Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Testimony of Commissioner Guillermo Linares New York City Council Committee on Immigration October 30, 2008

Good morning Chairman Stewart, members of the Immigration Committee and City Council. My name is Guillermo Linares and I am Commissioner for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to come before you today and discuss the immigration population trends that comprise our great City, and update you on the work that my office- the Office of Immigrant Affairs- has been doing to assist immigrant New Yorkers integrate into the social, economic and cultural landscape of the City.

Let me begin by sharing with you the role of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. In 2001, New York City voters passed a referendum establishing permanently the office of Immigrant Affairs within the Office of the Mayor. Building on its Charter mandate, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs promotes the well-being of immigrant communities by recommending policies and programs that help facilitate successful integration of immigrant New Yorkers. The office's core mission is to promote the full and active participation of immigrants in the civic, social, and economic life of New York City.

The Office serves as a bridge, connecting immigrant New Yorkers with City agencies and services. Our work is not done single-handedly, but in collaboration with leaders within immigrant communities, civic leaders, advocates, city officials, and other key stakeholders- such as yourselves- working together to address the needs of immigrants in New York City. The work undertaken by the Office of Immigrant Affairs is truly significant when you consider the City's demographics.

I have the great pleasure of being joined by Joe Salvo, the Director of the Population Division at the New York City Department of City Planning today. He will provide the members of the City Council with a thorough overview of the demographic make-up of

immigrants in New York City, a City which has one of the largest immigrant populations of any city in the United States. But let me lead by providing the members of the Council with a broad overview of the City's expansive immigration population. According to 2006 American Community Survey, there are more than 3 million foreign-born persons living in the City, which makes up 37 percent of the City's entire population. When you account for the children of the foreign-born population in the City, that figure rises to two-thirds of the City's residents, and approximately forty-five percent of the City's workforce is foreign-born. Thus, the participation of immigrants is critical to the success and vitality of our City. I'll let Joe- who is an expert in the field- provide you with more detailed information about the immigration and population change in New York City.

As a result of the sizeable number of recent arrivals to New York City, integration has become an important issue in bringing about sustained inclusion of the different groups that populate the City, and we believe that local government plays a critical role in developing polices that support immigrant communities and respond to their distinct needs as they integrate into their new environment.

During the past four years, our office has advanced a number of important initiatives to promote access to City services and to encourage New York City residents - no matter the language they speak, the immigration status they hold, or the country in which they were born - to become more fully engaged in the City's economic, social, and cultural life.

One way in which the Administration has sought to increase access is through the City's Privacy Policy- Executive Orders 34 and 41- otherwise referred to as "Don't Ask- Don't Tell"- a policy meant to promote access to City services for all New Yorkers by protecting the privacy of a wide range of information belonging to people.

According to the Executive Orders, City workers must protect the confidentiality of a broad range of information belonging to people seeking City services, including a person's immigration status.

There are many City services and programs that are available to immigrants, regardless of their status. However, fear of having their status disclosed to federal authorities may impede a newcomer from accessing vital services and hinder his or her ability to successfully integrate into their new environment. The privacy assurances set out by the Executive Orders help ease the fear, which increases the likelihood that our newest New Yorkers will avail themselves of City services and benefits that they may be entitled to.

Another initiative meant to increase access to service is through the provision of language assistance services. 311 has been a signature achievement for this Administration in providing access to City services to all New Yorkers, including those who are limited in English. As you may already know, 311 is New York City's phone number for government information and non-emergency services, which allows customers to call one easy-to-remember number in order to receive information and access to City government services. All calls to 311 are answered by a live operator, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and each caller has immediate access to translation services in over 170 languages. In recent months, the system has been enhanced to offer comprehensive and simplified access to information and referrals to an array of social services providers through its well-established 311 call centre.

The Office of Immigrant Affairs has been working on language access initiatives for a number of years, providing language access guidance and technical assistance to targeted agencies so they can more effectively serve and communicate with limited-English proficient (LEP) New Yorkers. In 2003, Mayor Bloomberg signed Local Law 73, also known as the "Equal Access to Human Services Law." This City law strengthens language access services for limited-English proficient individuals seeking vital health and human services. My office has worked with the four key human and social services agencies to implement their language access plan.

In 2005, Mayor Bloomberg delegated the Office of Immigrant Affairs to convene an Interagency Task Force on Language Access in order to strengthen access to City services. This Taskforce has representatives from over 30 City agencies, and convenes

regularly to explore best practices to provide meaningful access to the City's limited-English proficient and immigrant population.

The active participation of agencies in the Task Force helped lay the groundwork for my office's most recent achievement - Executive Order 120, signed by the Mayor on July 22, 2008. The Executive Order is meant to enhance public access for people considered Limited in English by providing language assistance services. The passage of this Executive Order is testament of the Administration's commitment to serving immigrant communities and strengthening their language access services. Currently, my office is in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Operations to work with City agencies in developing their language access implementation plan as mandated by the Executive Order.

In conclusion, the Office of the Mayor will continue to build upon these and other initiatives through partnerships with City agencies, immigrant communities, the City Council, and other stakeholders. I thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to appear before you today, and provide you with an overview of the initiatives put forth to advance access to all New Yorkers, including our newest New Yorkers. I look forward to working with your Committee on our common goal of supporting immigrants, and welcome any questions you may have at the conclusion of Mr. Salvo's testimony.

Immigration and Population Change A Population Update

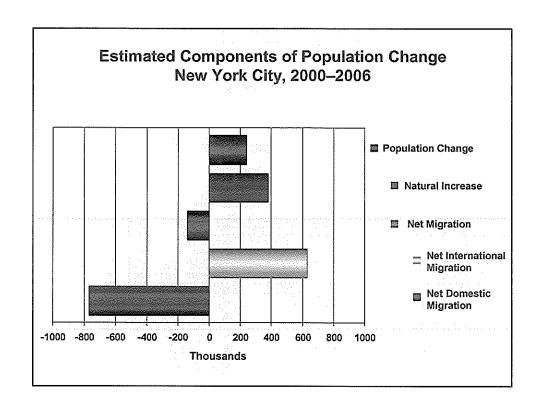


New York City Council Hearing on Trends in Ethnic Composition Of New York City's Population

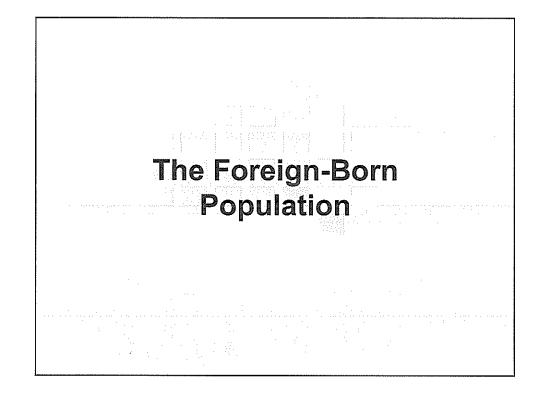
October 30, 2008

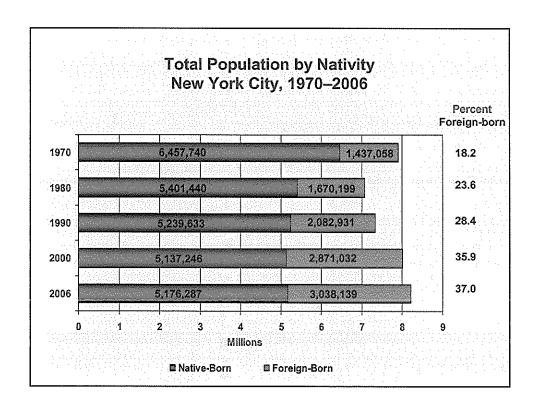
JOSEPH SALVO
POPULATION DIVISION

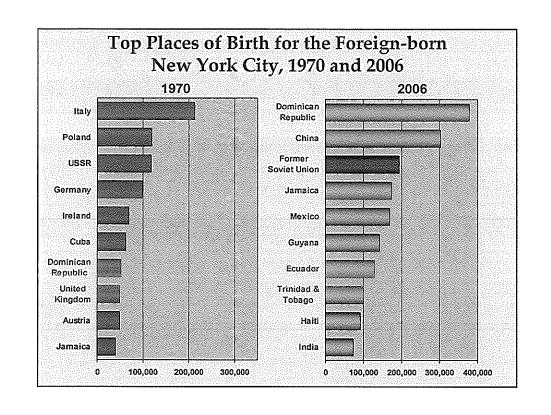
The Components of Population Change

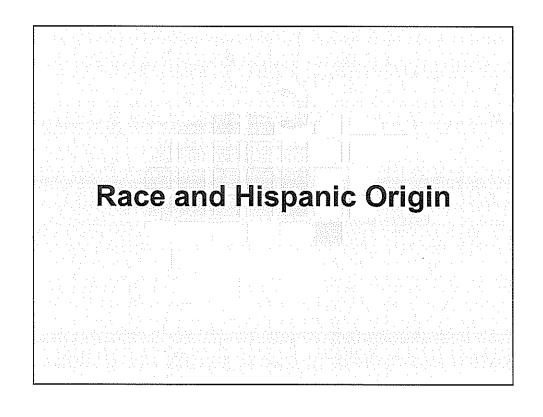


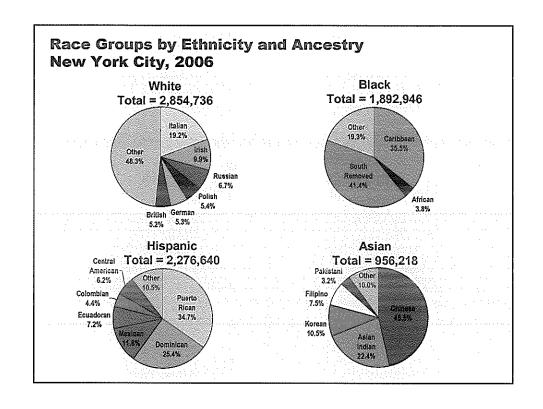
New York C	ity, ∠005		
	Number	Percent	
Total births	117,337	100.0	
Foreign-born mothers	62,508	53.3	
Mexico	7,910	6.7	
Dominican Republic	7,781	6.6	
China*	6,556	5.6	
Jamaica	3,370	2.9	
Ecuador	3,174	2.7	
Guyana	2,337	2.0	
Trinidad & Tobago	1,823	1.6	
Haiti	1,581	1.3	
Bangladesh	1,545	1.3	
India	1,420	1.2	

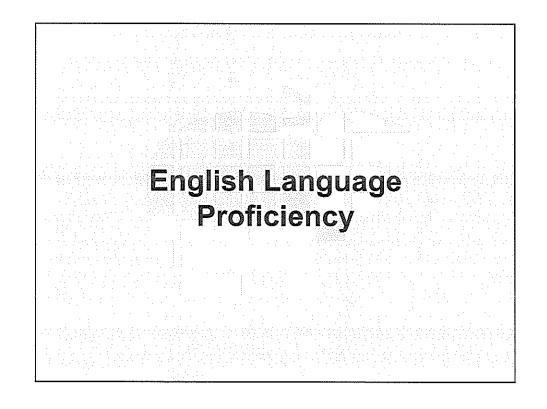


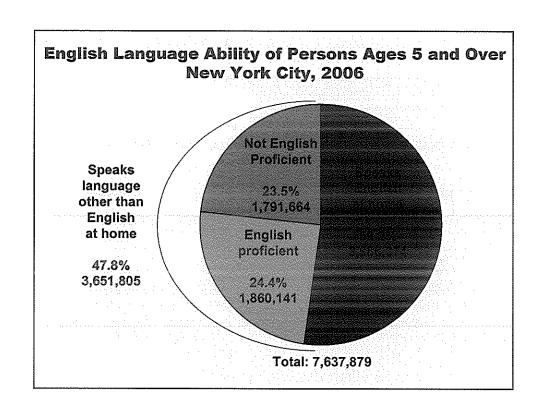












Lim	ited English Profic by Nativity and I New York City	anguage	lation	
		Number	Percent	
To	otal LEP	1,791,664	100.0	
	Native-born	294,603	16.4	
	Foreign-born	1,497,061	83.6	
To	p LEP Languages			
1	Spanish	910,264	50.8	
2	Chinese/Cant./Mand.	256,613	14.3	
3	Russian	121,104	6.8	
4	Korean	53,281	3.0	
5	Italian	41,132	2.3	
6	French Creole	38,115	2.1	
. 7	' Bengali	30,500	1.7	
	Polish	27,261	1.5	
	French	26,130	1.5	
10	Yiddish	24,875	1.4	

Persons of Limited English Proficiency Who Speak Spanish by Hispanic Subgroup

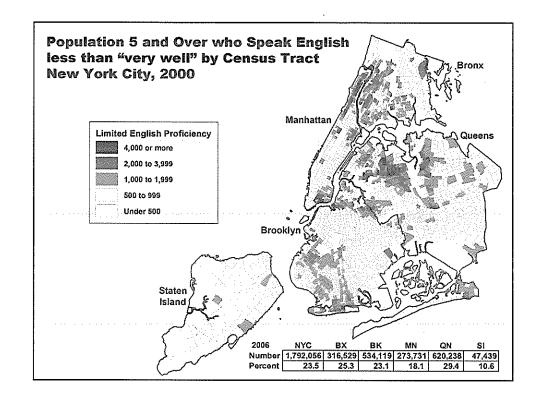
Persons Five Years and Over, New York City 2006 ACS PUMS

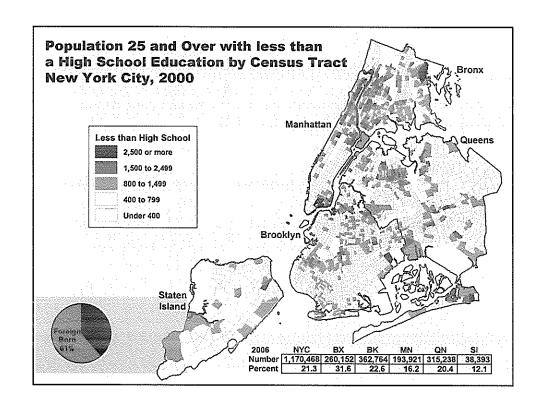
TOTAL	910,264	100.0
DOMINICAN	281,870	31.0
MEXICAN	159,391	17.5
PUERTO RICAN	155,960	17.1
ECUADORIAN	97,760	10.7
COLOMBIAN	50,271	5.5
ALL OTHER SPANISH	30,475	3.3
NOT SPANISH	22,366	2.5
PERUVIAN	21,578	2.4
HONDURAN	20,495	2.3
GUATEMALAN	18,008	2.0
SALVADORAN	16,515	1.8
CUBAN	10,211	1.1
ALL OTHER	25,364	2.8

Foreign-born Who are LEP (Limited English Proficient)
Persons Five Years and Over

New York City, 2006

		Percent
	Total	LEP
Dominican Republic	372,565	72.4
China, total	313,665	78.1
Jamaica	179,670	1.4
Mexico	170,278	86.3
Guyana	141,276	1.1
Ecuador	130,152	78.0
Trinidad and Tobago	100,691	0.9
Haiti	92,512	46.5
Colombia	73,832	69.6
India	72,337	38.5
Korea	71,617	66.8
Russia	70,476	59.2





WEB SITE

WWW.NYC.GOV/PLANNING

Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Immigration

October 30, 2008

Submitted by:

Peter Cheng, Executive Director Indochina Sino-American Community Center 170 Forsyth Street New York, NY 10002 Ph: 212-226-0317

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Hello, my name is Peter Cheng and I am the Executive Director of the Indochina Sino-American Community Center. The ISACC was established in 1990 by former refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Located in the Lower East Side, we have been an one-stop service center for Asian Americans in NYC offering educational and outreach programs, health care access services, entitlement assistance, job training, activities for seniors, emergency preparedness, as well as research and advocacy for community health needs. Our clients are low-income, language-disadvantaged immigrants and refugees from China and Southeast Asia.

The two ethnic groups which constitute a majority of our clients are the Vietnamese and the Chinese immigrants in NYC. According to U.S. Census figures: the Vietnamese population in NYC has increased 12% from in six years from 2000 to 2006 (13,010 to 14,624) and the Chinese population has increased a whopping 16% in the same six years from 374,321 to 434,617, or approximately 10,000 new immigrants coming in every year for the past six years.

Contrary to popular assumptions, Asian Americans in NYC are not well off. According to a study by the Center for Economic Opportunity, at 25.9% living below the poverty line, Asian American is the second poorest racial group in NYC. A very recent study by the Asian American Federation, titled "Working but Poor: Asian American Poverty in NYC", shows 40% of NYC Asians are low-income. More astounding is the finding that 71% of the low-income Asians are actually working adults. This indicates that many Asians are working at low-paying, mostly dead-end jobs.

As grim as the numbers have shown, things are even worse for certain Asian groups. In a research we collaborated with the NYU Center for the Study of Asian American Health, we have found in our study sample:

- o 30% of Vietnamese families were living in poverty, and 58% of Cambodian families in the Bronx received public assistance.
- o Among adult Vietnamese 26% were unemployed; and 56% of Cambodian adults were unemployed.
- o 23% of Vietnamese and 49% of Cambodians only had an elementary school education or less—with 27% of Cambodian adults in the Bronx having had no formal education in their lifetime.

O Limited English proficiency is a significant problem in the community, with 70% of Cambodian adults and 89% of Vietnamese adults surveyed were limited-English-proficient. Another study by the Asian American Federation has found that 63% of Chinese adults in NYC are limited-English-proficient.

The last point bears special significance. Being able to speak, read, and write in the English language is the most important factor in economic mobility: it opens the door to jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. Furthermore, being able to speak English allows immigrants to communicate with their neighbors, their children's teachers, health care providers, landlords, and others with whom they must interact on a regular basis. English skills are also crucial to passing the US citizenship exam, which serves as a gateway to full participation in the life of one's community, including the ability to vote in local, state, and federal elections.

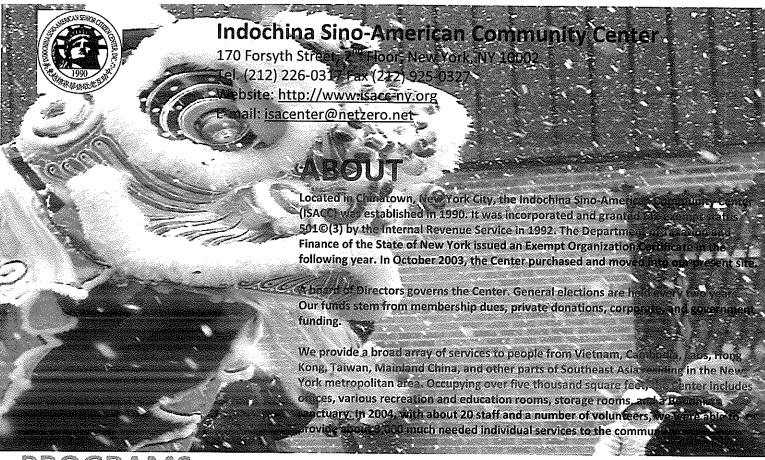
Yet government resource for ESOL classes is far inadequate when compared to the needs. A study by The New York Immigration Coalition in 2001 estimated that only 5 percent of the need for English classes was being met in New York City. The need is so great that we are using our own money to held ESOL and Citizenship classes in addition to our government-funded classes. In our program, it is not uncommon to find 40 or perhaps even 50 students in a class intended for 20.

In addition, currently much of the City and State literacy funding comes from WIA money. There is a heavy emphasis on learning English quickly and finding a job. This means that participants have to attend classes 3 to 5 days a week. However, many immigrants work six days a week and thus are unable to attend these programs. It also means that agencies are inclined to select younger clients who tend to learn English quicker and find a job easier. This means that older, less educated immigrants – those who probably need help most – are being left out.

Hence, the IOI money is so important. It is one of the few funding sources that allows flexibility in class scheduling. I understand that there is a funding cut to IOI in the coming fiscal year. However, I urge you to consider keeping as much of the remaining funding as possible for ESOL classes. The needs for the Vietnamese and Cambodian communities are particularly great. Due to their relatively small sizes and scattered residences, their needs are often overlooked even among organizations serving Asian Americans.

Lastly, I just want to briefly highlight a pioneering project we are performing. Currently, we are running the first ever and only elder abuse prevention program for Asian immigrants. I am taking liberty to describe it here as I understand our Immigration Committee Chair Kendall Stewart is also a member of the Committee on Aging. Paradoxically, we Asians place such an importance in respecting our elders; it makes elder abuse all the more painful and hidden in the community. But it does happen and we are filling a much needed gap. We are collecting data on this issue and hopefully we can share our results with you in the future. New York State is one of the few states that does not document elder abuse statistics. I hope this is something we shall work to change.

Thank you for listening to my concerns. I'll be glad to answer any questions you may have.



PROGRAMS

Following are some of the on-going programs and services ISACC offers to the community:

Immigrant Services

- Citizen and Immigration Services: These services includes application form assistance, language assistance, disability assistance, photo-taking, filing, and citizenship classes.
- NYC ESOL/Citizenship Project: Funded by the City of New York, several multi-levels ESOL and Citizenship classes in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Vietnamese.
- Computer Training for Refugees/Immigrants: In this joint project with Pace University's AmeriCorps Program, we offer Practical English Conversation classes, Computer classes, and Job Development classes to refugees and immigrants in the community.

Health Services

- Health Care Access Program: Working with the children's Aid Society, this program helps children and families overcome logistical and language barriers to successfully enroll in New York's principal government sponsored health insurance programs.
- NY Medicaid Choice Education Project: We have trained staff to provide periodical Medicaid Choice workshops and walk-in services to the community.
- Vietnamese Community Health Initiative: This program's primary outcome is to determine how social and medical services can be developed to better serve the various needs of the Vietnamese community.

Senior Services

- Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP): Partially funded by the U.S. Department of Labor via sponsorship by the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA), this program has helped older, economically disadvantaged participants acquire English language proficiency, job skills and employment through both classroom and on-site training since 1994.
- Senior Activities Program: The Center offers many kinds of activities, such as entertainment programs, field trips, parties, and workshops (from physical exercises to social benefits applications).
- Religious Sanctuary: We provide a Buddhist sanctuary for personal reflection and prayers, religious ceremonies, and celebrations of religious events.
- Cemetery Service: Concerned with the needs of our senior members, the Center owns a burial site with one thousand slots in East Brunswick, New Jersey. They are reserved to be used by the members.

Youth Services

• Scholarship Program: To ensure that the youth in our community are recognized and rewarded for academic excellence, awards have been granted to outstanding students from elementary school to college.

• SAT and College-Preparation Program: Serving the lower-income youth in the community, this program is being developed to prepare local high school students for the SATs as well as provide general guidance and information on college admissions.

Arts and Cultural Programs

To retain and promote Asian cultures, the Center offers various art and cultural programs such as Cantonese Opera class, Tai Chi class, Chinese Painting class, etc. Our cultural programs are popular and well-known in the community.

Emergency Preparedness Programs

- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training: Working with the New York City Office of Emergency Management, the Center hosts an 11-week training course aimed at preparing local residents to respond to local emergencies in the community.
- Chinatown Emergency Response Database: In collaboration with the NY Disaster Interfaith Services and Pace University's AmeriCorps Program, our onsite AmeriCorps*VISTA has been developing a database of the local houses of worship and organizations to develop an asset map and effective emergency response network for the community.

African Services Committee

A Head to Know • A Heart to Feel • A Hand to Serve

429 West 127 Street New York, NY 10027 Tel 212.222.3882 Fax 212.222.7067 www.africanservices.org

African Services Committee

Testimony on Shifting Demographic Trends in the City's Immigrant Population

Committee on Immigration

New York City Council

Thursday, October 30, 2008

For more than 25 years, African Services Committee has focused its work on promoting the health and self-sufficiency of the African diaspora in New York City.

African immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the black population in the United States, and they are the fastest growing immigrant community in New York City.

When we first opened our doors, our efforts were targeted towards Ethiopian and other refugees who were newly entering the country and needed a helping hand. Over time, we have seen shifts in the demographics and needs of our clientele. About five years ago, the majority of our clients were Francophone West Africans. More recently, our client population reflects increasing numbers of immigrants from southern Africa from countries such as Zimbabwe and Zambia and also a substantial number of West Indian immigrants.

Our Harlem-based office provides a number of services to community members including English classes, medical interpretation, a food pantry, HIV and other STD testing, case management and housing assistance for HIV+ individuals, and a range of civil legal services both for HIV+ individuals and for community members as a whole.

The greatest demand for our services comes in the area of immigration. Almost every single client who walks in the door, whether they come for English classes or for

case management or for our women's support group also needs immigration assistance. This is in addition to the large number of individuals who contact us exclusively for immigration assistance. We provide clients with immigration legal consultations, educating individuals about immigration law and procedure and assist them in getting released from detention, help them with obtaining immigration benefits by filing applications for asylum, permanent residency, HIV waivers, naturalization, VAWA self-petitions and temporary status like TPS, extensions of non-immigrant status. We also represent clients during USCIS interviews and before immigration judges.

Considerable numbers of African immigrants are imprisoned in detention centers. Our clients have been transferred to detention centers in other states, making it impossible for their families to visit them, and near impossible for our organization to represent them or to even find representation for them. This recently happened to one of our clients. She is currently in detention even though she committed no crime and has a meritorious asylum claim. There is no telling how long she will have to wait in detention in a far-away town in Pennsylvania before her case is resolved. Recently, one of our clients was released from a detention center in Rochester, New York. She was arrested on a Greyhound bus while she was traveling to Michigan and taken by border patrol to Rochester. After a long search, we found out that she was detained in Ontario County jail and that her bail was set at \$10,000. We intervened and requested an adjournment so that we could secure pro bono counsel for her. Ultimately, we were very lucky and through considerable advocacy and with the support of a number of other agencies, her family posted \$1,500 bond and she was released. However, she still faces challenges of what will happen to her in the hearing.

We have also taken on a number of compelling asylum cases. We recently won an asylum case on behalf of a young woman from Eritrea who was detained and tortured for her student activism. We represent three individuals from Zimbabwe who endured serious persecution on the basis of political opinion and participation in the Movement for Democratic Change party and, in one instance, on the basis of advocacy on behalf of Zimbabweans with AIDS. We also represent a young woman who participated in the opposition movement in Cameroon and who was beaten, detained and sexually assaulted by military police as a result. In addition, we have two cases that we have filed on behalf of women who are victims of female genital mutilation and who fear deportation on account of fear that the same practice would be forced upon their American-born daughters.

The considerable demand for immigration services creates two related challenges for us. First is our limited capacity to take on cases. The majority of our funding is restricted to non-immigration civil legal services; we only have a small stream of funding towards immigration work. However, there are few agencies to whom we can refer our clients; both because other agencies are similarly strapped for resources and also, there are no other agencies in New York that are able to provide the level of linguistic and cultural support to the African community that African Services can. What happens when we turn people down, either because we do not have space for them or because they do not have any legitimate options for regularizing their status is that they turn to deceptive immigration "attorneys" who promise to get them papers in exchange for a lot of money. We find that a number of our clients lose their money or are actually put at

increased risk for deportation due to the unregulated careless work of these immigration "advocates" who prey upon immigrant communities.

Recognizing the difficulties faced by our clients who do not have any current options to regularize their status, we are working on trying to support them in other ways. One is focusing on the poor housing conditions that many immigrants face. A few months ago, HPD contacted our office to alert us about a Harlem residential building populated by West African tenants who were terrified to lodge complaints about the lack of a locking front door and broken staircase because the landlord threatened to call immigration authorities on them. We were lucky to find one tenant willing to challenge the landlord and we are engaged in a drawn out litigation process. Given the approach of winter, we are working on a series of workshops to let community members know their rights as tenants to habitable housing.

In addition, recognizing both the economic downturn and the vibrant, entrepreneurial spirit of the African immigrant community, we are working on microfinance opportunities for our clients to generate income legally, whether as independent contractors or as members of an independent workers' cooperative.

More than any other factor, restrictive immigration laws and financial considerations constrain our ability to help our clients. The African immigrant community in New York remains continues to grow and diversify, and in response, we at African Services Committee continue to adapt its changing needs.

Presented by Hilary Njoya Tikum Paralegal African Services Committee njoyat@africanservices.org 212.222.3882

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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