

May 1, 2008

Dear Friend,

After years of abuse at the hands of her husband and a long struggle with the immigration system, Maria Nuñez is finally safe and living in peace. Like nearly **two thirds** of the clients served in our domestic violence program, Maria's former **husband wielded power over her by threatening her immigration status** if she didn't do exactly what he wanted. Because Northwest Immigrant Rights Project represented Maria in her long battle, she is finally able to move forward without fear.

Maria came to the United States from Jamaica in 1997. She fell in love with a U.S. citizen and was married to him in fall of 1998. Shortly after their wedding, her husband became a different man. His abuse ranged from the emotional to the physical, and on two separate occasions he held a knife to Maria's throat and threatened to kill her. He constantly **threatened Maria with deportation** and eventually refused to attend the interview with immigration authorities that was necessary for Maria to obtain lawful permanent resident status (a green card). Her application for legal status was therefore denied for lack of attendance by her husband.



A situation like Maria's, in which a husband holds power over his new wife through threatening her immigration status, is sadly all too common. Thankfully there is hope.

- Many immigrant survivors of domestic violence are eligible to move forward with their immigration process without the help of their abusive partners through the "Self-Petition" process.
- **Northwest Immigrant Rights Project has an entire program dedicated to pursuing justice for immigrant survivors of domestic violence** through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which includes the filing of self-petitions for clients who qualify.
- The need for NWIRP's immigration legal services is great. The VAWA program alone has more than 589 active cases and keeps an ongoing waiting list – **currently there are 87 people awaiting assistance through our Domestic Violence Unit.**

Maria was angry and scared but she found the courage to ask her husband for a divorce. In response, he raped her. Maria moved out of their house, but her husband continued to track her down and physically

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assault her. In order to save her own life, Maria fled to Seattle and, with assistance from NWIRP, filed a self-petition for survivors of domestic violence. Maria was eligible to adjust her status and receive her green card once again. Unfortunately, her story does not end here.

Maria attended her final interview but did not receive her green card. Instead she learned that a background “name check” had not yet cleared. Five years passed. NWIRP attorneys did everything they could on Maria’s behalf and received the same response from the U.S. immigration office: “name check still pending”.

With each year, Maria had to apply and renew her employment authorization, costing \$180 each time. Without a green card, she could not travel. She missed her brother’s funeral, could not help her newly homeless mother back in Jamaica, and could not seek help from her family or move home during an illness that rendered her wheelchair-bound for 8 months. The U.S. immigration office continually gave the same reply: “name check still pending.”

NWIRP attorney Mozhddeh Oskouian filed a Writ of Mandamus – a document asking the federal court to compel the U.S. immigration office to decide Maria’s case. Six months later, Maria finally received her green card. **Thanks to the assistance she received from NWIRP, Maria no longer lives in fear and can finally visit her remaining family in Jamaica.**

If you are like me, you want to help in any way you can. **Send your gift of \$25, \$50, \$100 or whatever you can give today.** Please use the enclosed donation form and envelope.

Your gift is a critical part of the effort to provide immigration legal services to low-income immigrants and refugees. Thank you for supporting NWIRP and our clients.

Sincerely,

Jorge L. Barón
Executive Director

P.S. Many of you will be receiving a tax rebate in the upcoming days. **Please join us in our critical work by donating a portion of those funds to support our work on behalf of people like Maria.** I’ve also enclosed a postcard as another way to help NWIRP. Please share it with a friend and let them know you support NWIRP!