

2009 Year in Review



This past year at JFON-West Michigan...

I must admit 2009 started slow....a three month vacancy in our only full-time position had us scrambling to serve existing clients, until we could get **Liz Balck**, new JFON Regional Attorney, on board. Many thanks to **Wendy Taylor**, JFON Legal Assistant, who put in many extra hours coordinating with **Danny Upton**, former JFON-West Michigan attorney and current traveling National Program Attorney, to serve during the transition.

During 2009, JFON launched a series of new projects funded by grants, an advocacy campaign, and community events. In the Spring, JFON began a 3-part training workshop involving caseworkers from Community Action House and Women in Transition Center in Holland. With this training these caseworkers are better equipped to spot possible immigration issues and encourage their clients to seek legal advice (grant from **Holland-Zeeland Community Foundation**). In September, Dr. Miguel De La Torre, author of **Trails of Hope and Terror**, spoke to audiences in Holland and Grand Rapids and JFON help plan a Community Forum for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. In November, we made the first "Know Your Rights" presentation to the women in ICE detention at the Calhoun County Jail (grant from **Michigan State Bar Foundation**).



JFON Regional Attorney
Liz Balck

Through the fall, JFON worked with advocates, professionals and service providers who make up the **West Michigan Coalition for Immigration Reform**. 2010 kicked off with a Day of Faith and Action, a day of prayer and reflection on the plight of the immigrant and the call to change laws to match the needs of our society.

Since opening our first office in 2004, JFON has served over 850 clients from 54 nations, by providing family-based and humanitarian immigration legal services to those earning less than 200% of poverty. We continue our relationship with Bethany Christian Services, helping their immigrant children in foster care pursue their appeals for asylum and SIJS status.

Wishing you all the best in 2010! - Laura Rampersad, JFON Regional Coordinator

Client Success Story—Anna & James

A story of a refugee family from Liberia

In 2007, JFON took on Anna and James', seemingly simple, family reunification case. Family reunification cases involve a refugee who has adjusted status to lawful permanent resident (green card holder) after one year of residency and who now wants to bring family members not resettled initially. In this case the family came from Liberia. Anna and their two young children were granted refugee status and established a new home in the Holland area. Her husband James did not get permission to travel and remained in Liberia. When Anna came to JFON, she had already made one unsuccessful filing of family reunification application pro se (without counsel). Our JFON attorney reviewed her situation and soon found this case to be more complicated than initially portrayed.

Back in Africa, James had serious and aggressive tumors growing in his nose and face. The tumors began behind his eyes and nasal cavity causing excruciating pain. As they grew, James' physical appearance drastically changed as the tumors contorted his face. He was also having routine nose bleeds and difficulty breathing. Here in the United States, Anna was having difficulty raising her two young boys without her husband. Already apart for two years, Anna and the boys missed their husband/father and didn't understand why he couldn't live with them in the U.S. *(cont'd page 2)*



JFON Reaches Out

We prioritize our limited resources to assist in the cases requiring a high level of expertise to those who have little or no financial resources. In 2009, we accepted 110 new clients, serving:

- **53 Women, 36 Men, and 18 Children**
- **12 VAWA** (Violence Against Women Act self-petitions)
- **14 U Visas** (Victims of Crime)
- **1 new** and **4 on-going** SIJS kids from Bethany
- A collaboration with St Joseph the Worker, Wyoming, and Cooley law students helped **19** ESL students prepare **US Citizenship** applications.

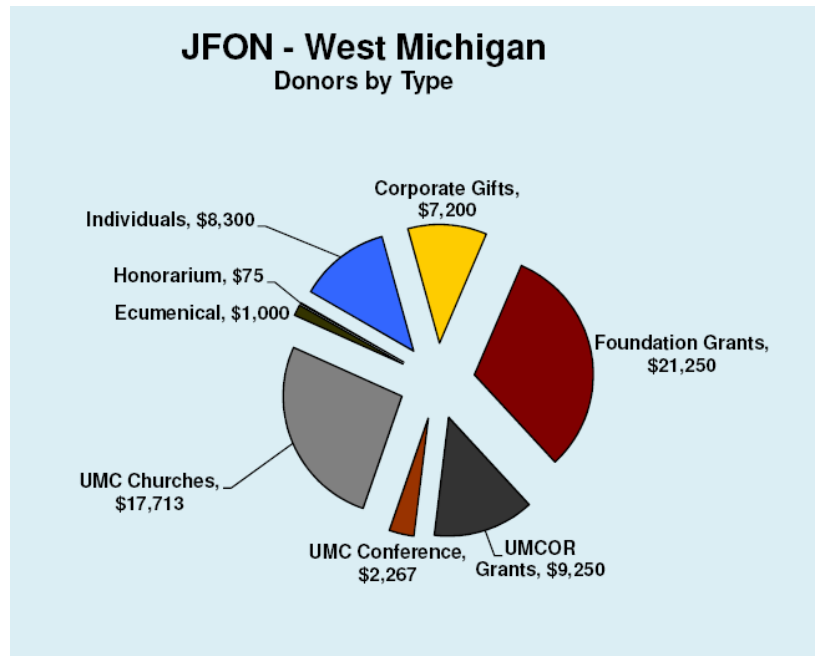
West Michigan Success Stories

Client –Anna & James *(cont'd from cover page)*

The boys were venting their frustration on their mother and getting into trouble at school. Anna was desperate and felt hopeless. Because of the medical condition, the first application JFON prepared was a humanitarian parole request -- asking the US government to allow James to come to the US based on humanitarian grounds. USCIS denied this request. Next, JFON applied for a medical visa request based on James' serious and potentially fatal medical condition. This was also denied. Finally, JFON made a second family reunification application. In early 2009, James' this application was approved.

Race against the Clock— By the time the application was approved, James' condition had deteriorated significantly. When James arrived in Michigan, he was immediately scheduled for surgery at the University of Michigan hospital in Ann Arbor. The University of Michigan surgeon operated on James' face and removed the tumors underneath. By August 2009, he had undergone two surgeries. After multiple surgeries the surgeon declared James both free from the tumors and cancer! It turned out that the tumors they removed from James were not cancerous, but would eventually have turned cancerous, if not removed.

Planning for the Future—James' arrival in the United States has stabilized the family and the boys' behavior has improved. The boys are also doing better in school. Now with James reunited with his family and cancer-free, he looks forward to providing financially for his family. He has applied to a nursing program. The family couldn't have gotten through those years of waiting without support from Bethany Christian Services, Pastor Marion VanderSteeg and Pastor Ron Baker. Further, the family could not have maneuvered through the USCIS system and been reunited, without multiple applications and persistent representation provided by JFON, prepared free of charge. This outcome could have been so different without these groups and individuals standing with them and not giving up.



Client Success Story – Sara

A story of a child trafficked, homeless....then saved

Sara was born in Ghana and came to the US at age 10. She immigrated with an American friend of Sara's mother (Mrs. Smith) after she had visited with her family in Ghana. This friend offered to bring Sara to Chicago and give her a better life - a good education and a safe place to live

In reality, Mrs. Smith's intentions were far from upstanding. When she arrived in Chicago, Sara was forced to care for the Smith's two small children and work as their domestic servant. Her chores included doing the family's laundry, cooking all meals, and cleaning the family house. Mrs. Smith did not allow Sara to go to school or to even leave the family's house. A pattern of verbal and physical abuse soon ensued. Sara was also sexually abused on several occasions by Mr. Smith. Mrs. Smith even lied to Sara, telling her that her mother had died!!

After about four years of living as the Smith's slave, Sara decided to run away and leave the only people she knew in the United States. For the next several years Sara lived on the streets of Chicago. At different times she accepted shelter from men who offered to help her, but each time they hurt and used her. Each time she fled back to the streets of Chicago. Finally, after being severely beaten by yet another man, Sara fled one last time. She ran to a nearby Home Depot and told one of their employees—a perfect stranger - her story. That employee helped her by calling a local shelter. Sara was eventually placed in a safe home, underwent counseling and began taking classes. A counselor helped Sara file a T visa application. (Note: T visa gives temporary legal status to victims of human trafficking). Since Sara was still a minor, she was placed in the foster care *(cont'd page 4)*

JFON-West Michigan Funding

Fall Fundraising Event raised over
\$5,000

Foundation Support

Michigan State Bar Foundation
Matching Grant \$22,500
Sebastian Foundation \$10,000
Holland Zeeland Com. Foundation \$3,000

Corporate Donations

Bethany Christian Services
Miller-Canfield
Jose A Sandoval, PC
Varnum

Church Sponsors

UMCOR
West Michigan Conf (UMC)
First UMC Grand Rapids
First UMC Holland
St. Francis De Sales Holland
Hope Reformed Church-Holland

Private Donors (over \$100)

Don and Ruth Chisnall
Sam Dixon
Stephan and Mary Monsma
Bob and Lois Nordling
Domingo Ramirez
Ronald and Laura Rampersad
Lyn Savidge
Tim and Lynda Zeller

Special Projects

In West Michigan

Education and Advocacy are equally important in the JFON mission statement to providing legal services. JFON-West Michigan spoke at numerous immigration forums and dozens of churches, both UMC and non-UMC.

- Know Your Rights Outreach** Funded by a grant from the UMCOR Refugee and Immigrant Ministries and the Michigan State Bar Foundation (MSBF), JFON Regional Attorney has started making monthly visits to the Calhoun County Jail (which serves the entire lower peninsula of Michigan and northern Ohio) to counsel detainees on their legal rights and available remedies. ICE detention centers hold asylum-seekers awaiting a hearing and Undocumented immigrants awaiting deportation.

Most detainees cannot afford legal representation by a private attorney, and US legal system does not guarantee the right to representation for immigration matters. On any given day, there may be a thousand detainees at this facility and length of stay can vary from weeks to years.



- Holland-Zeeland** JFON teamed with Community Action House to conduct caseworker training on immigration matters. The first workshop was an overview of family-based and immigration law. The second workshop was conducted in conjunction with staff from Women in Transition and focused on domestic violence and the immigrant family. Finally, the third workshop was a Know Your Right presentation so that caseworkers can be supportive and direct clients to proper resources if a family member is detained by ICE.
- WMCCIR** JFON helped found the West Michigan Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform in summer 2009. This group of advocates, professionals, clergy and service providers meets regularly to plan community events. WMCCIR has organized a speakers bureau available to present on Comprehensive Immigration Reform topics at community or church events.



New Cases for 2009

Cases helping General Immigrant Population	Applications for United States citizenship:	18
	Refugee and asylum-seekers fleeing persecution in their homelands:	7
	Humanitarian, Religious Workers, TPS, and other adjustments:	18
	Representation in Immigration Court—Removal, Motions and Appeals:	3
	Advise, Counsel and Research:	25
Applications to Reunite Families	Petitions filed on behalf of alien relatives, uniting families divided by international borders:	12
Cases Helping Immigrant Women and Children	Violence Against Women Act self-petitions, on behalf of immigrant women abused by their US citizen or lawful permanent resident spouses:	12
	Victims of Crime and Trafficking (T-visas and U-Visas):	14
Cases helping unaccompanied children and orphans:	Immigrant children unaccompanied by parents or other family members who may care for them; (SIJ):	1

Client Success Story—Sara (cont'd from page 2)

system. Sara was assigned to a caseworker at Bethany Christian Services in Grand Rapids. JFON joined the story to help Sara apply to adjust her status from temporary T visa holder to lawful permanent resident (green card).

In October 2009, Sara's LPR application was approved. Sara shouted with delight when she held the green card for the first time, not even allowing our attorney to take it from her hands to answer her own questions about the information on the card. Sara also got her wish, bridging the miles from GR to Africa with Facebook, she connected with a family member, and within 20 minutes was on the phone with her mother! With her new-found status as a legal permanent resident, Sara is able to both remain in the home she has known for over a decade and travel to Ghana to visit her mother!!

While nothing can erase the abuse she suffered from "family" for those 10 years, the help she received from strangers like the volunteers and staff from JFON, Bethany and that worker at Home Depot gave her freedom and security for the future.

Meet the Author Event

On October 28th, 2009, JFON-West Michigan hosted **Dr Miguel A De La Torre** two community events: a luncheon lecture and book signing at the Herrick District Library and an evening fundraiser at Grand Rapids FUMC.



Dr. De La Torre speaks
Herrick District Library, Holland

Dr. De La Torre, author of the newly released "Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration," presented a background of the human migration that has occurred in the Americas from the beginning of man to the current day. He covered NAFTA and the severe hardship realized by Central American and Mexican farmers. He also spoke about Operation Gatekeeper and the human rights violations that have resulted from this policy, including his own testimonials from time spent walking the border with his students. This event sponsored by **Bethany Christian Services** and **UMCOR** raised over \$5,000 for JFON-West Michigan.

10 Years of Service

New York Region

Brooklyn
Chinatown
Flushings
Lower Manhattan

Baltimore-Washington DC Region

Baltimore—Salem UMC
Hyattsville FUMC
Emory UMC/Emory Beacon of Light

Iowa Region

Cedar Rapids-Lovely Lane UMC
Columbus Junction UMC
Des Moines

Texas Region

Storm Lake UMC
Nebraska Region
Columbus FUMC
Omaha
Texas Region
Dallas—Pleasant Mound UMC
Fort Worth—Polytechnic UMC
Pharr (2009 start-up)

JFON National Network

5 Years of Service

West Michigan Region

Grand Rapids FUMC
Holland FUMC

Other Sites

Arkansas Region

Dover UMC
Monticello FUMC
Oak Forest UMC
Florida Region
Orlando FUMC Pine Hills
Tampa-Faith Community Haitian UMC

2009 Region Start-ups

California Region

San Francisco

Tennessee Region

Nashville—Hillcrest UMC

Regions/Sites Launched in Jan. 2010

Southeast Michigan Region

Local Partnerships & Internships

Cooley Law School:

Several students serve at clinics, special offsite clinics, and weekly office work:

Catalina Restrapo Beltrand

Karlla Brown

Elise Kowalski

Other Office Volunteers:

Liz Ibarra

Braeden Wilkerson

Hope College:

Amber Nyblad, a Hope College senior finished her internship last Spring. She provided 10 hrs per week for two semesters.

Volunteer Attorneys

JFON uses private attorneys to consult with clients during clinic hours and at times for follow-up activities.

Robert Alvarez

Kim Clarke

Mariza Gamez-Garcia

Lyn Savidge

Nathaniel Wolf

Tim Zeller

Support JFON-W. Michigan

Donate Now!

JFON is a grassroots efforts, both in promoting volunteerism and in finding local financial support to cover 100% of local operations. Funds collected in each region, remain in that region.

In 2009, we were able to renew existing grants and to find a few new funding sources. Due to the financial downturn, a Methodist program that formerly supplemented the attorney's salary and benefits ended and we experienced a 30% increase in our operating funds.

Did you Know? The JFON model promotes volunteerism and sets its priorities to maximize our funds. Over 50% of the program budget is from in-kind donations and our administrative expenses amount to only \$6k.

Donating is simple, just visit:

www.jfonwestmichigan.org