admitted to the US as a refugee. Even though the Burmese government issued a warrant for his arrest – which could've resulted in extradition from a third country – Moethee continued to work for a democratic Burma. He has spoken at venues around the world, authored two books, and received his Masters from

By the end of this year, we will have served over 400 clients – 75% of whom are women and children. We have seen our work have a profound impact on the lives of those we serve – not only in helping them become documented but also in enabling them to access other forms of assistance.

To help fill the gap created by losing our CCW attorney, we brought on board a temporary second attorney. We are currently in the process of raising funds and transitioning that into a permanent position.

Meet the NYAC-JFON Regional Coordinator

Thanks to a \$10,000 grant from JFON-UMCOR, we were able to hire a part-time Regional Coordinator in June. Her main role is to provide support to our Regional Board in the areas of fundraising and organizational development. She also assists our four clinic coordinators with volunteer recruitment and retention, leadership development, and organizing regional training and advocacy events.

Born in Ancash, Peru, Sofia emigrated to the US in 1991 to join her sisters. Her professional experiences reflect her dedication to serving others. Upon graduation from the University of California in Santa Cruz, Sofia worked for the Santa Cruz County Immigration Project (SCCIP), a non-profit organization similar to JFON. In 2002 Sofia worked for JFON national office in Washington, DC before joining UMCOR-NGO, a non-profit that provides international development assistance overseas. Sofia, her husband, Nathaniel, and son, Sumaq, reside in Harlem.



"I am happy to be a part of the NYAC-JFON family. It is such a pleasure to work again for a great organization that provides assistance to the most vulnerable population, undocumented immigrants."

We hope to raise enough funds to transform this into a full-time position by 2011.

Advocating closing Detention Center on Varick Street

Most New Yorkers aren't aware that the Federal Immigration Detention Center at 201 Varick Street in lower Manhattan reopened last year. The 250-bed dormitory style facility, which had been closed after 9/11, now mixes noncriminals swept up in immigration raids with legal immigrants who have criminal convictions that may make them deportable. Although purported to be a transitional center for immigrant detainees who need to appear in court, many have been housed there for years.

Since last December, the NY Annual Conference – in partnership with JFON and the Women's Division – have been calling for this facility to close. We hold vigils in front of the Center on the 2nd Friday of every month. Please join us in this important work. For information: jason@radicallivingnyc.com

Columbia University.

In 2002, JFON represented him on his green card application. Then in July 2006, desiring additional protection from the Burmese government which continued to actively seek to execute him, Moethee came to JFON to apply for naturalization. Although he met all the statutory requirements for naturalization – including completing an interview and passing the literacy and civics exams – his application languished for almost three years.

Prior to his interview, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement sent two investigators to interview him about his activities among pro-democracy exiles in Thailand. Although he only provided humanitarian aid, Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) supervisors later cited concerns that he may have provided material support to "terrorist" groups along the Burmese–Thai border.

According to the USA Patriot Act in 2001 and the REAL ID Act in 2005, the term "terrorist organization" has been defined broadly and even classifies persons who resisted Saddam Hussein and the Montagnards who fought alongside US soldiers in Vietnam as terrorists.

On May 28, 2009, JFON filed a federal appeal at the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York on his behalf. Seven days later, the US Attorney assigned to the case informed JFON that CIS agreed to naturalize him at a ceremony on June 18th.

Help us continue to assist clients like Moethee realize their dream of becoming U.S. citizens. Become a donor or volunteer by using the enclosed pledge card.

NYAC – JFON OFFICE

2085 5th Avenue, GF
New York, NY 10035
Tel: (212) 987-9705
Fax: (917) 508-4878

Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bklyn:

John Wesley UMC
260 Quincy Street
Brooklyn, NY 11216
Phone: (718) 783-1501

Chinatown, New York:

Chinese UMC
69 Madison Street
New York, NY 10002
Phone: (212) 267-6464

Flushing, Queens:

La Promesa Presbyterian Mission
150-20 Barclay Avenue
Flushing, NY 11355
Phone: (917) 609-9879

Yonkers, New York:

South Presbyterian Church
112 Radford Street
Yonkers, NY, 10705
Phone: (914) 963-1155

CLINIC INFORMATION