Time.

IMMIGRANT JUSTICE CORPS
35 young people stepped into the fray as the inaugural class of Immigrant Justice Corps fellows.
No year could have been better to launch Immigrant Justice Corps than 2014. It was the year that deportations by the current administration – most without counsel – hit 2 million, an unprecedented number. As the Congressional session ended, so did the Senate’s immigration bill, the most pro-immigrant package in decades. On the eve of Thanksgiving, President Obama announced the biggest immigrant legalization program in 30 years. It was immediately challenged in federal court.

Thirty-five young people stepped into this fray as the inaugural class of Immigrant Justice Corps fellows. They came from California, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Florida, and points between. Together they speak ten different languages. Half are first-generation immigrants, some in the U.S. barely a decade. All of them arrived in midtown Manhattan on the second day of September, ready to serve New Yorkers in need. Together they realize Judge Robert Katzmann’s founding vision, made possible by the Robin Hood Foundation’s enthusiastic incubation and generous seed funding.

Justice Fellows have already opened more than 500 cases. They represent young people who traveled to America alone, women rebuilding their lives after domestic abuse, LGBT people fleeing persecution, and so many more.

None of their clients would have a lawyer otherwise. With a lawyer, they are **five times** more likely to win.

Our Community Fellows – recent college graduates – dispersed to community-based organizations in every borough.

Community Fellows have screened more than 700 people: one-third of whom are already eligible to upgrade their immigration status. Our Fellows have helped them file applications for naturalization, DACA, and green cards.

One-third aren’t eligible now, but will be eligible for deferred action when the new programs begin. Still more were referred to Justice Fellows for help that requires a lawyer.

Those who aren’t eligible for any relief at all got an accurate, honest answer and advice on how to avoid being exploited.

It’s hard to fight poverty with one hand tied behind your back. Too many New Yorkers have their hands – or their parents’ hands – tied by lack of legal status. Winning the right to work protects our clients from exploitation and raises the wage scale for everyone. Winning the right to stay here in safety fulfills the promise our city makes over and over again, to each new generation of arriving Americans. Thank you for being part of it.

Rachel B. Tiven, Esq.
Executive Director
Meet the Fellows

We are both being assigned fascinating, challenging work, often on cutting-edge issues in asylum law. Rebecca just won her third defensive removal case today, and we are both working on BIA briefs, in addition to a full and varied client docket.

— Dave Wilkins
Justice Fellow at Central American Legal Assistance

Alain Balan, NYU – Brooklyn Public Library
Gloria Chacon, New York Law School – The Door
Mili Chapado, Florida State – Mexican Consulate
Janice Chua, Fordham Law – NYLAG
Scott Coomes, Harvard Law – Immigration Equality
Stephanie Cordero, Cardozo Law – Legal Aid Society
Karla Diaz, UC San Diego – Project Hospitality
Kimberley Fayette, Brown – Brooklyn Public Library
Scott Foletta, Brooklyn Law – Make the Road NY
Allison Gao, Franklin & Marshall – Chinese American Planning Council
Laura Garbes, Tufts – Part of the Solution
Miriam Lacroix, Pace Law – City Bar Justice Center
Palmer Lawrence, Michigan Law – Immigration Equality
Luis Mancheno, Roger Williams Law – Bronx Defenders
Edward McCarthy, Yale Law – Brooklyn Defender Services
Sean Lai McMahon, NYU Law – Urban Justice Center
Aseem Mehta, Yale – Part of the Solution
Caitlin Miner-Le Grand, Yale Law – City Bar Justice Center
Leslie Montes, Harvard – Project Hospitality
Nhu-Y Ngo, UCLA Law – Legal Aid Society
Kendal Nystedt, NYU Law – Make the Road NY
Wilson Osorio, American University Law – NYLAG
Karla Ostolaza, Cardozo Law – Bronx Defenders
Katherine Park, Columbia Law – Urban Justice Center
Amy Pont, NYU Law – The Door
Rebecca Popuch, Berkeley Law – CALA
Emily Puhl, Berkeley Law – Legal Services NY
Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, Georgetown Law – Legal Aid
Jessica Rofé, NYU Law – Brooklyn Defender Services
Faiza Sayed, Columbia Law – Sanctuary for Families
Michael Shannon, Boston College Law – Sanctuary for Families
Hong Tran, Yale – Chinese American Planning Council
Melissa Garcia Velez, Lehman College – Mexican Consulate
Tanika Vigil, Harvard Law – Legal Services NY
Dave Wilkins, Georgetown Law – CALA
Faiza Sayed and Michael Shannon are working at Sanctuary for Families, an agency dedicated to the safety, healing and self-determination of victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and related forms of gender violence. Faiza graduated from Columbia Law School and clerked for Judge Kimba Wood. Originally from Pakistan, Faiza’s family’s positive experience with an immigration lawyer influenced her career choice. Michael Shannon, a graduate of Boston College Law School who speaks Spanish, French and Pulaar, was inspired by his activist parents to join the Peace Corps and pursue a legal advocacy career. Faiza and Michael represent immigrants on battered spouse waivers; VAWA self-petitions; petitions for U and T non-immigrant status; and SIJS and asylum applications.

Select Press

Editorial: Mr. Obama’s Wise Immigration Plan
There is a crying need for legal representation for immigrants… Not everyone is lucky enough to live in New York, where a groundbreaking effort, the Immigrant Justice Corps, has announced that it is doubling its outreach — with 50 lawyers and 30 community advocates — in response to the Obama plan.

A Lawyer Corps for City Immigrants, By Mirela Iverac
WNYC News, September 23, 2014
25 lawyers make up the inaugural class of the Immigrant Justice Corps, whose goal is to address a growing problem: the dearth of qualified lawyers to represent immigrants facing deportation and other legal problems.
Our fellows’ year began with a thrilling surprise visit from Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who joined Judge Katzmann to welcome the fellows and charge them to change lives.

All 35 fellows spent September in our immigration law “boot camp.” Guest lecturers from every host organization participated. Training included a mock trial and visits to the Tenement Museum, the New-York Historical Society, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Robin Hood incubated Immigrant Justice Corps literally as well as figuratively, turning a former library space into our office. Our Fellows’ biweekly meetings take place at Cardozo School of Law, and Temple Emanu-el hosted our September boot camp.

Once permanent Executive Director Rachel B. Tiven was in place, Immigrant Justice Corps began to staff up. Three excellent lawyers – Victoria Neilson, Sarah Deri Oshiro, and Maribel Hernández Rivera – train and mentor the Justice Fellows and directly supervise the Community Fellows. Operations Director Kelly Schnur, an Encore fellow, has set up accounting, IT, and payroll systems.

Our 501(c)(3) status was granted by the IRS in November.

Our start-up year was audited by Grant Thornton, which gave our books a clean bill of health.

We advertised at hundreds of schools to recruit our next class, visiting more than 30 campuses. Our Selection Committee – comprised of leading lawyers and activists – reads hundreds of applications and conducts dozens of interviews. No doubt the next class will be as accomplished and committed as the first!
I am representing three young people from a Honduran family that has been harassed and persecuted by gang members in Honduras. One of their family members was raped, tortured, and killed. After such tragic ordeal, the whole family fled Honduras and is now seeking refuge in the US.

— Wilson Osorio
Justice Fellow at New York Legal Assistance Group
Staff

Victoria Neilson
Sarah Deri Oshiro
Maribel Hernández Rivera
Kelly Schnur
Rachel B. Tiven

Legal Director
Managing Attorney
Supervising Attorney
Interim Operations Director
Executive Director

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