

December 18, 2024

NIJC Pro Bono Case List: 53 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.

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[Priority Matters – Defensive Asylum](#)
[Defensive Asylum Matters](#)
[Affirmative Asylum Matters](#)
[VAWA Matters](#)

Priority Matters

Priority Matters - Defensive Asylum

1. 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

2. 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

Languages: French, Farsi

Location: IL

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

3. J. is a gay cisgender man with HIV from Colombia. His merits hearing is on July 29, 2025. He speaks Spanish and lives in the western suburbs of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 7/29/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

As a child, J.'s peers frequently called him anti-LGBTQ slurs because they perceived him as feminine. In 2018, a group of men attacked and sexually abused J. while calling him homophobic slurs. J. contracted HIV from the assault. Later that year, another group of men beat J. while calling him anti-LGBTQ slurs and threatening to kill his family if he went to the police. J. fears living openly as a gay man in Colombia and fears that sharing his HIV status and abuse with anyone would put him at risk for further harm. J. believes the Colombian police are corrupt and anti-LGBTQ and would not protect him from future harm.

Important Client Context

J. timely filed his asylum application pro se. All affidavits and supporting documents for J.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his merits hearing on July 29, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 23-0161824

4. H. is a gay cisgender man from Venezuela. His merits hearing is on August 1, 2025. He speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 8/1/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

From a young age, H.'s family and peers abused, harassed and bullied H. for being effeminate. His father told H. he would rather have a dead son than a gay son. H. hid his sexual orientation out of fear. As an adult, H.'s boss fired him from his government job after discovering H.'s sexual orientation. H. also believes he was fired because he refused to support President Maduro. H. moved 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. All affidavits and supporting materials are due 15 days prior to H.'s merits hearing, which is on August 1, 2025.

NIJC Contact

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

5. D. is a man from Colombia. His merits hearing is on August 13, 2025. D. speaks Spanish and lives in a northern suburb of Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 8/13/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Colombia

Client's Story

A drug trafficking crime family known as the Serna Family targeted D.'s cousin because he refused to join their operation. The Serna family framed D.'s cousin for a murder he did not commit, and he was sentenced to prison. The Serna family then targeted other members of D.'s family, including D. The Serna family harmed and threatened D. multiple times, including shooting into D.'s house. D., his partner, and their children attempted to move to a different city in Colombia. The Serna family found them shortly after, and D. fled Colombia to seek safety. D.'s longtime partner and children remain in hiding in Colombia. The Serna family continues to look for D. and has killed one of D.'s close family members since D. entered United States.

Important Client Context

D.'s case was initially part of the Asylum Merits Interview process, which means the positive Credible Fear Interview (CFI) determination he received in March of 2023 constitutes a timely filed asylum application. All affidavits and supporting materials to D.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing on August 13, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 24-0178399

6. M. is a woman from Benin. Her Master Calendar hearing is on August 19, 2025. M. speaks French and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 8/19/2025

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

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: French

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Benin

Client's Story

When M.'s husband died unexpectedly, his family and other members of the Mono community forced M. to participate in burial and widowhood rituals they knew were against her Christian religion. They demanded she marry her late husband's HIV positive brother. The tribe/family adhere to strict (Voodoo) traditions that suspect widows of causing a husband's unexpected death and perceive widows as tribal property. M. fled Benin to escape forced marriage and potential death, leaving behind her four minor children.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed an application for asylum on M.'s behalf with USCIS. Following a long wait, M. had an interview, but the asylum office referred M.'s case to immigration court. NIJC is urgently seeking a pro bono team to advance M.'s case on

the basis that she has now been separated from her children for ten years. All affidavits and supporting materials for her case will be due 15 days prior to her individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org
NIJC Case Number: 15-0099445

7. 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

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

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

8. 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-LGBTQ 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

9. 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

10. 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

11. R. is dual national of Ecuador and Venezuela. R.'s merits hearing is on November 18, 2025. He speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 11/18/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Client's Story

In Venezuela, R. became involved in politics around 2012. He engaged in anti-government protests with the group Primero Justicia, motivated by the food shortages, extreme government crackdown on civilians, and violence against opposition activists. The government became increasingly violent toward protesters, so R. left Venezuela and lived in Ecuador, where he is also a citizen. Gang members and drug traffickers in Ecuador harmed and threatened R. because of his Venezuelan nationality. He returned to Venezuela and began working for a publicist in support of government opposition activism. In 2023, men threatened him at gunpoint and demanded that he cease his government opposition work. A short time later, Venezuelan officers stopped him and warned him to cease his anti-government work. R. then started receiving threatening calls demanding that he stop his activism. Pro-government individuals went to his family's home when he was not there, shot at the house, and threatened to kill R. because of his work for the publicity company. R. then went into hiding and fled Venezuela.

Important Client Context

R.'s NIJC attorney timely filed his application for asylum. All affidavits and supporting materials for R.'s case will be due 15 days before his merits hearing on November 18, 2025.

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0167355

12. A. is a woman from Nicaragua. Her son, P., is a derivative on her application. Their merits hearing is on December 30, 2025. A. and P. speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 12/30/2025

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

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Nicaragua

Client's Story

A.'s uncle sexually abused her during her childhood. In her teens and early adult years, she also suffered domestic violence from different partners in Nicaragua. A. later moved to Costa Rica on a tourist visa and became a permanent resident. A. continued to suffer domestic violence from multiple partners in Costa Rica, including the father of her son, P. A. and P. later moved back to Nicaragua, where they were pursued by A.'s most recent partner. While back in Nicaragua, A.'s uncle began to pressure her to join the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). A. did not want to join the party but knew that refusing to do so would lead the FSLN to target her. Fearing torture or death from the FSLN and further harm from her ex-partners, A. fled Nicaragua with P.

Important Client Context

A. filed her application for asylum pro se. She missed her one-year filing deadline by just two days because she mailed it over a weekend. Pro bono attorneys should be prepared to argue, with NIJC's support, that A. and P. qualify for exceptions to the one-year filing deadline and the firm resettlement bar. All affidavits and supporting materials in A. and P.'s case will be due 15 days prior to their individual merits hearing on December 30, 2025

NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

Asylum - Defensive

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

13. 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

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

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 and 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

14. 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

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

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

15. 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 2/4/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

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

16. 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

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

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

17. 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

Location: IL

Language: French

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

18. 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

19. A. is a man from Brazil. His Master Calendar hearing is March 6, 2025. A. speaks

Portuguese and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 3/6/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Portuguese

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Brazil

Client's Story

A. worked as a police officer in Brazil for several years, specializing in drug and organized crime investigations. He uncovered bribes paid by a powerful criminal organization to various government officials. Other police officers and various members of the criminal organization threatened A. with death after he refused to accept hush money.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed A.'s asylum application with USCIS, but his case is now with the immigration court. A.'s Master Calendar hearing is on March 6, 2025. All affidavits and supporting materials 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: 23-0163741

20. 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 24, 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 3/24/2025

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: CT

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

21. 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

22. 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

23. N. is a gay cisgender man from Honduras. His master calendar hearing is on June 9, 2025. N. speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 6/9/2025

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

N. faced verbal, sexual, and psychological abuse from a young age in Honduras. His classmates called him homophobic slurs. Older teens sexually abused N. when he was around eight years old. He hid his sexual orientation for his safety. As a young adult, N. received death threats when he and a boyfriend held hands in public. Terrified that he would be assaulted or killed for his sexual orientation, N. fled to the United States at age 20.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed N.'s asylum application. Pro bono counsel will need to argue, with NIJC's support, that N. merits an exception to the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways (CLP) Asylum Ban. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior to his merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled. If the 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: 24-0190808

24. 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

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

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

25. 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 July 09, 2025. The family speaks Spanish and lives in Northern Indiana.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 7/9/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IN

Language: Spanish

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 July 09, 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

26. 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

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

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

27. 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

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

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

28. 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

29. S. is a man from Togo. His next Master Calendar hearing is on December 1, 2025. He speaks French and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 12/1/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Languages: French, English

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Togo

Client's Story

S. joined the PNP political party in 2017 to protest the lack of democracy in Togo. He became party secretary and mobilized individuals to join PNP protests. In 2018, the police beat S. during a protest and threatened to kill him. The police attempted to drag S. to their vehicle, but other protesters saw this and threw things at the officers. The police let go of S. and he was able to escape. With help from his father, S. fled to another village. He remained in hiding there for two weeks, but continued to receive threats daily via phone. During this time, the police gave S.'s father a summons for S. to go to the police station. S. fled to Brazil and lived there without status for almost two years until he received more threats. He then went to Mexico before entering the United States in 2021.

Important Client Context

S. timely filed his asylum application with the Chicago Immigration Court. All filings 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: 23-0161245

30. J. is a man from Ecuador. His Master Calendar hearing is on December 2, 2025. J. speaks Spanish and lives in a southern suburb of Chicago.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 12/2/2025

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Ecuador

Client's Story

In December of 2023, an Ecuadorian drug cartel known as Los Choneros, approached J. while he was working in a legal bookstore. Los Choneros offered to lend J. money, but he refused. The cartel members later returned and beat J., threatening him with a gun and demanding extortion money from him. J. began working from home, and the store later closed temporarily because Los Choneros had fired gunshots directly outside. J. approached the police for protection, but they were unwilling to help. Los Choneros then kidnapped J. and his son and demanded money from J.'s family. J. paid a partial sum, and Los Choneros released him. J. fled Ecuador. His wife and son live in hiding in Ecuador and continue to receive threats from Los Choneros.

Important Client Context

J. timely filed his application for asylum pro se. His Master Calendar hearing is on December 2, 2025. All affidavits and supporting materials for J.'s case 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: 24-0198430

31. R. is a woman from Honduras. Her son F. and daughter L. are derivatives on her asylum application. Their Master Calendar hearing is on December 8, 2025. R. and her children speak Spanish and live in southern Indiana.

Deadline: Master calendar hearing on 12/8/2025

Asylum Categories: Domestic and Gender Violence

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Spanish

Location: IN

Country of Origin: Honduras

Client's Story

R. met her ex-partner, S., and he moved in with R. and her two children. S. was very

controlling. He physically abused R. daily and tried to hit her children. Several months into their relationship, R. learned that S. was a member of the MS-13 gang. Knowing that there is nowhere in Honduras that R. and her children could be safe from S., R. fled to Mexico with L. S. threatened to kill R., her mother, and her children if she did not return to Honduras. He told R. that he would find her in Mexico. R. returned to Honduras for F. and together she and her children fled for the United States.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed R.'s application for asylum with the immigration court. All affidavits and supporting materials to R., F., and L.'s 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: 20-0140788

32. 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

33. S. is a man from Colombia. His merits hearing is on March 16, 2026. S. speaks Spanish and lives in a suburb of Indianapolis.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 3/16/2026

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 set for March 16, 2026.

NIJC Contact

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

34. O. is a man from Sudan. His individual merits hearing is on April 2, 2026. O. speaks Arabic and lives in Indianapolis.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 4/2/2026

Asylum Categories: Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: Immigration Court

Language: Arabic

Location: IL

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 21 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is on April 2, 2026.

NIJC Contact

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

35. 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

36. 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

37. D. is a gay cisgender man from Ghana. His merits hearing is scheduled for July 7, 2026. He speaks Twi and English and lives in Chicago.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 7/7/2026

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+

Venue: Immigration Court

Location: IL

Languages: Twi, English

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 months 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

NIJC timely filed D.'s asylum application with the Chicago Immigration Court. All affidavits and supporting documents for D.'s case will be due 15 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is on July 7, 2026.

NIJC Contact

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 22-0159379

38. 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
Location: IL

Language: Spanish
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 kidnappers, 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

39. C. and K. are lesbian cisgender women from Mexico. They speak Spanish and live in the Chicago suburbs. Their consolidated merits hearing is January 7, 2027.

Deadline: Merits hearing on 1/7/2027

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. Because C. and K. are married and their facts are overlapping, their cases have been consolidated. Their merits hearing is scheduled for January 7, 2027. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 15 days prior. Pro bono counsel may consult with clients about filing a motion to advance their hearing for an earlier date.

NIJC Contact

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

40. 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

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

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

41. 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

42. 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

43. 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

44. 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

45. 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

46. 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

47. 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

48. 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

49. 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. This case placement would be for representation on the asylum cases only; the SIJS cases are being handled independently. 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

50. V. is a gay cisgender man from Nicaragua. He speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

Asylum Categories: LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

Venue: USCIS

Language: Spanish

Location: IL

Country of Origin: Nicaragua

Client's Story

V. was taunted, threatened, and attacked for his sexual orientation in Nicaragua from a young age until adulthood. Both V.'s uncle and a neighbor molested and physically abused V. when he was a young child. As a young adult, while walking down the street, several men attacked V., holding a knife to his throat and leaving V. scarred. V. filed a complaint with the local police in the past but was pressured by the authorities into dropping the case. V.'s family history of political activism, expression of anti-Sandinista views and participation in public rallies also make him afraid to return to Nicaragua.

Important Client Context

NIJC timely filed V.'s asylum application, and he is awaiting an interview with the Chicago Asylum Office. 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
NIJC Case Number: 23-0161825

VAWA

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

51. 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

52. 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

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

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

53. 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

Location: IL

Language: Spanish

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