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*The Neighbors Link mission is to strengthen the Hudson Valley community through the healthy integration of immigrants. Our mission is achieved by (i) filling a service gap for new immigrant families (ii), offering education and empowerment programs, (iii) involving longer-term residents in volunteer opportunities and creating substantive partnerships with other local organizations. Our strategies to educate, empower and employ families include a Worker Center, English as a Second Language education, legal services and advocacy, workforce development, parent education, early childhood programs and academic support for school-age children of immigrants. Neighbors Link is grateful to the more than 400 volunteers who participate in our programming each year.*

*Neighbors Link Community Law Practice (NLCLP), the legal arm of Neighbors Link, has a variety of volunteer opportunities. These opportunities can be found below.*

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## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH NLCLP**

Our clients are among the most vulnerable individuals and families in our communities. Nevertheless, when it comes to immigration law, they are not entitled to an attorney. As a result, but for NLCLP, they would not have access to due process in the face of deportation and the many other immigration issues that could have a profound negative impact on their lives. That is why your help is so vitally important. Below is a list of volunteer opportunities. If you are interested in volunteering on one of these matters or would like additional information, please contact Elizabeth Mastropolo at [emastropolo@neighborslink.org](mailto:emastropolo@neighborslink.org).

### **Affirmative Case Opportunities..... pg 3**

1. **Deferred Action: Ms. S.E.V.** is undocumented and would like to apply for Deferred Action in order to obtain employment authorization and protection from deportation so she can support and care for her autistic son.
2. **Affirmative Asylum: Ms. B.R.** entered the United States in 2019 with her young son. She fled Honduras because of domestic violence and because of mistreatment of her son, who has Down’s syndrome. Since coming to the United States, her son suffered from an accident while with a babysitter and is now hospitalized with brain damage. She is looking for assistance in order to file asylum for herself and her child as members of a particular social group.

### **Litigation Opportunities.....pg 4-7**

1. **Defensive Asylum: Mr. C.V.** and his family fled the Dominican Republic because of religious and political persecution. He and his wife were pastors in the Dominican Republic and were attacked by narco-traffickers. They need representation in their asylum case before the NY Immigration Court.



2. **Defensive Asylum –Individual: Ms. V.G.** entered the United States as an unaccompanied minor fleeing child abuse and neglect in her home country. This is an opportunity to second chair a Neighbors Link attorney in the preparation and litigation of an asylum and will provide litigation and client interaction experience.
3. **Defensive Asylum –Individual: Mr. M.R.** entered the United States because of threats he received as a result of his political work in Guatemala. He is now seeking political asylum. This is an opportunity to second chair a Neighbors Link attorney in the preparation and litigation of an asylum and will provide litigation and client interaction experience.
4. **Defensive Asylum –Individual: Ms. G.M.** entered the United States as an unaccompanied minor fleeing domestic violence. When she was 14 years old, her boyfriend physically and sexually abused her. She went to the police and hospital in Guatemala but the government was unwilling to protect her from this violence. She then fled to the United States. This is an opportunity to second chair a Neighbors Link attorney in the preparation and litigation of an asylum and will provide litigation and client interaction experience.
5. **Defensive Asylum –Individual: Ms. V.L.** fled Guatemala as the victim of domestic violence and sexual assault. She refused to comply with her partner’s demands because his demands were against her morals and political opinion. She is seeking asylum on this basis of her religion and particular social group. This is an opportunity to second chair a Neighbors Link attorney in the preparation and litigation of an asylum and will provide litigation and client interaction experience.

**Legal research and writing assignments..... pg 7**

1. **Citizenship/Naturalization Research: Mr. F.** Research on derivation of citizenship for foreign-born adoptees and research on consequences of misrepresentation as a US citizen on subsequent eligibility to naturalize.



**1. Name: Mr. S.E.V.**

**Country of Origin: Guatemala**

**Claim: Affirmative Deferred Action – 20 hours of work**

**Spanish speaking**

Ms. SEV entered the United States in 2005. She is undocumented and does not have employment authorization in the United States. She has had no contact with immigration since entering the United States. She has a five-year-old United States citizen son who is autistic and requires many medical and educational services that are not available in Guatemala. She lives in

Ms. SEV's husband is a resident and can petition for her. However, since that process may take several years, it would be beneficial to her to apply for affirmative deferred action with the New York Field Office so that she can obtain permission to work in the short-term and provide protection from immigration enforcement based on her son's special needs. Neighbors Link can provide samples and templates for similar cases.

**2. Name: Ms. B.R.**

**Country of Origin: Honduras**

**Claim: Affirmative Asylum – 50+ hours of work**

**Spanish speaking**

Ms. BR entered the United States in July 2019. She was not advised that she had one year to file for asylum, and has not yet filed. She likely can prove exceptional circumstances for missing the one-year deadline. First, as a single mother, she was caring for her toddler son who has Down's Syndrome. Second, after arriving in the United States, her son had a terrible accident where he choked on a candy, and suffered severe brain damage. Her son continues to be cared for in a long-term care facility due to his serious medical needs. Third, she was, in Honduras, the victim of severe domestic violence, including daily beatings to her body and head, which have negatively impacted her ability to function, and have affected her mental health to this day.

Ms. BR was issued an NTA when she entered the United States, but that NTA has not been filed with the Immigration Court. Thus, she is able to file an asylum application directly with the asylum office.

Ms. BR is eligible for asylum based on her relationship to her son who has Down's Syndrome. Ms. BR states that she fled Honduras due to the inhumane treatment of her son, as well as her fear of death at the hands of her partner.



**1. Name: Mr. C.V. and family**

**Country of Origin: Dominican Republic**

**Procedural Stance: Defensive Asylum**

**Claim: Political/ Religious Asylum – 100+ hours of work**

**Spanish speaking**

Mr. CV lives in the Bronx with his family. He reached out to us just a few days before his one-year filing deadline for asylum so we assisted him filing a pro se application the day before the deadline. He mailed the pro se asylum application so that it would be timely received by the deadline.

He and his wife were pastors in the Dominican Republic where they were persecuted by narco-traffickers due to their work helping addicts escape the control of the cartels. Mr. CV was threatened and attacked by drug traffickers in the Dominican Republic because of his religious beliefs. He and his wife, as pastors, saved at least 50 drug addicts from a hovel in which they were living so that they could return to the church and to society. The drug traffickers were angry because they taking business away from them, and helping addicts find drug treatment centers. They narco-traffickers targeted Mr. CV's family for this reason.

Mr. CV was unrepresented at the asylum office, and his case has been referred to the Immigration Court. He has a master calendar hearing in February 2022.

**2. Name: Ms. V.G.**

**Country of Origin: Guatemala**

**Procedural Stance: Defensive Asylum**

**Claim: Particular Social Group Asylum – 50+ hours of work**

**Spanish speaking**

Ms. V.G. is a 23-year-old Guatemalan woman, who came to the US as an unaccompanied minor, fleeing neglect, sexual abuse, and child labor. In the United States, she applied for asylum and reunited with her boyfriend, (who also came to the US as a UAC fleeing parental abuse and neglect). Ms. V.G. and her now partner have two US citizen children. Her partner obtained special immigrant juvenile status and is now waiting for his priority date to be current in order to apply for lawful permanent resident status. Ms. V.G. stopped working after she was hit by a car, sustaining injuries. Ms. V.G.'s most recent Individual Hearing date was cancelled due to COVID-related court closures. Her next Individual Hearing is scheduled for April 18, 2022.

Given the current administration's immigration enforcement priorities, Ms. V.G. may also be a candidate for administrative closure, which would allow her to avoid going to trial, while remaining in the United States indefinitely. In order to best preserve Ms. V.G.'s broadest options for relief from removal, we must present a strong application for asylum with detailed evidence of Ms. V.G.'s equities in the United States. Therefore, although her hearing is a year away, it is in Ms. V.G.'s interest that we proceed in preparing her case for negotiation with ICE Office of Chief Counsel.

**Example of Tasks:**



- Review client statement and Form I-589
- Conduct country conditions research
- Identify and collect relevant primary evidence
- Obtain expert testimony on country conditions
- Draft Memorandum of Law
- Draft request for administrative closure in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion

### **3. Name: Mr. M.R.**

**Country of Origin: Guatemala**

**Procedural Stance: Defensive Asylum**

**Claim: Political & Particular Social Group Asylum – 50+ hours of work**

**Spanish speaking**

Mr. M.R. had a good life in Guatemala, working for a large international company. He was married and had two young children. In his spare time, he and his wife had a small business, selling second hand items in a stall outside the church they attended. Both Mr. M.R. and his wife's family had both experienced gang violence in the past. Shortly after he joined a local political party, he and his wife began to face threats of extortion and violence from gang members and the local police. Mr. M.R. joined the party to support his uncle's campaign for local office. He was in charge of publicity. He reported the gang threats to the police, but in separate incidents, police officers told him that he needed to stop his political activities. A neighbor involved in the same party was shot.

Shortly thereafter Mr. M.R. fled to the U.S. with his wife and children. At the border, Mr. M.R. was separated from his wife and children at the border. He was detained, while his wife was released with the children. In detention, he became ill and very anxious. In desperation to obtain release and reunite with his family, he made misstatements in his credible fear interview. Mr. M.R.'s wife and children are represented by other counsel. His individual hearing is October 2021.

**Example of Tasks:**

- Review client statement and Form I-589
- Conduct country conditions research
- Identify and collect relevant primary evidence
- Obtain medical records
- Obtain forensic exam and expert testimony regarding illness, trauma to mitigate misstatements
- Obtain expert opinion regarding country conditions
- Draft Memorandum of Law
- Draft request for administrative closure in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion

### **4. Name: Ms. G.M.**

**Country of Origin: Guatemala**

**Procedural Stance: Defensive Asylum**

**Claim: Particular Social Group Asylum – 50+ hours of work**

**Spanish and Mam speaking**



Ms. G.M. arrived in the U.S. at age 15. Born and raised in Guatemala, she only learned to speak Spanish after arriving in the US. Ms. G.M. is indigenous and speaks Mam fluently. She is also proficient in Spanish. Ms. G.M. was raised with her siblings by mother. At age 14, Ms. G.M. and moved in with her boyfriend, despite her mother's disapproval. He put a lot of pressure on Ms. G.M. to move forward in their relationship and she wanted him to be happy. However, he quickly became verbally and physically abusive as soon as she moved in with him in his family's house. He beat her, raped her, insulted her at the same time that he forced her to do all the housework and cooking. He started dating another girl, but insisted that she had to remain in his house and do whatever he told her to do anyway. She was hospitalized after one of his attacks, but was unable to communicate with the staff because she and her mother spoke only Mam.

Ms. G.M. reported her boyfriend and went to court, but the judge told her "that is what men are like". The police and the judge all knew she was only 14 but they did not do anything to protect her. Ms. G.M. fled to the US to escape the danger. She was then sexually assaulted on route, became pregnant and gave birth to a son the following summer. She is now seeking asylum based on her membership in the particular social group of a woman in Guatemala and as a victim of abuse. Her next hearing is March 2022.

**Example of Tasks:**

- Review client statement and Form I-589
- Conduct country conditions research
- Identify and collect relevant primary evidence
- Obtain country conditions expert report
- Obtain forensic psychological examination and testimony
- Draft Memorandum of Law
- Draft request for administrative closure in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion

**5. Name: Ms. V.L.**

**Country of Origin: Guatemala**

**Procedural Stance: Defensive Asylum**

**Claim: Particular Social Group Asylum – 50+ hours of work**

**Spanish speaking**

Ms. V.L. entered the US fleeing an abusive and dangerous relationship with her boyfriend. Ms. V.L. was raised by her grandparents after her mother, (and later her brother and sister) joined her father in the US. Ms. V.L. was a solitary child and was teased by other children. Ms. V.L. was raised in a strict Evangelical faith. As other girls started to date and become pregnant, Ms. V.L. vowed to honor her religious beliefs by remaining a virgin until she married. Ms. V.L. continued her studies even as other children left school. She met her boyfriend shortly before she graduated from a three-year program with a certificate in Montessori instruction. He was very romantic and attentive in the beginning, but swiftly changed. He became controlling and verbally abuse, insulting her clothes, her appearance, and telling her, she was worthless. He also began to demand sex and became physically abusive and attempted to rape Ms. V.L. when she refused to comply.

She filed a police report, but he returned furious: he knew that she had filed the report even though she had said nothing to him. He assaulted her again. He returned to the house a third time, where he again attacked her and sexually assaulted her. He told her he would never allow her to break up with him. Ms. V.L. refused to submit to his demand for intercourse even in the face of this treatment because of her religious beliefs and



her opinion about women's right to be free of this control. She is now seeking asylum on this basis. Her Individual is scheduled for October 2022.

**Example of Tasks:**

- Review client statement and Form I-589
  - Conduct country conditions research
  - Identify and collect relevant primary evidence
  - Obtain country conditions expert report
  - Obtain forensic psychological examination and testimony
  - Draft Memorandum of Law
  - Draft request for administrative closure in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion
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**1. Citizenship/Naturalization Research: Mr. F.**

Mr. F entered the U.S. from Canada as an adoptee in 1957. Both of Mr. F's parents were United States citizens and his parents told him he was a US citizen. Mr. F recently discovered that he was not a United States citizen when he went to file for social security. For the last 65 years, Mr. F has held himself out as a citizen; however, he has never left the U.S., never voted, and never applied for a US passport. This requires research on derivation of citizenship for foreign-born adoptees and research on consequences of misrepresentation as a US citizen on subsequent eligibility to naturalize.