

February 21, 2025

## NIJC Pro Bono Case List: 57 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 asylum case that you do not see listed here, please email Lili Henkel ([lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org](mailto:lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org)) and Moisés López Soltero ([mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org](mailto:mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org)), and we will explore whether we have a case available that may be a good fit. For general questions about pro bono work with NIJC, please contact Charlotte Sall ([csall@immigrantjustice.org](mailto:csall@immigrantjustice.org)).

- **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.

Click to View:

[Priority Matters – Defensive Asylum](#)

[Defensive Asylum Matters](#)

[Affirmative Asylum Matters](#)

[SIJS – Predicate Order Matters](#)

[VAWA Matters](#)

## Priority Matters

### Priority Matters - Defensive Asylum

1. 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 (Voudou) 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 30 days prior to her individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

#### NIJC Contact

Lili Henkel, [lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org](mailto:lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org)

NIJC Case Number: 15-0099445

2. A. is a woman from Guatemala. Her four children are derivatives on her application for asylum. A. and her son, B., are scheduled for their individual merits hearing on August 28, 2025. Because A.'s daughters, C., D., and E., entered the United States as unaccompanied minors, USCIS has initial jurisdiction over their cases. All three are awaiting the scheduling of their asylum interviews, and C. has a Master Calendar hearing on August 5, 2027. A. and her family speak Spanish and live in Central Illinois.

**Deadline:** Merits hearing on 8/28/2025

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Canjobal

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Guatemala

#### Client's Story

A.'s partner abused A. and their children, raped A., and controlled her. He became particularly violent after she gave birth to their second daughter because he was angry that the child was a girl. A. has long-term hearing loss as a result of the abuse. A.'s partner forced her daughter, C., to scavenge for food at a local dump, attempted to sell C. to a drug trafficker, and threatened to rape C. When A. moved with her children to another part of Guatemala, her partner found them and threatened to kill them with the help of his drug trafficking associates. Fearing for their lives, A. fled with B. to the United States, followed separately by C. A.'s two youngest daughters, D. and E., joined them in the United States several years later.

**Important Client Context**

Because A. and B. filed for asylum after their one-year deadline, their pro bono attorneys will need to argue that they merit an exception to the one-year filing deadline for asylum eligibility. NIJC will assist them in making this argument. All documentation to their case will be due 30 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for August 28, 2025. C., D., and E. timely filed their applications for asylum with USCIS. All supporting documentation to their cases will be due one week prior to their asylum interviews.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 20-0143124

- 3. 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:** Merits hearing on 8/28/2025

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

**Venue:** Immigration Court, USCIS

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Ecuador

**Client’s Story**

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

**Important Client Context**

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

**NIJC Contact**

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

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

**Deadline:** Merits hearing on 9/3/2025

**Asylum Categories:** LGBTQ+, Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Venezuela

### **Client's Story**

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

### **Important Client Context**

NIJC timely filed Q.'s asylum application. All affidavits and supporting documents for Q.'s case will be due 30 days prior to her merits hearing, which is on September 3, 2025.

### **NIJC Contact**

Moises Lopez Soltero, [mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org](mailto:mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org)  
NIJC Case Number: 23-0161994

5. P. is woman from Venezuela. Her children, Q. and R., are derivatives on her application for asylum. Their individual merits hearing is on September 10, 2025. P., Q., and R. speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

**Deadline:** Merits hearing on 9/10/2025

**Asylum Categories:** Domestic and Gender Violence

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Venezuela

### **Client's Story**

L. abused P. from the time she was a child. He raped and beat her several times over the course of years. P. and her mother reported L. to the police, but he used his family's government connections to avoid any problems. L. threatened P. and her family with a gun for having reported him. P. eventually learned she was pregnant with L.'s child. During her pregnancy, L. threatened P. with a gun and hit her because he wanted P. to move in with him. P. was afraid that he would hurt her and take her daughter away, so she felt forced to live with him after the child, Q., was born. Months later, P. and Q. returned to live with P.'s mother. L. attempted to kill P. after this happened. P. then fled to Colombia. She left Q. with her mother, but L. took Q. while P. was out of the country. P. returned to Venezuela briefly when her mother died and then fled again to Colombia with Q. P. suspects that L. or his family were involved in her mother's death. P. had to flee Colombia as well because L. had family there who learned of her whereabouts. P. entered the United States with her daughter and son, who was born during her time in Colombia, and filed for asylum.

### **Important Client Context**

P. submitted her asylum application after her one-year-deadline. NIJC will support pro bono attorneys in making arguments for an exception to the deadline in her case. All affidavits and supporting materials for P., Q., and R.'s case will be due 30 days prior to their merits hearing, which is scheduled for September 10, 2025.

### **NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, [lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org](mailto:lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org)  
NIJC Case Number: 24-0180479

6. R. is national of Venezuela. Her individual merits hearing is on October 2, 2025. R. speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

**Deadline:** Merits hearing on 10/2/2025

**Asylum Categories:** Domestic and Gender Violence

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Venezuela

**Client's Story**

In Venezuela, R. first experienced harm in 2012 when the National Guard killed her brother during a raid. R. and her family pursued a case against the National Guard and received threats from the government. In 2022, R. was raped by her sister's husband. Then, also in 2022, R. noticed that she was being surveilled. Cars would follow and monitor her at her home and work. In 2023, several people came into her home and kidnapped her. She was held for seven days with several other women. She discovered that her kidnappers were the Guayana Cartel, and that they planned to traffic her to Brazil for sex work. R. believes that they targeted her because she is an indigenous woman. R.'s mother is from the Guajira indigenous minority in Venezuela, and R. has typical physical attributes associated with indigenous women. The other kidnapping victims held with R. were also indigenous Venezuelan women. During her captivity, R.'s kidnappers fed her just once a day and raped her multiple times. Eventually, R. managed to escape and flee to the U.S.

**Important Client Context**

R. timely filed for asylum and was placed in removal proceedings. All affidavits and supporting materials for her case will be due 30 days prior to her merits hearing, which is scheduled for October 2, 2025.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 24-0171602

7. 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 30 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

8. M. is a woman from Honduras. M., her husband, T., and three of their children each individually eligible for asylum. Their Master Calendar hearing is on November 10, 2025. M., T., and their children speak Spanish and live in Indianapolis.

**Deadline:** Master calendar hearing on 11/10/2025

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IN

**Country of Origin:** Honduras

**Client's Story**

M.'s nephew, who is an imprisoned gang member, demanded that M. help him leave prison by lying to the police. M. refused to cooperate. After her refusal, her cousin threatened to harm M. and her family. M. noticed gang members surveilling her family and her home. Additionally, gang members threatened T. for his refusal to pay extortion fees. The family fled Honduras after they made a police report against M.'s nephew and the police did nothing.

**Important Client Context**

They entered the United States in 2018, were placed in removal proceedings, and applied for asylum. They filed for asylum after their one-year deadline but are Mendez Rojas class members and timely filed class membership notices. They were set for an individual merits hearing in January 2023, but the immigration court cancelled the hearing. Their Master Calendar hearing is now scheduled for November 10, 2025. All supplementary filings will be due to court at least 30 days before their merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 21-0151700

9. 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 30 days before his merits hearing on November 18, 2025.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 24-0167355

10. 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 30 days prior to their individual merits hearing on December 30, 2025

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 23-0163260

11. 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 30 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

12. K. is a man from Honduras. His merits hearing is on February 5, 2026. K. speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

**Deadline:** Merits hearing on 2/5/2026

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Honduras

**Client's Story**

K. was part of an opposition political party in Honduras and was very active in the protest movement. In 2015, armed men from the Honduran military kidnapped and beat him. They threatened that he had to leave the country or end his participation in the political party. After K. escaped, he reported the kidnapping and torture to the police. After filing the police report, Honduran military and government officials constantly threatened K. that he had to leave the country. Fearing further attacks, he fled to the United States July 2018.

**Important Client Context**

K. filed his application for asylum pro se with the immigration court. Because he filed more than one year after his arrival, K.'s pro bono attorneys will need to argue that he merits an exception to the one-year filing deadline. NIJC will assist them in making that argument. All affidavits and supporting materials to K.'s case will be due 30 days prior to his individual merits hearing, which is scheduled for February 5, 2026.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 20-0143330

13. D. is a man from Mexico. His wife, F., is a derivative on his asylum application and needs to file an independent affirmative application with USCIS as soon as possible. D.'s individual merits hearing is on February 3, 2028, but his sworn affidavit is due on March 5, 2025. D. and F. speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

**Deadline:** Merits hearing on 2/3/2028

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court, USCIS

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Mexico

**Client's Story**

In 2022, unknown individuals shot and kidnapped D.'s brother. D. went to see the aftermath of the situation after his aunt called to tell him what happened. The next day, D. attempted to file a police report. Multiple police stations turned him away and told him he had to wait three days before filing a report. D. then dedicated his own time to search for his brother. He went to various morgues and around March 2022, he noticed police cars following him. D. received text messages and phone calls from the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) threatening to kill him like they did to his brother if he didn't stop investigating or begin working for them instead. About a week later, D. saw his picture on Facebook with a red X over it saying that his time had come. D. and F. fled their home and hid for a month in Ciudad Hidalgo, Michoacan about an hour away, where D. continued receiving threats. D. and F. fled Ciudad Hidalgo and sheltered at the United States southern border for about five months before entering the United States.

**Important Client Context**

D. timely filed his asylum application with the Chicago Immigration Court. F. is not in the Court's system and has passed her one-year deadline. NIJC is seeking pro bono attorneys to submit her individual asylum application with USCIS as soon as possible. D.'s affidavit is due March 5, 2025, and all other supporting materials to his case will be due 30 days prior to his merits hearing, which is on February 3, 2028.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 24-0167093

**Asylum - Defensive**

*Expected Tasks:* Legal research, Litigating in immigration court, Preparing affidavits, Preparing



applications, Preparing client testimony, Working with vulnerable clients, Writing legal memos

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

**Deadline:** Master calendar hearing on 2/24/2025

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Colombia

**Client's Story**

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

**Important Client Context**

Their next Master Calendar hearing is on February 24, 2025. All affidavits and supporting materials for their case will be due 30 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

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

**Deadline:** Master calendar hearing on 2/25/2025

**Asylum Categories:** LGBTQ+

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** French

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Benin

**Client's Story**

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

**Important Client Context**

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

**NIJC Contact**

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 21-0151564

16. 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 30 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

17. 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 30 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

18. G. is a woman from Honduras. Her son, E., and her partner, R., are derivatives on her asylum application and have independent applications on file. Their Master Calendar Hearing is on March 12, 2025. G. and her family speak Spanish and live in western suburb of Indianapolis.

**Deadline:** Master calendar hearing on 3/12/2025

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IN

**Country of Origin:** Honduras

**Client's Story**

G. began receiving threats from her aunt's ex-partner because G. and her family

refused to tell him where her aunt was after she fled Honduras. Another one of G.'s aunts was kidnapped by a local gang leader related to her aunt's ex-partner. Gang members tortured this aunt and left her for dead. G. and her partner, R., fled with her family to Mexico, but while in Mexico, G. began to receive threatening messages from gang members stating that they knew the family's whereabouts and would make them pay for disobeying.

**Important Client Context**

NIJC timely filed G., E., and R.'s asylum applications with USCIS, but their cases are now before the immigration court. Their Master Calendar hearing is scheduled for March 12, 2025. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 30 days prior to their individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 21-0152573

19. 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 30 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

20. 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 30 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

21. L. is a woman from Cameroon. Her partner, O., and their daughter, B., have independent asylum applications on file, and B. is a derivative on both of her parents' applications. Their Master Calendar hearing is on April 9, 2025. The family speaks French and lives in Chicago.

**Deadline:** Master calendar hearing on 4/9/2025

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

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** French

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Cameroon

**Client's Story**

L. was forced into marriage as a child. Her husband routinely raped and abused her. He threw their newborn baby against the wall, killing the infant. After several years of horrific abuse, L. escaped and relocated to another city but was left homeless. While on the streets, she suffered multiple rapes. A woman found L. and offered her a place to stay, but the woman's husband also raped L. The woman and her husband then trafficked L. to Brazil, promising L. work as a maid in a family member's home, but instead forcing her into a life of prostitution. While in Brazil, L. met O., who had fled Cameroon several years prior to escape political persecution. O. helped L. escape the forced prostitution, and the two relocated to another city in Brazil. After giving birth to their daughter, B., L. learned that her traffickers, who are members of the Nigerian mafia, continued to search for L., O., and B. and intended to kill them. Fearing for their lives, L., O., and B. fled to the United States.

**Important Client Context**

NIJC timely filed L., O., and B.'s applications for asylum with the Chicago Immigration Court. Their pro bono attorneys should be prepared to argue, with NIJC support, that the firm resettlement bar does not apply to their cases. All filings will be due 30 days prior to their merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Numbers: 22-0155648, 22-0155670

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 30 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

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**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 30 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. U. is a woman from Cameroon. Her Master Calendar hearing is on June 9, 2025. U. speaks English and lives in Chicago.

**Deadline:** Master calendar hearing on 6/9/2025

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** English

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Cameroon

**Client's Story**

At the start of the Cameroon Civil War, U. worked as a nurse. U.'s employer fired her after she disclosed that Separatists captured and raped her while she was returning home from a trip. As the Anglophone Crisis continued, the military came into U.'s community and burned down shops, including the shop of U.'s partner. Devastated and angry, U.'s partner joined the Separatists and was later killed during a shootout. After her partner's death, Separatists tried to recruit U., and the military came looking for her.

**Important Client Context**

U. timely filed a pro se asylum application. All affidavits and supporting materials for her case will be due 30 days prior to her individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0181897

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 9, 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

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IN

**Country of Origin:** Honduras

**Client's Story**

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

**Important Client Context**

NIJC timely filed the family's asylum applications. R. and her children's next Master Calendar Hearing is on July 9, 2025. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 30 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

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Guatemala

**Client's Story**

When E. was in high school, local gang members began to demand that E. help them with their illegal activities. E. refused, and the gang members pushed him to the

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

**Important Client Context**

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

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 21-0150685

27. 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 30 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

28. L. is a lesbian cisgender woman from Colombia. Her master calendar hearing is scheduled for October 17, 2025. She speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

**Deadline:** Master calendar hearing on 10/17/2025

**Asylum Categories:** LGBTQ+

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Colombia

**Client's Story**

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

them how to be women." L. and her friend ran to the police, but the police refused to help them.

**Important Client Context**

Since 2017, L. mostly lived outside of Colombia because she could not tolerate the homophobia. She spent several years in Brazil and briefly lived in Chile and Ecuador, but she did not request or have legal status or a work permit in any of these countries. Pro bono counsel will need to argue, with NIJC's support, that L. was not firmly resettled in any of these countries. L.'s asylum application was timely filed with the Chicago Immigration Court.

The immigration judge is requiring a detailed affidavit be filed prior to L.'s master calendar hearing on October 17, 2025. All other supporting materials will be due 30 days prior to the merits hearing, likely to be set at the scheduled master calendar hearing.

**NIJC Contact**

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 23-0161948

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 30 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 30 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 30 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. L. is a woman from Guatemala. Her children, G. and J., are derivatives on her application for asylum and are also independently eligible for asylum. Their Master Calendar Hearing is on February 24, 2026. The family speaks Spanish and lives in the Indianapolis area.

**Deadline:** Master calendar hearing on 2/24/2026

**Asylum Categories:** Domestic and Gender Violence

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IN

**Country of Origin:** Guatemala

**Client's Story**

L. endured sexual, physical, and emotional abuse from X., the father of her children. X. raped her regularly and threatened to kill her or her parents when she disagreed with him or tried to end the relationship. X. began selling drugs and was implicated in a triple femicide. When he was arrested, the victims' families surrounded L.'s house and threatened to kill her and her children as punishment for X.'s crimes. L. and her children fled Guatemala to escape the threats and X. Since arriving to the United

States, X. has contacted L. and threatened to kill her for abandoning him.

**Important Client Context**

L. filed her asylum application pro se with the immigration court. Because L.'s application was filed more than one year after L. entered the United States, her pro bono attorneys will need to argue that she merits an exception to the one-year filing deadline for asylum eligibility. NIJC will assist them in making this argument. The family's Master Calendar hearing is scheduled for February 24, 2026. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 30 days prior to L.'s individual merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 22-0159967

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 30 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 Sudanese 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 30 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

**Languages:** French, Other

**Location:** IL

**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 30 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 30 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 30 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 30 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](mailto: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

**Location:** IL

**Language:** Spanish

**Country of Origin:** Haiti

**Client's Story**

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

**Important Client Context**

NIJC timely filed S.'s asylum application. All affidavits and supporting materials to S.'s case must be filed 30 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](mailto: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  
**Location:** IL

**Language:** Spanish  
**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 30 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. H. is a woman from Venezuela. Her son and daughter, R. and W., are both derivatives on her asylum application, and W. has an individual application on file. H.'s partner, S., also filed an individual asylum application on which their son, R., is a derivative. H., R., W., and S.'s individual merits hearing is on November 10, 2027. They speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

**Deadline:** Merits hearing on 11/10/2027

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Venezuela

**Client's Story**

H. was a teacher in Venezuela. In 2019, she attended protests to fight the poor conditions of teachers and the education system. As a teacher working under the Venezuelan Ministry of Education, H. was not supposed to attend protests that may be perceived as anti-government. The education system did not improve, prompting H. to move to Peru with her daughter, W. There, H. met her partner, S., and had their son, R. The family returned to Venezuela in 2021. H. continued to attend protests. When she attempted to return to her position as a teacher, school administrators barred her from doing so because her family did not politically align with the government. Colectivos, including civilian supporters and law enforcement, were frequently present at the protests H. attended. The colectivos harmed protestors with gas bombs, water hoses, and small spherical bullets. In 2023, colectivos arrived at H.'s house. They destroyed items around the house, beat S. and her other son, J., and threatened to either take her children away or torture and kill her family if they continued attending protests. H. and her family left their home as soon as the colectivos left and immediately fled to the United States.

**Important Client Context**

NIJC timely filed H., S., and W.'s asylum applications. All affidavits and supporting materials will be due 30 days prior to their merits hearing, which is on November 10, 2027.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 23-0164100

43. 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](mailto: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

44. R. is a man from Colombia. His wife, W., and daughter, D., have independent asylum applications on file. D. is also a derivative on both of her parents' applications. Their Master Calendar hearing is scheduled for December 16, 2025. R. and his family speak Spanish and live in Chicago.

**Deadline:** Master calendar hearing on 12/16/2025

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** Immigration Court

**Location:** IL

**Language:** Spanish

**Country of Origin:** Colombia

**Client's Story**

R. was a small business owner in Colombia. W. worked at another small business. FARC dissidents demanded that R. and W. pay a monthly war tax. When they

refused, the dissidents robbed the store and threatened R. with a gun. A few weeks later, FARC dissidents again demanded R. and W. pay the war tax, threatening that if they did not pay, R. would be disappeared. Following the second demand, R. and his family received multiple pamphlets at their business and home threatening to kill R. and W. and kidnap D. for recruitment if they did not pay up. Eventually, R. and his family fled to another town about 17 hours away. Soon after, they received phone calls warning that the FARC dissidents knew where the family was and threatening to kill R. and W. and kidnap D.

**Important Client Context**

NIJC timely filed R., W., and D.'s applications for asylum applications with the immigration court. All affidavits and supporting materials for their case will be due 30 days prior to their merits hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 24-0210414

45. 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

46. 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

47. K. is a gay cisgender man from Venezuela with dual citizenship in Colombia. He speaks Spanish and lives in Chicago.

**Asylum Categories:** LGBTQ+

**Venue:** USCIS

**Location:** IL

**Language:** Spanish

**Country of Origin:** Venezuela

**Client's Story**

K. fears returning to Venezuela (his primary country of citizenship) because his family beat him and called him homophobic names from a young age for playing with dolls. K. repressed his sexual orientation to survive. Two of K's older cousins sexually abused him when he was a child. His mother beat and blamed him when she found out. As an adult, Venezuelan police extorted and threatened K. for going to gay clubs.

Out of fear, K. fled to Colombia and obtained citizenship through his mother around 2017. Even as a dual citizen, K. faced discrimination and harassment for being gay. In Colombia, police also extorted and targeted K. for being gay. K. knows other LGBTQ people who were murdered and feared he would be one of them.

**Important Client Context**

K. entered the United States in October 2022 and timely filed for asylum before USCIS. However, the application was filed through a notary and will require some edits, though the factual information is consistent and correct. K. is awaiting an interview with the Chicago Asylum Office. Affidavits and other supporting documents will be due approximately one week prior to his interview at the asylum office. Because interview timing can vary, NIJC recommends pro bono counsel plan to work up this case within 12 weeks of case acceptance.

**NIJC Contact**

Moises Lopez Soltero, mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 23-0165075

48. 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](mailto:mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org)  
NIJC Case Numbers: 23-0162629, 23-0161512

49. 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](mailto:mlopezsoltero@immigrantjustice.org)

NIJC Case Number: 24-0167484

50. 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

51. T. is a woman from Honduras. Her daughter, W., is a derivative on her affirmative asylum application. T. and W. speak Spanish and live in the northwestern suburbs of Chicago.

**Asylum Categories:** Political Opinion, Religious Beliefs

**Venue:** USCIS

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Honduras

**Client's Story**

Around 2013, T.'s eldest daughters, S. and J., worked on the campaign of the mayoral candidate for the National Party of their town in Honduras. After the National Party candidate won the elections, supporters of the Liberal Party threatened S. and J. with death for working for the opposing party. S. and J. fled Honduras. In following years, T.'s youngest daughters, K. and W., were sexually assaulted. T. suspects the assaults are related to the problems her eldest daughters had. In 2022, unknown individuals shot into the family's house, prompting T. and W. to flee to the United States fearing for their lives.

**Important Client Context**

NIJC timely filed T.'s asylum application with USCIS and will file an individual asylum application on W.'s behalf. Affidavits and other supporting documents will be due one week prior to T. and W.'s interview(s) at the asylum office. Because interview timing can vary, pro bono counsel should plan to work up this case within 12-16 weeks of case acceptance. T.'s daughters, S. and J., were granted asylee status in the United States and S. is now a permanent resident.

**NIJC Contact**

Lili Henkel, lhenkel@immigrantjustice.org

NIJC Case Number: 24-0167420

52. 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

**SIJS - Predicate Order**

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

53. Z. is a 12-year-old boy from Mexico living with his mother, who speaks Spanish, in West Chicago (DuPage County).

**Deadline:** Predicate Order filed by 3/1/2025

**Venue:** Family Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Mexico

**Client's Story**

His parents separated when he was about five years old due to his father's physical abuse of his mother, which Z. often witnessed. After the separation, Z. initially lived with his aunt in Mexico while his mother came to the United States in early 2022. During this time, his father provided financial assistance only occasionally and inconsistently. In June 2023, Z. reunited with his mother in Illinois. Since arriving in the United States, Z. has had minimal contact with his father.

**Important Client Context**

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

**NIJC Contact**

Berenice Sanchez Ruiz, bsanchezruiz@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 24-0167053

54. E. is a 13-year-old boy from Honduras. He lives with his mother, who speaks Spanish, in central Illinois. (McLean County).

**Deadline:** Predicate Order filed by 6/1/2025

**Venue:** Family Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Honduras

**Client's Story**

E.'s father left the family when E. was just one year old. He maintained contact for a few years, sending money to support E., but around the time E. turned eight, his father stopped all communication and financial support.

**Important Client Context**

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

**NIJC Contact**

Berenice Sanchez Ruiz, bsanchezruiz@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 24-0181744

55. M. is a 15-year-old girl from Guatemala. She lives with her mother, who speaks Spanish, and they live in west Chicago (DeKalb County).

**Deadline:** Predicate Order filed by 6/1/2025

**Venue:** Family Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Guatemala

**Client's Story**

M.'s father abandoned her mother while she was still pregnant with M. in 2008. M. has never known her father, and he has never attempted to get in touch with her. Her father has not provided any financial or emotional support to her whatsoever.

**Important Client Context**

A pro bono attorney will need to file a petition for allocation of parental responsibilities and establish paternity on behalf of M.'s mother. They will need an order finding that M.'s reunification with her father is not viable due to abandonment and that it is not in M.'s best interest to return to Guatemala.

**NIJC Contact**

Berenice Sanchez Ruiz, bsanchezruiz@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 24-0214304

56. Z. is a 15-year-old girl from Honduras. She lives with her mother, who speaks Spanish, in a West Chicago suburb. (DuPage County).

**Deadline:** Predicate Order filed by 6/1/2025

**Venue:** Family Court

**Language:** Spanish

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Honduras

**Client's Story**

Z.'s father was physically abusive to both her and her mother, with Z. witnessing the abuse during her early childhood. Her mother came to the United States on a work visa, but when it was time to return to her home country, Z.'s father hid her passport and identification to prevent her from leaving. Z.'s mother filed for a U-visa and added Z. as a derivative due to the domestic violence. In December 2015, Z. was able to reunify with her mother in the United States. When Z. was about 8 years old, her father was prosecuted for assault against another minor and deported in December 2017. Since then, he has abandoned her, providing no financial or emotional support.

**Important Client Context**

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

**NIJC Contact**

## **VAWA**

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

57. 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 English and resides in Chicago. There is currently no set deadline, but a petition has been filed for divorce which may lead to a deadline in the future. (24-0204874) (24-0215458).

**Venue:** USCIS

**Language:** English

**Location:** IL

**Country of Origin:** Mexico

### **Client's Story**

A. has been the victim of emotional, financial, physical, and mental abuse by her U.S. citizen husband. A. stopped living with him because he was physically abusive. After she left, he would call her multiple times a day and would show up to her job. In 2024 she reported two incidents to the police. A. reported him to the police because while dropping off some documents for him she remained in her car and did not let her husband in. This made him angry, and he kicked the rear-view mirror of her car until it fell off. He then threw the mirror at A. as she drove off. A. obtained an emergency order of protection right after this incident. Most recently, A's husband was following her on the road, yelling through his window, and rear-ended her vehicle then fled. She reported the incident to the police. A. is attending counseling.

### **NIJC Contact**

Jackie Mares, jmares@immigrantjustice.org  
NIJC Case Number: 24-0215458