

**NEW YORK
LAW SCHOOL**

SAFE PASSAGE PROJECT



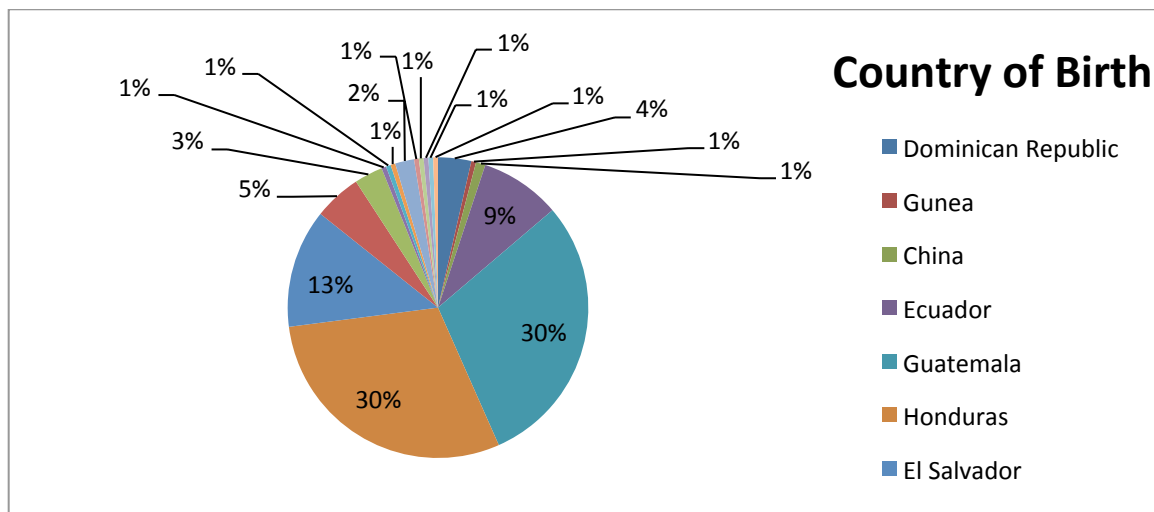
ANNUAL REPORT 2013

Safe Passage Project:

THE SAFE PASSAGE PROJECT was begun in 2006 to address the unmet legal needs of indigent immigrant youth living in New York State. Safe Passage believes that no child should stand alone in immigration court and that all children, regardless of their country of birth are entitled to legal representation. Yet the right to free counsel is not guaranteed to immigrants, even those under the age of twenty-one. Under current law, unaccompanied immigrant children are not entitled to any government-provided legal representation in immigration proceedings.

The number of cases involving indigent children now comprises nearly 12% of the New York Immigration Court's docket - 5,000 cases. The number of children placed in removal is growing in other parts of the country as well. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "between October 2012 and August 2013, 24,000 unaccompanied immigrant minors were arrested by United States Border Patrol and Customs officials and taken into the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. This number nearly tripled the prior year's apprehensions of 8,327. In December of 2013, Safe Passage Director, Lenni Benson, attended a federal government interagency meeting in Washington D.C. where the U.S. government predicted as many as 60,000 apprehensions of unaccompanied minors this next fiscal year. Thus, the Immigration Court Juvenile docket, in all probability, will continue to expand and so will the need for Safe Passage.

In addition to serving over 250 immigrant children in removal proceedings, Safe Passage mentors pro bono attorneys, other non-profit organizations, teachers, social workers, and foster care agencies about the various forms of legal relief available to undocumented youth. Safe Passage works closely with a Public School in Washington Heights and Foster Care agency in Queens to make sure its children's legal needs are met. Under the supervision of Professor Benson, the project has expanded east beyond New York City into Nassau and Suffolk County and north to Westchester, Rockland, Orange and Putnam County. Safe Passage currently has active cases in 12 different New York counties and involving children from 18 different countries.





Dear Friends of Safe Passage,

This year my life has been transformed by the work we are doing at THE SAFE PASSAGE PROJECT. Every day I work with advocates, law students and pro bono attorneys who are helping immigrant children secure the right to remain safely in the United States. Brian and Deivy are an example: brought to the United States years ago, they had been trying to secure legal status and faced deportation. Our Safe Passage team was able to help them secure Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, a protection for children under 21 who have been abandoned, abused or neglected by one or both parents. We were also able to complete their legal adoption in the United States – while adoption could not give them a path to residence alone – the boys now have parents **and** status in the United States **and** have enrolled in college. Brian and Deivy represent only two of the many young people we have helped this year.

Earlier this year, through our project at a New York City Public School we helped a young Mexican boy and his three brothers secure legal permanent resident status in the United States. His school teachers and counselors have told us that our Project is bringing real change into the lives of their students. According to the young man's Spanish teacher, "Safe Passage has given our students the hope that our Congress has not. For our students, Safe Passage represents one of the only true hopes for Immigration reform, progress and a successful life in this country."

These are just a few of the many victories we enjoyed this year. But, they did not happen without hard work and persistence. And, they could not have happened without remarkable unified efforts. Safe Passage is working with some of the best immigrant's rights organizations, attorneys, and advocates in New York. We are grateful for all of our volunteer attorneys, interpreters, social workers, teachers, high school, college and law students alike, and the continued support of the Safe Passage Board. At Safe Passage, we firmly believe that "¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!" and will continue to work together to ensure that the Safe Passage Community protect the futures of New York City's most vulnerable children.

Peace,

Lenni Benson, Director



Brian and Deivy at their USCIS interview with Staff Attorney and Abbey Center Legal Fellow, Gui Stampur. Photograph used with permission.

Report of The Safe Passage Project:

This past year, SAFE PASSAGE served over 250 immigrant children living in New York State. It provided critical legal assistance to clients in Immigration Court, enrolled in New York City Public Schools, and to kids in Foster Care. The national office of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) named The Safe Passage Project as its 2013 Pro Bono Hero of the Northeast region.

I. SAFE PASSAGE STAFFS JUVENILE DOCKET IN IMMIGRATION COURT

Safe Passage staffs the Juvenile docket at the New York Immigration Court, where project staff appear as “friends of the court” after conducting free screenings of youth in removal proceedings. The project was incredibly successful in its first full year, screening 215 children and placing over 60% with pro bono counsel. Pro bono counsel are currently representing children in Family Courts throughout the five boroughs and in Westchester, Putnam, Orange, Nassau, Suffolk and Yonkers Family courts.

Most recently, a Safe Passage pro bono attorney obtained Special Immigrant juvenile status on behalf of a 7 year old Honduran girl, who traveled alone to the United States in order to reunite with her aunt. In Honduras, she lived with her grandparents because her parents could not take care of her. She considered her aunt as her mother. Her aunt traveled between the United States and Honduras regularly to make sure her niece was provided for. Safe Passage not only helped this young girl obtain legal permanent residence, but also helped the guardian successfully file for guardianship and terminate the child’s removal proceedings in Immigration Court.

According to Safe Passage counsel, Janet Porro “Angel was Angel – she won over the judge’s heart. When the judge granted the Petition for Guardianship and my Motion for Special Findings there was not a dry eye in that court room. Even the Court Attorney and Court Officer (who rarely smiled – were overwhelmed with emotion by this little girl). The judge was totally transformed.

That child was so sincere, genuine and proud of her accomplishments in school it warmed everyone’s heart. I wish you could show a video tape of what went on today to prospective volunteer attorneys. To see that child’s face today in court made all our efforts worthwhile. She is so happy to be in this country and is working so hard at it.”- Janet Porro, Safe Passage Pro Bono Attorney

TOTAL CASES

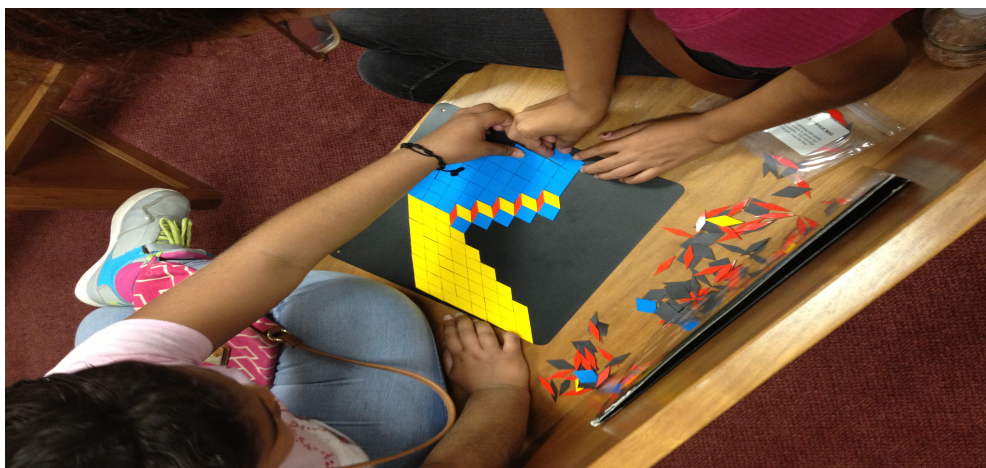
	Total Cases Screened	Active Cases	Represented by Safe Passage Pro bono Counsel	Inactive
Docket	215	205	112	10
Public School	24	17	17	7
SCO	14	4	14	10

Volunteers in many forms.

In addition, in 2013 Safe Passage Board member, Marie Kimmel brought art therapy to the immigration court at 26 Federal Plaza. Marie's arts and crafts projects in the ceremonial courtroom enabled Safe Passage clients to relax and helped lower the anxiety levels of the children and their accompanying relatives while at Immigration Court. Joining Marie are several other regular volunteers who help with non-legal tasks such as document preparation and interpretation. We are particularly grateful to the many professionals who volunteer their time at the court in many roles.



Children's art work made in the court screening room.



II. SAFE PASSAGE CONDUCTS IMMIGRATION SCREENINGS AND CITIZENSHIP DAY AT PUBLIC SCHOOL IN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

Throughout 2013, Safe Passage continued its work in the community and alongside community-based organizations, such as The Door, The New York Immigration Coalition, Catholic Charities, and Legal Aid. Safe Passage partnered with a school in Washington Heights to ensure that its students, otherwise afraid to face their immigration situation, found their legal needs met. We worked closely with public school teachers and social workers alike to better understand the legal issues involved and took on 24 new cases. Seventeen of these cases have been completed or are in their last phase – awaiting an adjustment interview before United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Recently, a Safe Passage attorney helped a 17 year old Mexican boy and his 3 brothers obtain legal permanent residence. This child fled Mexico and an abusive, alcoholic father, in search of a better opportunity in New York City. He enrolled in public school in Washington Heights and up until one year ago, remained afraid to talk about his past. After meeting with Safe Passage, his Spanish teacher, and guidance counselor, it was not only determined that he could obtain permanent residence, but that his three younger brothers also qualified. Recently, the young man called Safe Passage to thank us for our work on his behalf and to inform us that he had been accepted to college, but would not yet accept, because it was a “safety school” and he wanted to hear from his top choices before accepting admission.

According to the High School Spanish teacher, “Safe Passage is a lifeline for many of our students. As an educational community that aims to secure the opportunity to attend and succeed at a college of each student’s choice, we need the help, guidance and collaborative effort of the Safe Passage Project lawyers. As we work together as a team, we can finally serve the needs of ALL of our students, documented and undocumented alike. –NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER



The Safe Passage Team at Citizenship Day at a NYC Public School in Washington Heights.

III. IMMIGRATION SCREENINGS AT FOSTER CARE AGENCY AND DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (DACA) CLINICS

Safe Passage worked closely with SCO Family Services of Queens to provide know-your-rights presentations and free legal intake sessions to kids in foster care. In 2013, Safe Passage screened immigrant youth enrolled in foster care and helped 14 children secure pro bono counsel. These children qualified for a host of relief ranging from Special Immigrant Juvenile Status to Deferred Action. And, some of the kids qualified to naturalize and needed help becoming United States citizens.

Safe Passage faculty and students participated in several Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals clinics. This year Safe Passage forged a partnership with African Legal Services Committee and together we were able to ensure a number of youth obtained DACA and access to two year renewable employment authorization. Through regular meetings and jointly sponsored continuing legal education events, Safe Passage has worked to improve the representation of immigrant youth in both immigration and family courts as well.



The Safe Passage Team at SCO Family Services in Queens, New York.

IV. SAFE PASSAGE DESIGNED AND PARTICIPATED IN MULTIPLE TRAININGS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

In 2013, Safe Passage Project, in conjunction with New York Law School or other non-profit organizations helped to design or presented multiple trainings. In some cases, staff of the Project went to private law firms to conduct trainings for small groups of attorneys. For example in November of 2013, Professor Benson conducted a three hour training for pro bono attorneys at the law firm of Gibney, Anthony and Flaherty, LLP. This firm has committed to providing pro bono immigration attorneys at the upcoming court dockets throughout the year. Attorneys in the firm are already handling several pro bono cases.

Other examples of trainings included: February CLE on advanced topics in immigration representation, March CLE at the Immigration Court with NY area non-profits, April CLE on more advanced immigration topics, presentation to the Westchester Bar Association (with Board Member Susan Henner), Pace Law School, The City Bar Association, The NY County Bar Association. In August of 2013, Professor Benson held an open training for law student volunteers and more than 200 students attended and several attorneys also attended this training. Professor Melynda Barnhart assisted in the program.

In October, Sam Coppersmith, Sheila Wellington and Lenni Benson presented at a CLE concerning attorney participation on a non-profit board. The law firm of Bingham McCutchen donated space and meals to the attendees. Several of the attorneys who attended also inquired about doing pro bono work with Safe Passage.

In September and October, Safe Passage Project assisted in presenting trainings within the Family Courts in Brooklyn, Bronx and Manhattan.

V. FINANCIALS

SAFE PASSAGE PROJECT CORPORATION

2013 REVENUE [Estimated as of 1/10/2014]

Contributions and Special Events	61,000
Foundation Grants	10,000
Investment	0
Miscellaneous	750
In-Kind Contributions*	<u>15,000</u>

Total	\$ 83,750
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2013 EXPENDITURES

Administration and General	1000
Fundraising	0
Legal	2000
Miscellaneous	<u>500</u>

Total:	3500
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*Does not include space and facilities support from NYLS. Does not include value of all pro bono legal services provided to Safe Passage in 2013.

THANK YOU TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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