

No child should face the
immigration process alone



Annual Report 2017



To the supporters of our Safe Passage Project children,

I start with a humble "Thank you." Thank you for choosing now to support the children facing the immigration process through our work at Safe Passage Project. With deportations and family separations championed at the highest level, we, as emboldened citizens, stand now to show our support for the immigrant community and, in particular, the children -- the most vulnerable of us all.



I'm proud to stand with you as we support these children and walk with them towards a more stable future through this chaotic time in history. The entire team at Safe Passage Project has exemplified the vivacity, dedication, and rigor necessary to help over 700 active immigration cases in 2017. This feat is only possible with the immense passion and support of our board and each and every donor.

We stand here on a strong foundation, sharing what we've learned, growing a driven and mission-aligned team of staff and volunteers. We move forward with speed, conviction, and the understanding that further work and support are needed to grow this effort.

We are largely a nation of immigrants. If you were to look back at your own lineage, I suspect that you too would find a photo of a child, new and wide-eyed at the prospect of life in this great country. With your support, we can help the children who need our services onto a path toward a bright future, free from the circumstances that brought them here.

--Pam Foster, esq.

Chair, Board of Directors



Dear Friends,

It is a frightening time to be an immigrant in the United States. 2017 saw increased opposition from the government, a volatile legal and policy environment, increasing criminalization, and terror in immigrant communities. The children we serve, along with their families and communities, are facing more challenges now than at any time in recent memory. Safe Passage Project is not immune to these challenges, and we seem to face new and unpredictable obstacles at every step of the immigration process.



In these uncertain times, in 2017 we chose to grow bigger and stronger, equipping ourselves to meet these obstacles and those still ahead. We strengthened our small but mighty legal team and expanded our social work team. We led 33 training events, trained over 1,700 individuals on effective representation of immigrant children, and provided close mentorship to an army of more than 400 pro bono attorneys. With 160 new cases in 2017, we ended the year representing children in more than 700 cases. And we are winning those cases. Despite redoubled efforts to deport immigrants and narrow the path toward citizenship, we are proud to have maintained a success rate of over 80%.

It is with this context that we are so pleased to share with you this annual report. We could not have accomplished any of this without the steadfast support of our donors, the persistence of our pro bono attorneys, the leadership of 22 terrific staff, and most of all the resilience and strength of our young clients and their families.

As long as there are children facing the immigration process alone, we will continue to grow, to find creative ways to win their cases, and help them find a safe and stable future in the United States. To that end, as 2017 came to a close, Safe Passage Project adopted an inspiring and ambitious new goal — to grow to a caseload of 2,000 clients by 2020, ensuring that no unaccompanied children in NYC or Long Island must face immigration court without a lawyer.

On a personal note, 2017 was my first full year at Safe Passage and it has been the most rewarding time of my professional life. I am endlessly grateful to all our staff, partners and supporters - and especially to our inspiring clients who lead the way into a more tolerant and welcoming future.

--*Rich Leimsider*
Executive Director





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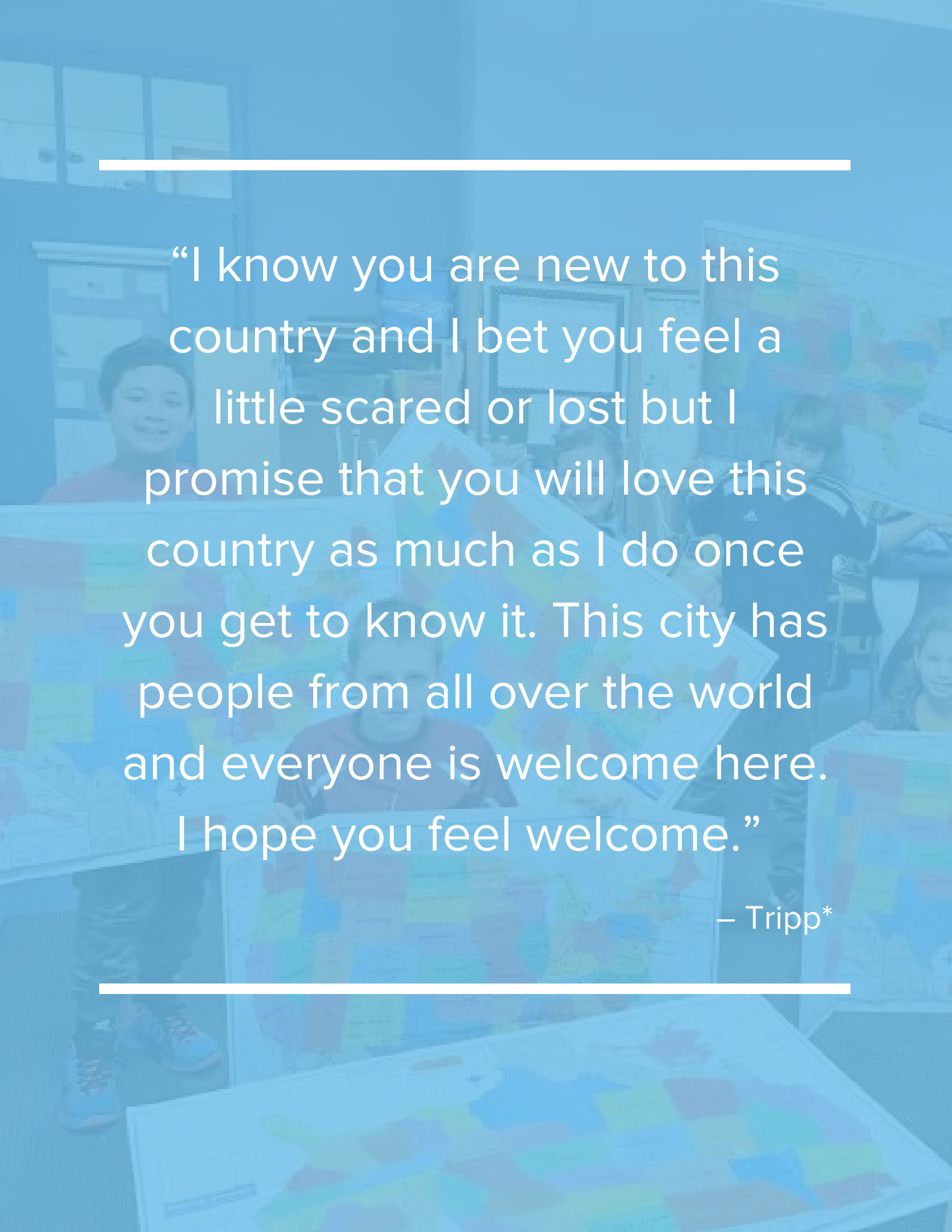
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The background is a blue-tinted photograph of a classroom. Several children are visible, some standing and some sitting, around large maps of the United States that are spread out on the floor and on tables. The children appear to be engaged in a learning activity. The text is overlaid in white, and there are white horizontal lines above and below the text.

“I know you are new to this country and I bet you feel a little scared or lost but I promise that you will love this country as much as I do once you get to know it. This city has people from all over the world and everyone is welcome here. I hope you feel welcome.”

– Tripp*

720 Active Cases

Safe Passage Project had 720 active cases by the end of 2017.

463 Children Provided with Social Services

Safe Passage Project provided critical social services to 463 children, addressing issues such as homelessness, access to health care, psychological needs, and more.

33 Trainings

We conducted 33 immigration law trainings throughout the year to strengthen our capacity to provide high-quality legal assistance to all immigrant children.

1749 Legal Professionals

We recruited, trained, or mentored 1749 pro bono attorneys in New York State.



26 Green Card Applications Filed

27 Employment Authorizations Filed

71 Asylum Applications Filed

113 Special Findings Orders Granted

124 SIJS Petitions Filed

134 Custody Petitions Filed

... in 2017!

Open Cases in 2017 by Country



"I asked my client, Sandra*, what she would do if she won the lottery. She said she would bring her mom, dad, and brother to the U.S., then she said she would make a big donation to the shelter she's living in because without them, she would be lost.

I asked her, 'but what about you?' Sandra works at Burger King, lives in a shelter, and is a survivor of sexual abuse and human trafficking. She said, 'I have so much. I've been so lucky.'

These are the types of people Safe Passage Project is helping stay in the country."

- Loretta Lopez, Case Manager



NYC Mayor's Office Honors Safe Passage Project



The New York City Mayor's office recognized and celebrated Safe Passage Project Board Members, Careen Shannon, Susan Henner, and Lenni Benson, as well as Safe Passage Project pro bono attorneys, John Ryan, Joe Francoeur, and Steve Kent, for their commitment to service through the NYC Mayoral Service Recognition Program. Collectively, they contributed over 5,000 hours of pro bono service to Safe Passage Project in 2017. Safe Passage Project staff were honored to attend the awards ceremony at 1 Municipal Plaza, where First Lady Chirlane McCray addressed the award winners.



According to award winner and pro bono attorney, John Ryan:

"I am very honored to have been recognized by the Mayor's office for my pro bono work with the immigrant community in New York.



I know that I have been blessed in so many ways through my involvement with Safe Passage Project in its mission to provide legal services to undocumented children as they navigate the very complicated immigration system in this country.



My clients have inspired me and so has Safe Passage Project. The children I have represented and those I now represent have risked everything for the hope of forging a new and meaningful life in this country. Their stories replicate those I read about in textbooks describing those who came to America with the hope of forging a new life and helped build a stronger nation."

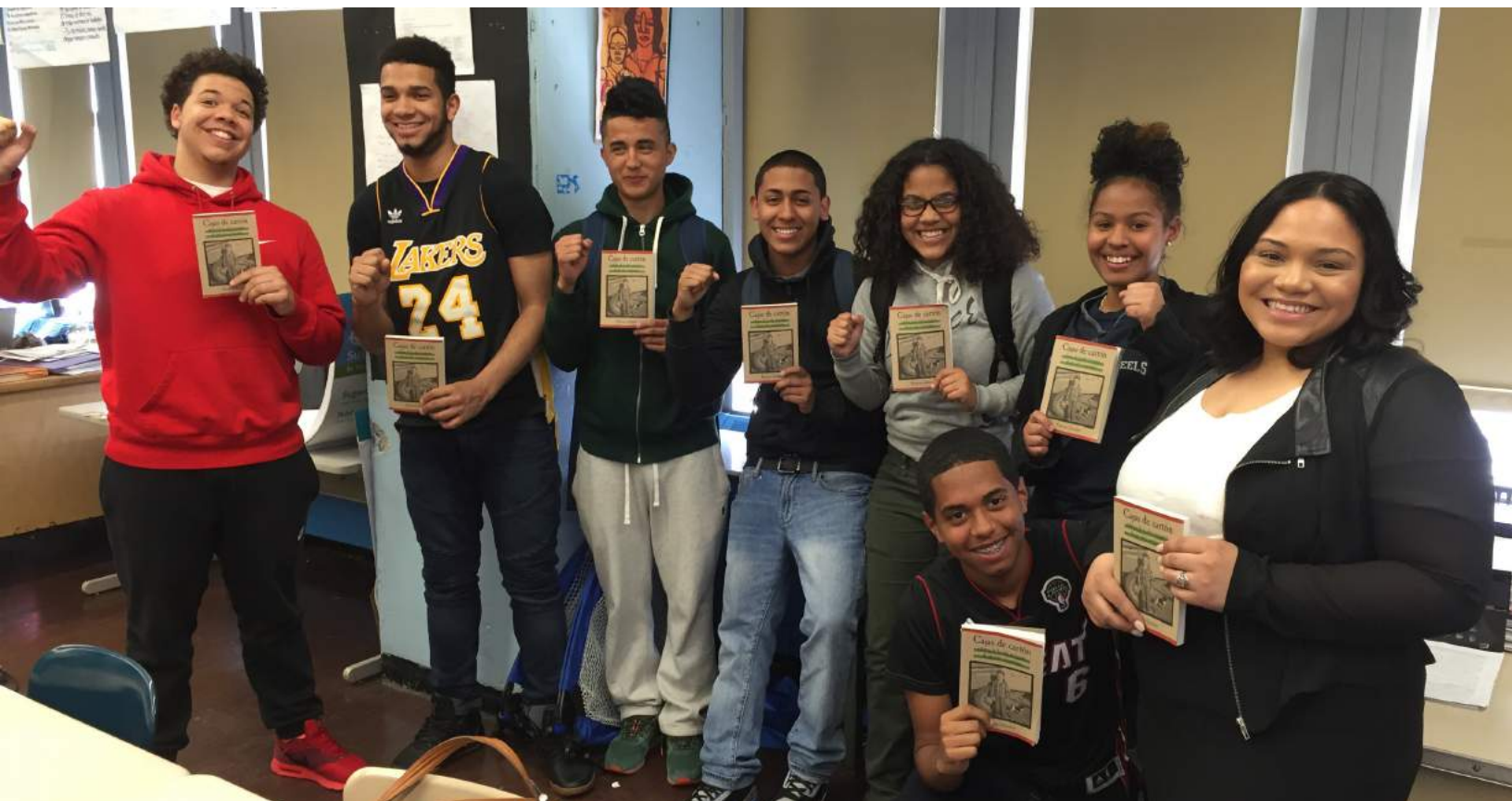
Safe Passage Project in Schools

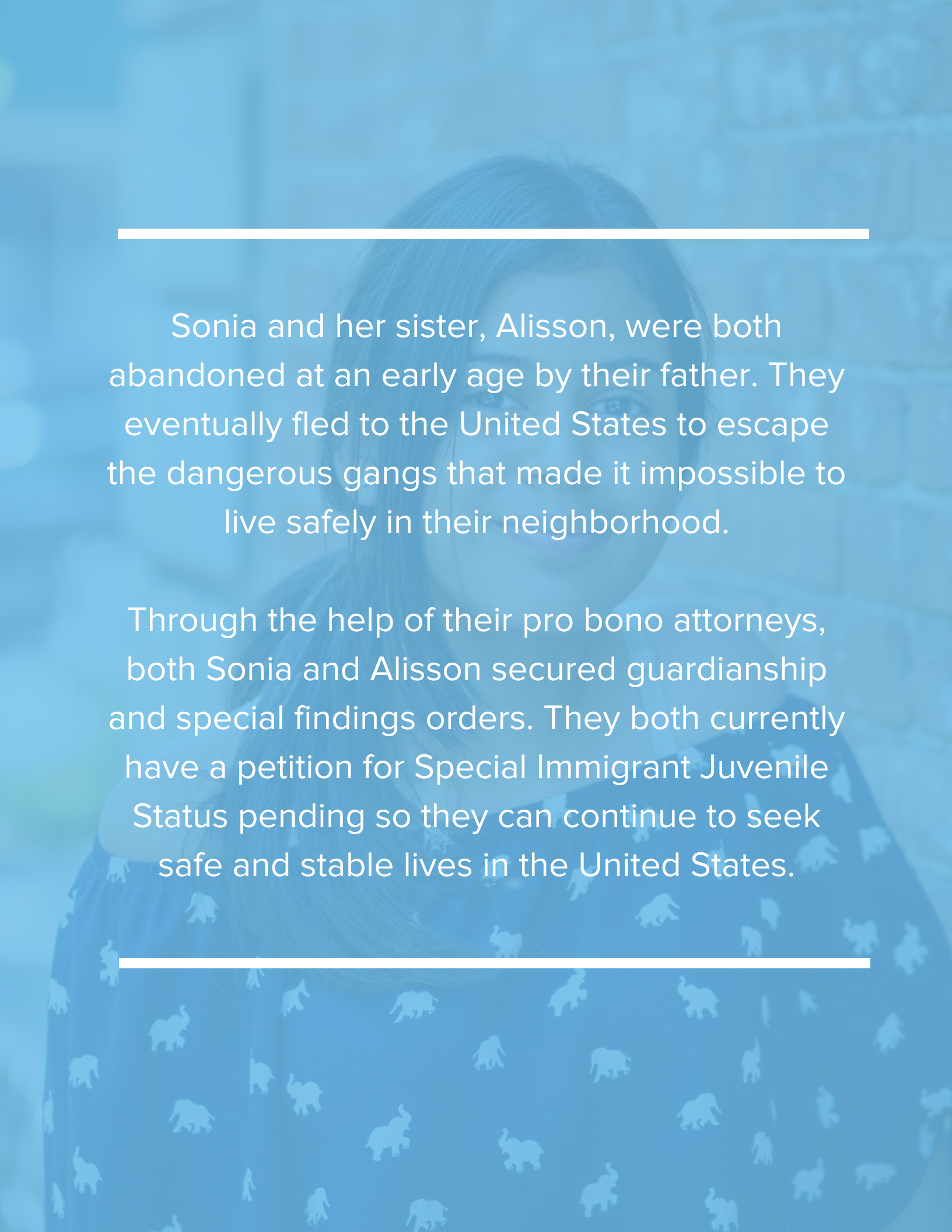
In 2011, Safe Passage in Schools was created to serve the unmet needs of immigrant children enrolled in New York City public schools. Since May 2012, Safe Passage Project has worked closely with teachers, social workers, coaches, principals, and college advisors at public schools, such as Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School (WHEELS), throughout Manhattan and the Bronx. Safe Passage Project holds confidential screenings at the schools to determine which students need assistance and provides the children with free representation.

In 2017, thanks to the generous support of The New World Foundation and Brooklyn Community Foundation, Safe Passage Project expanded its work in schools to serve immigrant children from all 5 boroughs of New York City. Now, Safe Passage Project is serving 50 undocumented students enrolled in NYC public schools with full legal representation through this program. According to one former client, "Safe Passage Project helped me understand that I was eligible to become a Legal Permanent Resident, and they made it happen. They represented me, and changed my life forever."

"Safe Passage Project in Schools has been a lifeline for our students. They have made the dream of attending college a reality for many of my students."

- David Lenzner
High School Spanish Teacher, WHEELS





Sonia and her sister, Alisson, were both abandoned at an early age by their father. They eventually fled to the United States to escape the dangerous gangs that made it impossible to live safely in their neighborhood.

Through the help of their pro bono attorneys, both Sonia and Alisson secured guardianship and special findings orders. They both currently have a petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status pending so they can continue to seek safe and stable lives in the United States.

Donor Spotlight



We at the Zegar Family Foundation are strong supporters of Safe Passage Project and their excellent work on behalf of immigrant children seeking refuge in our country. It is essential to help these children who have already encountered tremendous hardships in their young lives by providing them with legal representation in their immigration struggles so that “no child faces the immigration process alone”! As long time supporters, we are proud to have watched Safe Passage Project grow and assist more and more deserving children live safely here.

- Merryl Zegar, Zegar Family Foundation



New York Law School is proud to be the home of Safe Passage Project, a legal advocacy organization serving the needs of refugee children who face increasing threats to their safety and security. Safe Passage Project lawyers and staff demonstrate an unsurpassed level of compassion, determination, and success for their vulnerable clients. Safe Passage Project represents the very best a legal services provider can offer, and presents a scalable model of engagement and advocacy to effectively address among the most serious issues in immigration law today.

- Anthony Crowell, Dean
New York Law School



Robin Hood is proud to support Safe Passage Project, one of the city's most effective nonprofits serving refugee children. These young immigrants have overcome extraordinary challenges to make it to our city. Helping them win their legal cases is the best way that we, as a community, can ensure they have a strong foundation for a successful future.

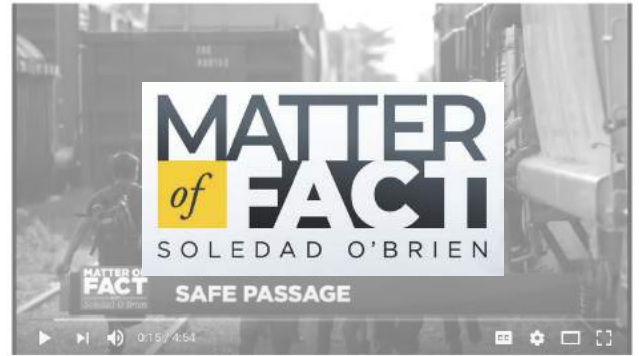
- Veyom Bahl, Managing Director
Robin Hood Foundation

In the Press

#NBCLatino20: The Crusader, Desiree Hernández



— Desiree Hernandez, Director of Legal Services, Safe Passage Project. Raul A. Reyes



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THE TEENS TRAPPED BETWEEN A GANG AND THE LAW

On Long Island, unaccompanied minors are caught between the violence of MS-13 and the fear of deportation

By Janet



The Woman Giving Refugee Kids Free Lawyers

And two other people advocating for immigrants



Jaime Alfaro posted Feb 27, 2017

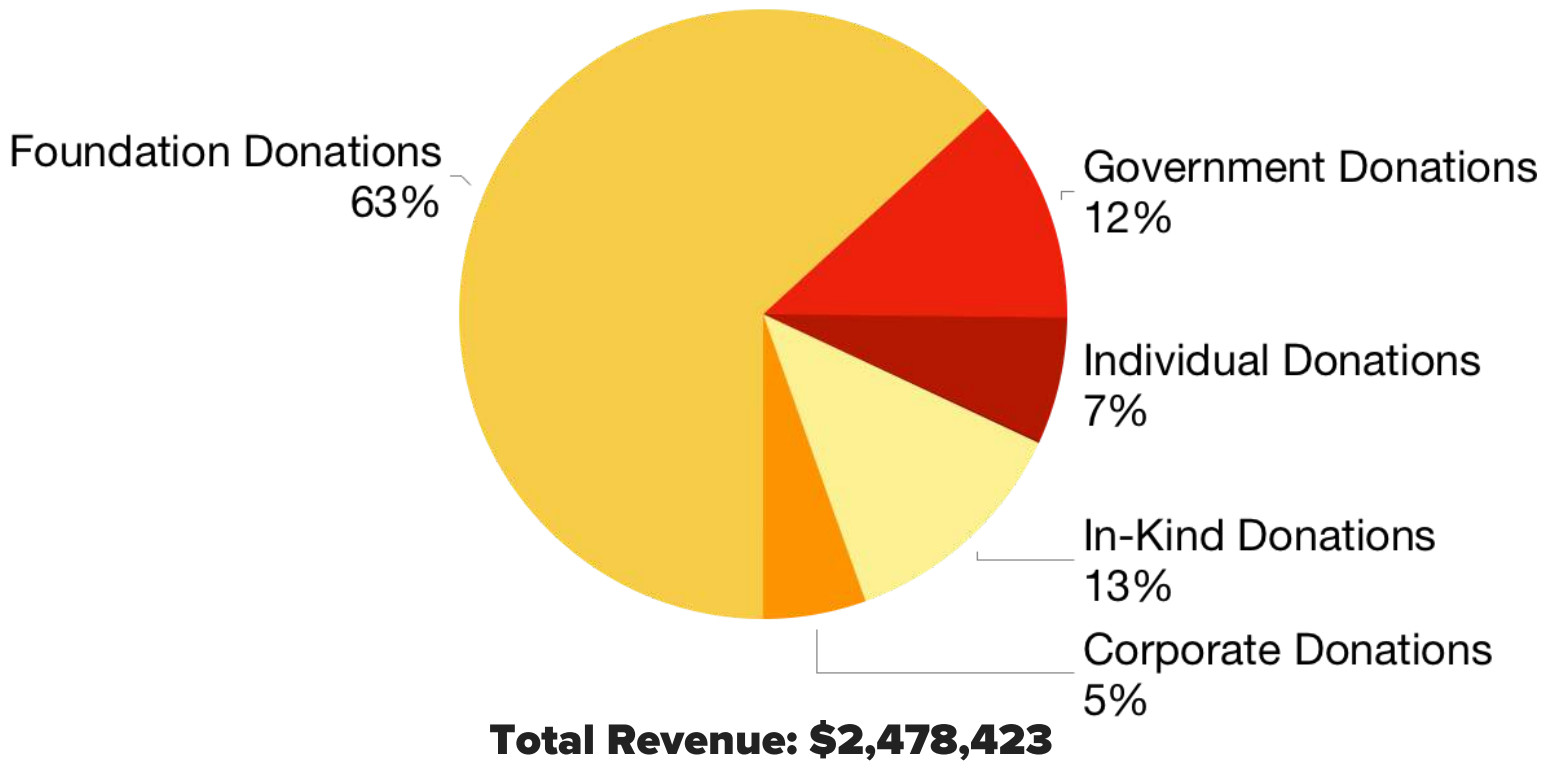


UNACCOMPANIED MINORS WHO ARE UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS FEEL ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO NEW POLICIES

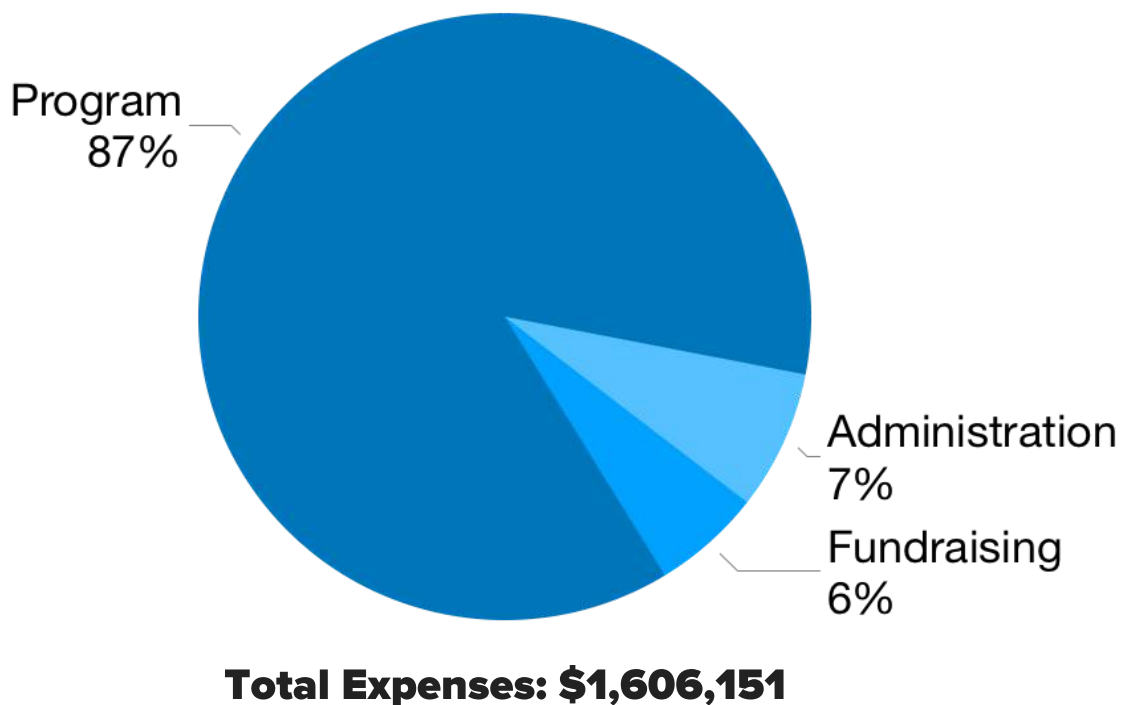
By Ruschell Boone | March 2, 2017 @8:55 PM

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No child should face the immigration process alone

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