



Irene Gomez-Bethke Papers.

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CENTRO LEGAL, INC.

Ad hoc Annual Meeting Committee Report
May 8, 1985 6:00 p.m.

Present: Olivia Arredondo (Chair), Angelita Estrada, Miguel Garza, Carlos Mariani.

Staff: Donn J. Vargas

1. Chair Arredondo stated that the tentative month for the Annual meeting has been indentified as November. Therefore, a decision must be made as to type of activity that will be recommended for Board approval.

Options

- A. Annual meeting / Dinner / Dance
- B. Annual meeting / Dinner
- C. Annual meeting / Picnic
- D. Annual meeting / Reception (wine, cheese)
- E. Annual meeting / Coffee, cake

After reviewing the options the committee decided to select option A as its first choice. A potential site was suggested as being the Y.W.C.A. in Downtown St. Paul.

The following committee members have agreed to obtain additional information on site location and condiments.

Olivia Arredondo
location

Angelita Estrada
catering
mariachis

Miguel Garza
band
refreshments
guard

Carlos Mariani
printing

The information is to be available for the next meeting scheduled May 21, at 6:30 PM in St. Paul.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM

Respectfully,


Donn J. Vargas
Administrative

Discussion - Martin Diaz will chair committee and Juan Lopez and Carlos Mariani will be on the committee.

Motion Carries

2. Motion: Martin Diaz

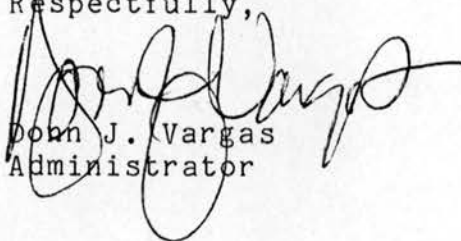
Moves that Board meetings be assigned at starting time of 6:30 PM.

2nd: Carlos Mariani

Motion Carries

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully,



Donn J. Vargas
Administrator

MINUTES OF ANNUAL
MEETING OF CENTRO LEGAL, INC.

May 25, 1983

The annual meeting of Centro Legal, Inc. was duly held at the Minneapolis office of Centro Legal, 2929 4th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, 1983.

Present at the meeting were Directors Donn J. Vargas, Wesley Iijima, Alberto O. Miera, Oscar Castro, Isabel Gomez Edwards, and staff members Arcelia Romo-Perez and Sonia Nieves Burton.

First item on the agenda was approval of the minutes of the meeting of May 11, 1983. Upon motion of Isabel Gomez Edwards, seconded by Wesley Iijima, the minutes were unanimously adopted without amendment.

Second item on the agenda was the report of the Nominations Committee. In the absence of Irene Gomez-Bethke, chair of the Nominations Committee, Oscar Castro reported that the committee had not had an opportunity to meet and did not have a report to submit.

Upon motion of Alberto Miera, seconded by Isabel Gomez Edwards, it was unanimously voted to postpone nominations for Board vacancies to the next scheduled Board meeting of June 8, 1983.

Third item on the agenda was the Admissions Committee report. Alberto Miera submitted the names of Lisa Ybarra, Maria Frolund and Sonia Nieves-Burton, staff members of Centro Legal, to be admitted as active members to the Centro Legal. He reported that he would be meeting with Arcelia Romo-Perez to review the functions the Board would want new members to undertake for the Centro Legal and the persons who could best fill these.

Upon motion of Isabel Gomez Edwards, seconded by Oscar Castro, it was unanimously voted to admit Lisa Ybarra, Maria Frolund and Sonia Nieves-Burton to active membership in the Centro Legal.

Fourth item on the agenda was the report by the By-laws Committee. Oscar Castro and Arcelia Romo-Perez submitted the written proposed amendments which reflected the changes suggested at the May 11, 1983 Board meeting. During discussion of the proposed amendments the following changes were made: (a) In Article III, Section 4, the words "or by the" between 'Centro' and Board of Directors were deleted; (b) In Article V (should be IV), Section 2, provisions were added stating that directors can be elected for more than one term, and for appointment of ex officio members from time to time to the Board.

(c) Article V (should be IV), Section 3, the words "unexcused" and "or of Committees to which he/she has been appointed" were deleted.
(d) Added the word "Director" to Article VIII, Section 1, to clarify that directors are also subject to removal.

Upon motion of Alberto Miera, seconded by Oscar Castro, it was unanimously voted to adopt the proposed amendments including the above changes.

Fifth item on the agenda was election of officers. Upon motion of Alberto Miera, seconded by Oscar Castro, it was unanimously voted to postpone the election of officers until the meeting of June 8, 1983.

Sixth item, under old business, was discussion of the schedule of meetings for the Board.

Upon motion made by Wesley Iijima, seconded by Isabel Gomez Edwards it was unanimously voted to schedule meetings every other month commencing with the meeting of June 8, 1983.

The seventh item, under new business, was discussion of the desirability of having the staff of Centro Legal attend the meetings of the Board. It was felt that both the staff and the Board members would benefit from their attendance at least on an occasional basis, and to have them make presentations regarding the work in which they are involved.

Upon motion of Alberto Miera, seconded by Isabel Gomez Edwards, it was unanimously voted that the Executive Director encourage staff members to participate at Board meetings.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted.

Arcelia Romo-Perez

Centro Legal, Inc.

A NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY LAW OFFICE



ANNUAL MEETING
December 15, 1988

ANNUAL MEETING
CENTRO LEGAL, INC.
DECEMBER 15, 1988
ST. PAUL, MN.

6:30pm - 7:30pm: Social Hour

Donos y caballeros, Bienvenidos, Ladies/Gentlemen
Welcome and Introductions: Irene Gomez-Bethke, President

BOD / Spec. guests · Al Garcia - Nominations Report.
Invocation: Reverend Sunthi Paul Chookiatirichai

→ Dinner 16.12.

→ Chief Legal Officer's Report: Martin A. Diaz

8:30
Guest Speaker: The Honorable Manuel M. Cervantes,
Judge, Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals
"Hispanics, The Law and the '90's"

Awards: Irene Gomez-Bethke and Martin A. Diaz

Conclusion: Irene Gomez-Bethke

CENTRO LEGAL, INC.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
1988**

Welcome

Introduce

Officers

Irene Gomez-Bethke, President, Community Representative
Carlos Mariani-Rosa, Vice-President, Minn. Council of
Churches
Albert Garcia, Jr., Secretary, Centro Cultural Chicano
Thomas J. Barrett, Treasurer, Popham, Haik, Schnobrich &
Kaufman, Ltd.

Board Members

Miguel Garza, Neighborhood Justice Center
Angelita Velasco, Minn. Coalition for Battered Women
Reverend Sunthi Paul Chookiatirichai, Southeast Asian
Ministry of Mpls.
Olivia Mancha, Community Representative
Wesley Iijima, Attorney & Deputy Commissioner of
Minnesota Department of Human Rights

**Immediate Past Board Members
(1987-88)**

Juan Lopez, Community Representative
Steve Hoffmeyer, Attorney
Douglas Hall, Attorney
Olivia Arredondo, Community Representative

STAFF

Martin A. Diaz, Esq., Creighton University, J.D. 1983, Chief
Legal Officer.
Phillips F. Gonzalez Gonzalez, University of Minnesota, J.D.
1984, Immigration Project Attorney.
Michael H. Davis, University of Minnesota, J.D. 1986, Staff
Attorney.
Amaya Maura, Paralegal, Proyecto Ayuda, Battered Woman's
Program.
Christine Rosario, Legal Secretary.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is my privilege to greet you, and extend a warm welcome to our Annual Meeting. While our organization enjoys the respect of the community, we do not intend to rest on our laurels. We are the first to recognize that there is always room for improvement. We are aware that much is yet to be done, and that we cannot afford to remain inert. A progressive organization must look to the future, more than to the past, but, lest we forget, from time to time it is also important that we review our achievements and the challenges of the past.

As we look to the past, we see that Centro Legal has a history of meeting the challenges. In response to the reduction of services for low-income and Hispanic clients by the government, the challenge was met by the incorporation of Centro Legal, Inc. in August, 1981. Centro Legal was founded to provide legal representation for people in the low-income segment of our society and with an emphasis on bilingual services for the Hispanic community in the State of Minnesota. Therefore, this agency is unique in that Centro Legal fills a niche in the provision of legal services that other traditional legal providers do not fill. Our strength is in language and cultural sensitivity, enhancing our services to that population not able to access other legal services.

We look to the present as the past of the future. Non profit corporations are in trouble; changes in the economy are prompting many institutions to restructure and the challenge is to change, in order to survive. The leadership of the Board of Directors and Staff is primary to that survival. I want to express to the Board of Directors and the Staff of our organization my great appreciation for the cooperation which they have given me as President. This support has not been passive or mere approval; it has been spontaneous, active and enthusiastic. They have been loyal and unswerving in their support and dedication to the agency's mission, for which I am very grateful. Many of the Board Members have willingly accepted difficult committee assignments. Many have taken time

out from their vocations to render services to the organization at great personal sacrifice and even some financial loss. As for the Staff, no one could have a more loyal and hardworking one, and their devotion to their work is one I shall never forget.

Martin Diaz, our Chief Legal Officer, has demonstrated outstanding leadership. His vision, courage and conscience challenged people towards action, to improve the condition not only of the organization but ultimately the human condition as well. His skills made the difference by his effective approaches to change through crisis management. He has rendered faithful, conscientious and valuable services to our organization. The Board of Directors makes formal acknowledgement of its appreciation for the services rendered by him during this time, of his leadership, and duly acknowledge the substantial contributions which he has made to the organization. He has the esteem, admiration, and affection of the Board and his colleagues. We extend to Martin our best wishes and sincere gratitude.

The challenge Centro Legal faces for the future is to meet the increasing demand for our services, in an economic environment of decreasing resources. The study prepared by Susan Steven and Associates prescribed long term strategies for ongoing support and addressed short term survival issues. The challenge to the Board is to continue to implement the recommendations. The Board of Directors is very appreciative of the study and the the St. Paul Foundation for funding it. The Board gratefully acknowledges the support of the foundations, and all our other funders for their confidence in Centro Legal in continuing to meet the challenges of the future.

The Board of Directors wishes you Happy Holidays.

Sincerely,

Irene Gomez-Bethke

Irene Gomez-Bethke

President

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER'S REPORT

One year ago, I noted that 1988 would be the year in which Centro Legal would seek financial and programatic stability. While the journey has brought us to the doorstep of stability, what a journey it has been. To paraphrase Charles Dickens: It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. Certainly, while many would have rather not experienced 1988, it may have been the greatest year for the organization since its inception.

Financially, the year began ominously, with the intervention of the Internal Revenue Service. In response, Centro Legal hired a consultant, Sue Stevens and Associates, and cut its staff by two. As well, the Board merged the Chief Legal Officer and Administrator position into one. Through the help of the McKnight and Bremer Foundations and the special support of NSP, Dayton Hudson and General Mills, Centro was able to put together a strong fundraising year. The end result is that the IRS has been paid off in full, a sizeable deficit has been cut by nearly 90%, and the agency has maintained a respectable and relatively sizeable funding base. Given the cuts in expenses, the restructured staffing pattern and the support of our consistent funders, the future of Centro Legal is very bright.

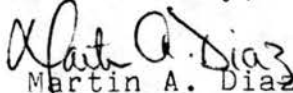
Programatically, Centro Legal had a banner year. The two programs begun in 1987: Immigration Legalization and Proyecto Ayuda (Hispanic Battered Woman's Program), were in full swing and attracted a significant amount of activity. The Legalization Project has been an unqualified success. The impact of the amnesty program on the Hispanic Community will be felt for many years to come. Our entry into consistent service for the Battered Woman has also been extremely successful. We have received positive reviews and our new Paralegal, Amaya Maura, has made an impact on the stability of the program. We have been accepted as a significant contributor to the Battered Woman's movement and at a recent fundraising seminar, legal service was noted as one of the two services most needed by, and least available to, the Battered Woman.

In this report you will find a statistical breakdown for our 1987 cases and a representative sample of cases to give you a sense of who we are, what we do and how your assistance and support helps impact on our communities. Our 1988 figures will be available in February, 1989. However, we anticipate that our total casework in 1988 will exceed 600, an expected 25% increase in service at the same time as our staff was cut by 28%. In order to demonstrate the incredible commitment that our staff has to serving its community, I note that in 1987 we served 70 clients per employee; in 1988 that figure will exceed 120 clients per employee.

There is not enough that I can say about our staff. They worked through periods of no paychecks; worked short-staffed; worked under constant pressure; and worked for less than they can command in the private sector. I have worked with alot of dedicated people in my life, but I have never been prouder of a group of co-workers than I am of the staff of Centro Legal. While it has been a difficult year, at times very painful, it has been the greatest experience of my working life. I am very proud to say that I am the Chief Legal Officer of Centro Legal, Inc.

Unfortunately, I will be leaving Centro Legal in the Spring of 1989. I will take with me great memories and great pride for the work which we've accomplished. With great sincerity, I thank the Staff of Centro Legal; the Board of Directors which showed great confidence in me and supported the direction which has brought us to this day; the funding community for accepting our mission as theirs; and the Hispanic Community of the Twin Cities for allowing me to serve it.

Respectfully,


Martin A. Diaz

Chief Legal Officer

STATISTICS FOR 1987

The following is a statistical breakdown of the casework that Centro Legal accomplished in 1987. In total we served 490 clients. Due to the demand from legalization applicants and individuals in our battered women's program in 1988, Centro Legal anticipates a 25% increase in 1988. These programs will shape our clientele for years to come. The following are the statistics for the agency as a whole. If you are interested in particular combinations or more specific demographics, please feel free to call and we can utilize our new computer to meet your needs.

GEOGRAPHY:

Hennepin County	43.0%
Ramsey County	40.0%
Metro Area	91.5%
Greater Minnesota	8.5%

ETHNICITY

Hispanic	51.63%
Caucasian	15.53%
Black	12.04%
Asian	4.49%
Native American	1.43%
Other	3.88%

MARITAL STATUS

Married	35.10%
Separated	18.98%
Single	32.45%
Divorced	10.61%
Widowed	2.86%

ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME

Below \$5,000	33.06%
7,500- 9,999	12.45%
15,000-19,999	10.61%

GENDER

Male	58.57%
Female	41.43%

AGE

Less than 19	1.44%
19-29	40.41%
30-39	42.25%
40-49	10.81%
50-59	3.87%
60+	1.22%

CASE TYPE

Immigration	45.51%
Family	33.88%
Other	15.71%

TOTAL PERSONS IN HOUSEHOLD

1,116

**CENTRO LEGAL:
SERVICE TO CHANGE THE FUTURE
(1987-88)**

While every case has its importance to the individual, the organization and the judicial system, there are a few that stand out as examples of the commitment to excellence, the impact on individuals and the value to society. The following are those cases which have been realized during 1987-88 and which stand out among the many cases handled by Centro Legal. Unless the client has agreed, the individual's name has been altered to protect their privacy.

1. The Rodriguez Family:

Tomas and Maria have traveled many miles year after year, as itinerant migrant workers. In any one year they travel to as many as fifteen different locations covering five states. They work incredibly long hours at back breaking labor for low wages and no benefits. They work as a team; they and their ten (10) children. Unfortunately, their hard work costs them a sense of permanency and provides minimal financial support. It also prevents them from providing decent education for their children. Their lack of a permanent immigration status also haunts them wherever they go. Their future is not bright.

However, the passage of the recent immigration legalization law has given the Rodriguez's the window to a brighter future. Through the help of Centro Legal, Tomas and Maria and each of their ten children have gained temporary legal residence despite difficult documentation problems created by their nomadic existence. No matter where the Rodriguez family may go, the sun will always shine. We wish them well on their journey to permanent residency and we thank them for letting us be a part of their team.

2. June

June is a Kenyan mother of two United States citizen children who was about to be deported to Kenya when Centro Legal received a frantic call from her fiancé, who stated that she was being detained by immigration and her children placed in a foster home. June and her children faced an uncertain future.

Centro Legal intervened on her behalf and prevented her deportation as she was being taken to the airport. It then helped her file an application for legalization; clear up problems with her application through networking with other agencies; helped bond her out of detention; and helped return her children to her after the County attempted to place the children in foster care.

While premature to speculate as to the eventual outcome of her legalization application, it is clear that Centro Legal's intervention has prevented two American children from being forced out of the country of birth and given new hope to their continued stay in the U.S. What appeared to be a lost hope, straight-forward deportation, has become a clear and lasting example of what tremendous perseverance and commitment to excellence can accomplish. Our "never say die" approach to resolution of peoples' legal difficulties creates a brighter future for our clients.

3. Flo

Flo is a middle aged woman who was divorced several years ago after a 25 year marriage and two children. At the time of her divorce, Flo suffered from scoliosis, exacerbated by two difficult pregnancies, but she believed she could return to work. As a result, spousal maintenance was reserved and Flo received child support from her ex-husband. However, in 1987, Flo stopped receiving child support and faced a financially insecure future. You see, her scoliosis had worsened; she was unable to return to work; and she was now receiving only \$360.00 per month from Social Security. Her expenses were three times

her income and she was looking at losing her home of twenty-five years and moving out of a neighborhood she had learned to live in with her disability.

Flo called Centro Legal and sought our advice and help. She had exhausted all her options and could not afford to hire a private attorney. We agreed to represent her and sought an award of maintenance from her ex-husband whose income had increased nicely. After a five month period of legal maneuvers, the Court awarded Flo \$400.00 per month in spousal maintenance with no set durational limitations. Flo was extremely happy and thankful. For Flo, the future has brightened and her many years of sacrifice have been rewarded.

4. Leah

Leah was "accidentally" born in Fort Francis, Ontario, Canada. Her father was a United States citizen, who did not legitimate her until age 19. Her mother, who was 60% Native American and a permanent resident, was permitted by a special Indian treaty to come-and-go across the border as she pleased. It was this privilege that would later lead Leah through a maze of legal technicalities. Leah's mother opted to give birth in Canada because it had better facilities. Her family failed to include her in any residency petitions.

When Leah turned age 18 she sought a Social Security card. Such a simple task; such a horrible result. She was informed that no record of her existed and the Immigration Service moved to deport her. Despite the fact that she had lived practically all of her life in the United States, she was now persona non grata and faced an uncertain future.

Unlike her mother, Leah failed to qualify for the special treaty and she had one other problem: an old conviction for possession of a small amount of marijuana (a foolish mistake of youth). After years of delays, Leah appeared in an immigration court represented by Centro Legal. At that hearing, we argued that her lengthy residence made her eligible for a special (brand new) form of relief from deportation and that the

conviction which had been expunged after Leah had served out her probationary period could not be used against her. The Judge agreed despite a recent case holding against a similar individual. After several years of delays, pleas, private bills, vigils and prayers, Leah had finally come home; had finally crossed the border; had finally been born again, this time on the right side of the line. Without Centro Legal, Leah would have been another example of justice perverted. Leah is home now, International Falls, and her future is hers.

5. Juana

Juana Maria Flores is an example of perseverance through difficult times. She immigrated unlawfully to the United States in the early 70's in an effort to find the better life we all seek. She did not expect much out of life; but she surely wanted more for her husband and five children. For years she attempted to legalize her status and it took her several applications, many changes in the law, lawsuits filed in other states that benefited her, and 14 years, before she finally became a permanent resident. Her children are all well educated and fine people.

However, despite her desire to keep a low profile and live for her family, Juana Flores did one thing that her children will likely never do and to which they can point with pride and respect. Juana Maria Flores persevered for over a year through rejections and denials before she beat the State of Minnesota's Unemployment Compensation program at the highest court in the State of Minnesota.

On August 28, 1987, the Supreme Court for the State of Minnesota held that the Unemployment Compensation Department's rule that all aliens had to show proof of work authorization before they could receive unemployment compensation benefits was unnecessary and inconsistent with State and Federal law. Juana, who had worked for many years, not only received her benefits but set precedent in the State of Minnesota and across the United States. While the value of the decision will change as a

result of statutory changes the lesson for all of us is not lost. One individual can make a significant difference upon the lives of many people by simply persevering and carrying on with pride and commitment. Centro Legal was proud to represent Juana Flores; she embodies all that is good in our clientele and we were extremely pleased to help her.

6. Mahmoud

Mahmoud is another example of perseverance. However, his case reveals an ugly side of humanity. Mahmoud was the son of a vocal supporters of the Shah of Iran. When the Shah was thrown out of power in 1979, Mahmoud, who had helped out as a guard at a local police station, was captured. He suffered severe torture and was interrogated for many weeks. His parents, able to bribe the guards, secured his release and Mahmoud fled to the United States. While here, he participated in many Anti-Khomeini rallies.

When the Immigration Service began deportation proceedings, and threatened to return Mahmoud to Iran and an uncertain and deadly future, Mahmoud contacted Centro Legal and a Petition for Asylum was submitted. However, we had one major problem: there was absolutely no documented proof of his claims. We had only his word.

At the hearing, Mahmoud testified to his torture and Anti-Khomeini activities. His testimony was detailed, factual, consistent and credible. The judge granted him asylum. Mahmoud is now free from fear of deportation but not the horrors of what the dark side of humanity can be. While we cannot undo what has been done, we can certainly take credit for changing his future.

There are significantly more cases than can be highlighted here. However, space limits our ability to bring those to you. In the future, we hope to bring you more examples of the type of work we do and the impact that we can have on individuals and our community. Working together there is little we cannot change, and, in particular someone's future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Centro Legal wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the following foundations, agencies, and corporations for their continued support and encouragement. The following agencies have supported us in 1987 and/or 1988 (* denotes funding in both years):

- *United Way of Minneapolis
- *United Way of St. Paul
- *Lawyers Trust Account Board
- *Legal Service Advisory Committee
- *Immigration Legalization Project (Funded by
Dayton Hudson; Otto Bremer Foundation;
Northwest Area Foundation; F. R. Bigelow
Foundation; Mardag Foundation and
St. Paul Foundation).
- *Department of Corrections
- *Dayton-Hudson Foundation
- *General Mills Foundation
- *Northern States Power
- *Minnesota State Bar Foundation
- *Fingerhut Family Foundation
- *Northwestern Bell
- *Otto Bremer Foundation
- *St. Paul Foundation
- F. R. Bigelow Foundation
- Minneapolis Foundation
- Gannett Foundation
- Honeywell Foundation
- Minnesota Women's Fund
- Popham, Haik, Schnobrich & Kaufman, Ltd.
- Law Office of Michael Martinez

Most of all, we wish to thank our clients, for it is in their struggle to lead peaceful, productive lives that we find the strength to battle for their future.

Centro Legal, Inc.

A NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY LAW OFFICE



ANNUAL MEETING
November 9, 1989

ANNUAL MEETING
CENTRO LEGAL, INC.
NOVEMBER 9, 1989
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

6:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.: Social Hour

Welcome and Introductions: Irene Gomez-Bethke, President

Guest Speaker: Jose Zalaquett, Attorney, author, and noted
International Human Rights Advocate.
"Thoughts on Human Rights in Latin America".

Invocation: Reverend Sunthi Paul Chookiatsirichai

Dinner

Chief Legal Officer's Report: Karim El-Ghazzawy

Awards: Irene Gomez-Bethke and Karim El-Ghazzawy

Conclusion: Irene Gomez-Bethke

CENTRO LEGAL, INC.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
1989**

Officers

Irene Gomez-Bethke, President, Instituto de Arte y Cultura
Carlos Mariani-Rosa, Vice-President, Minn. Council of
Churches

T-R Albert Garcia, Jr., Secretary
Thomas J. Barrett, Treasurer, Popham, Haik, Schnobrich &
Kaufman, Ltd.

Board Members

^ Miguel Garza, Neighborhood Justice Center
Angelita Velasco, Organizing Against Pornography
Reverend Sunthi Paul Chookiatirichai, Southeast Asian
Ministry of Minneapolis.
Olivia Mancha, Community Representative

**Immediate Past Board Members
(1988 - 1989)**

R- Steven Zachary, Attorney *New Job*
R- Elaine Valadez, Attorney " "
R- Rose Lucero Cummins, Community Representative *out of state*

Staff

Karim El-Ghazzawy, J. D. University of Minnesota Law School
1986, Chief Legal Officer
Phillips F. Gonzalez Gonzalez, J. D. University of Minnesota
Law School 1984, Immigration Project Attorney
Edmundo D. Lijo, J. D. University of Minnesota Law School
1986, Staff Attorney
Amaya Maura, Paralegal, Proyecto Ayuda, Battered Women's
Program
Christine Rosario, Legal Secretary
Estela O'Brien, Part-time Secretary
Gerald W. Carr, Volunteer (Retired Seniors Volunteer Program)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is my privilege to extend a very warm welcome to you to our Annual Meeting. While our organization enjoys the successful attainment of financial and management goals and the respect of the community, we do not intend to rest on our laurels. We are the first to recognize that there is always room for improvement. We are aware that much is yet to be done, and that we cannot afford to remain inert. A progressive organization must look to the future, more than to the past, but, lest we forget, from time to time it is also important that we review our achievements and the challenges of the past.

As we look to the past, we see that Centro Legal has a history of meeting the challenges. In response to the reduction of services for low-income and Hispanic clients by the government, the challenge was met by the incorporation of Centro Legal, Inc. in August, 1981. Centro Legal was founded to provide legal representation for people in the low-income segment of our society, with an emphasis on bilingual services for the Hispanic community in the State of Minnesota. Therefore, this agency is unique in that Centro Legal fills a niche in the provision of legal services that other traditional legal providers do not fill. Our strength is in language and cultural sensitivity, enhancing our services to that segment of the population not able to access other legal services.

I want to express to the Board of Directors and to the Staff of our organization my deep appreciation for the cooperation and support which they have given me as President. This support has not been passive or mere approval; it has been spontaneous, active and enthusiastic. They have been loyal and unswerving in their support and dedication to the agency's mission, for which I am very grateful. Many of the

Board Members have willingly accepted difficult committee assignments. Many have taken time cut from their vocations to render services to the organization at great personal sacrifice and even some financial loss. On behalf of the Board of Directors our sincere thanks to the Staff, no one could have a more loyal and hardworking one, and their devotion to their work is one we shall never forget.

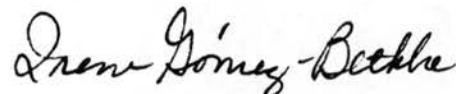
Karim El-Ghazzawy, our Chief Legal Officer, has demonstrated outstanding leadership. His vision, is in keeping with past leadership; to improve the condition not only of the organization but ultimately the human condition as well.

The Board of Directors makes formal acknowledgement of its appreciation for the services rendered by him at this time, and duly acknowledge the contributions which he has made to the organization.

The challenge Centro Legal faces for the future is to meet the increasing demand for our services, in an economic environment of decreasing resources. The Board gratefully acknowledges the support of the foundations, and all our other funders for their confidence in Centro Legal in continuing to meet the challenges of the future.

The Board of Directors wishes you Happy Holidays.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Irene Gomez-Bethke".

Irene Gomez-Bethke
President

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER'S REPORT

In April of this year I assumed the position of Chief Legal Officer of Centro Legal, Inc. The past seven months have been exhilarating and challenging on a professional and personal level. Thanks to the tireless work of my predecessor, Martin Diaz, Centro Legal achieved fiscal and programmatic integrity prior to his departure. There is however much to be done in terms of meeting the challenges of the future.

Centro Legal, Inc. was incorporated as a non-profit community law office in August, 1981. The impetus for the creation of Centro Legal was primarily in response to federal cuts in legal services programs nationwide. Centro Legal was originally created to address the legal needs of Hispanics in Ramsey County; however, it soon became apparent that there was a definite need for similar services in Hennepin County. Centro Legal opened its Minneapolis office in April, 1983 in order to provide legal representation to the Hispanic community of Hennepin County.

Since its inception Centro Legal has represented clients from the Hispanic and lower income communities in their efforts to obtain viable access to the judicial system in areas of importance to them. Centro Legal fulfills an important and unique role in the provision of legal services to the Hispanic population. Every person on Centro Legal's staff is bilingual and familiar with Hispanic culture. Centro Legal is the only law office in the State of Minnesota providing a wide range of civil legal services to the Hispanic population.

It is important to note that our services are not available elsewhere. I am proud to say that Centro Legal's representation has made a real difference in the lives of our clients and their respective families. Centro Legal is currently a streamlined, efficient, and financially viable organization. The Chief Legal Officer handles a sizeable caseload as well as fundraising and administrative responsibilities. In addition, Centro Legal's staff is comprised of two attorneys, a paralegal, and one full-time and one half-time secretary. Centro Legal's Minneapolis and St. Paul offices operate with a minimal support staff.

Centro Legal faces the challenge of an ever increasing demand for our services in an era of tightening resources. It is my impression that the 1990 Census will reveal that Minnesota's Hispanic population is considerably larger than previously thought. In order to meet this demand Centro Legal must maintain the loyalty of its current funders and ensure continued support within our community, including our colleagues in the bar.

Another aspect of the challenge is to ensure that Centro Legal maintains the dynamism and flexibility it has historically demonstrated in the past to meet the legal needs of our client population. In 1987, in a joint venture with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, Inc. and Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance, Inc., Centro Legal established the Immigration Legalization Project. Through the dedicated work of Phillips G. Gonzalez, our project attorney, Centro Legal ensured that our clients benefitted from the amnesty provisions in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Thanks to these efforts, hundreds of

our clients have legalized their immigration status. In the second phase of the legalization effort, these clients will become permanent residents and eventually citizens of the United States. As a result of the project's work, the human condition of our clients has improved. Our clients are able to lead productive lives, finally free from the ever present fear of deportation they had previously experienced.

Practicing immigration law has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my current position. The immigration laws are complex and often difficult to interpret. When we extend our services to persons accused of violating, or being in noncompliance with, immigration laws, we are simply operating in the tradition of legal practitioners in other areas of law. Our mission is to insure that our clients fully avail themselves of the legal defenses and discretionary relief available to them as a matter of law. Edmundo D. Lijo, a Centro Legal staff attorney, is continuing our agency's tradition of quality legal representation in the area of general immigration and family law.

The economic, social and political turmoil in Latin America and throughout many parts of the world has created a situation where our immigration services will be in demand for years to come. In addition, the beneficiaries of the IRCA laws will provide an additional demand for our services in the areas of government benefits, housing and consumer law.

I am very proud to note that Centro Legal is at the forefront in the area of family law. Centro Legal has operated Proyecto Ayuda, a project from Hispanic women battered women, since 1987. The project opened my eyes to

the significant barriers faced by battered women of all ethnic and social backgrounds within the legal system. Through thorough preparation, tough cross examination, and an unswerving commitment to the work^{at} hand our project has been successful in obtaining custody, child support, spousal maintenance and other benefits for many battered women. Amaya Maura, a paralegal with Proyecto Ayuda, has played an invaluable role in the smooth operation of the project. Frankly, I am amazed at how quickly our clients recover once their abuser loses control over their lives. These are the rewards that make our work so gratifying.

I would also like to sincerely thank Christine Rosario, Estela O'Brien and Gerald W. Carr whose hard work and dedication ensures the smooth and efficient functioning of Centro Legal.

CONCLUSION

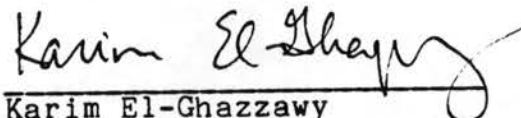
The demand for our services greatly exceeds our capacity to take cases. Due to our limited resources we are forced to turn away clients with meritorious legal cases. This is a painful process for us, and painful, if not actually injurious, to the clients who are turned away due to our lack of resources. Unfortunately, when Centro Legal turns away a prospective client, there is very little probability that alternate legal representation will be found.

The Hispanic community is the largest growing minority group in the State of Minnesota. Limited English language skills, cultural and financial barriers all interconnect to deprive many Hispanics of meaningful access to our judicial and administrative systems. Centro Legal is committed to providing access to the legal system to all of our clients.

However, our capacity to accept new cases is directly related to our ability to fund attorney positions. Core support from the funding community will allow Centro Legal to expand to meet client needs with services, rather than rejection.

Our agency, with the support of its Board of Directors, has accomplished a great deal given its limited staff and resources. Centro Legal is currently in a position to realize its enormous potential. Our challenge for the future is to maintain and insure fiscal integrity along with quality legal representation.

Sincerely,


Karim El-Ghazzawy
Chief Legal Officer

STATISTICS FOR 1988

The following is a statistical breakdown of the casework that Centro Legal accomplished in 1988. In total we served 713 clients, a considerable increase over our 1987 figure of 490. This increase was due to the enormous demand from legalization applicants and individuals in our battered women's program. These programs will shape our client base for years to come. The following are the 1988 statistics for the agency as a whole.

GEOGRAPHY:

Hennepin County	39.13%
Ramsey County	37.87%
Metro Area	92.16%
Greater Minnesota	7.94%

GENDER

Male	55.65%
Female	44.35%

ETHNICITY

Hispanic	68.3%
Caucasian	13.1%
Black	11.4%
Asian	3.2%
Native American	1.7%
Other	2.3%

AGE

18-19	39.65%
30-39	41.73%
40-49	13.80%
50-59	4.10%
60 +	.72%

CASE TYPE

Immigration	43.25%
Family law	41.51%
Other	15.24%

ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME

Below \$5,000	28.78%	5,000 - 7,499	21.35%
7,500 - 9,999	11.47%	10,000 - 14,999	17.73%
15,000 - 19,999	14.30%	20,000 +	6.97%

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Centro Legal wishes to formally acknowledge the assistance of the following foundations, agencies, and corporations for their continued support and encouragement. The following agencies have supported us in 1988 and/or 1989. (* denotes funding in both years):

- * United Way of Minneapolis
- * United Way of St. Paul
- * Lawyers Trust Account Board
- * Legal Services Advisory Committee
- * Immigration Legalization Project (Funded by Dayton Hudson; Otto Bremer Foundation; Northwest Area Foundation; F. R. Bigelow Foundation; Mardag Foundation and St. Paul Foundation).
- * Department of Corrections
- * Dayton-Hudson Foundation
- * General Mills Foundation
- * Northern States Power
- * Minnesota State Bar Foundation
- * Hennepin County Bar Association
- Fingerhut Family Foundation
- Northwestern Bell
- 3 M
- * Otto Bremer Foundation
- * St. Paul Foundation
- * F. R. Bigelow Foundation
- Minneapolis Foundation
- * Gannett Foundation
- * Minnesota Women's Fund
- Popham, Haik, Schnobrich & Kaufman, Ltd.
- Dorsey & Whitney
- Fredrickson & Byron
- Spicer, Watson & Carp

Most of all, we wish to thank our clients, for it is in their struggle to lead peaceful, productive lives that we find the strength to battle for their future.

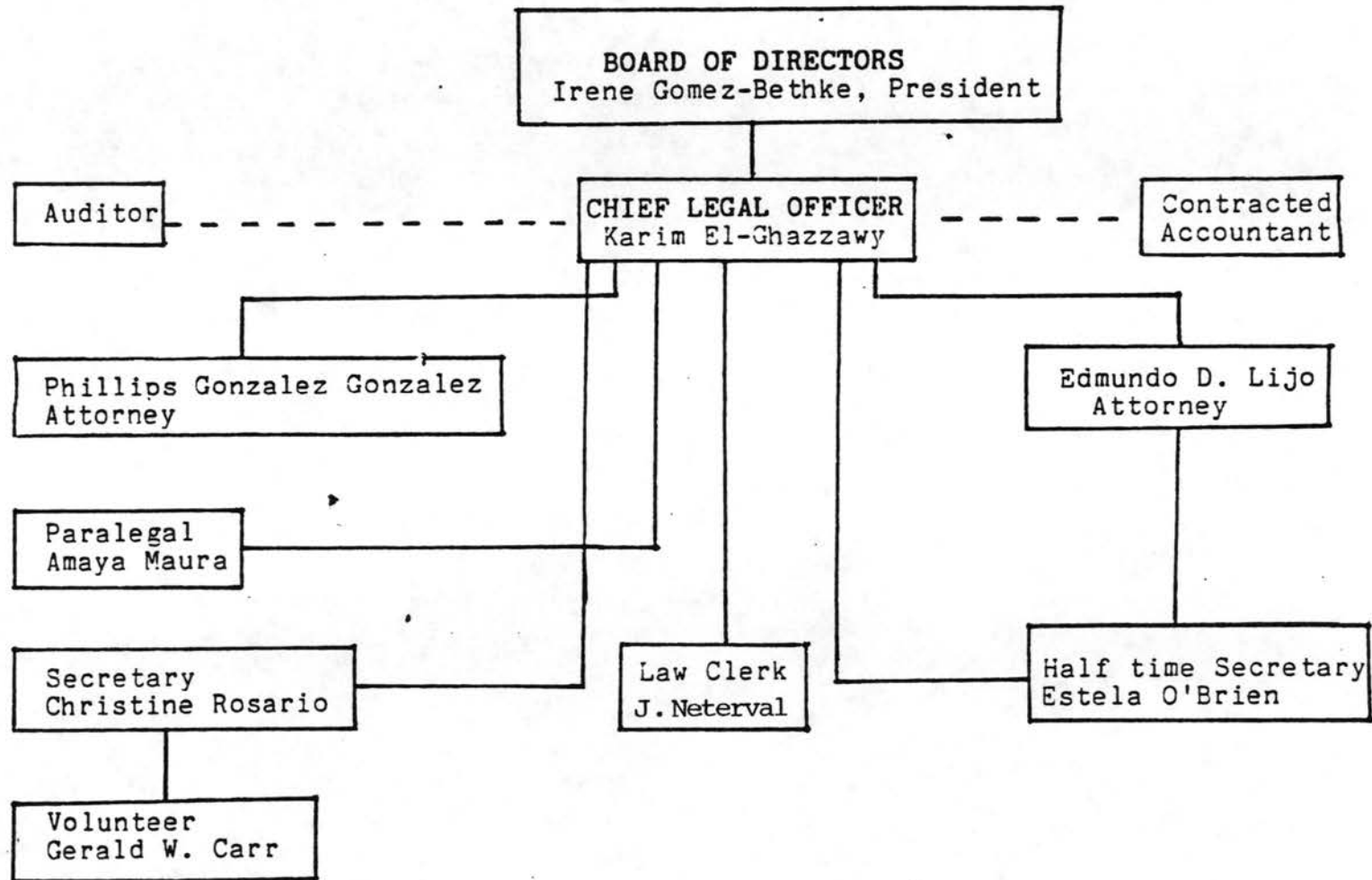
1989

FULL TIME EQUIVALENT
BY PROJECT AND STAFF MEMBER

Karim El-Ghazzawy (CLO):	.15	FTE	Mpls., Justicia		
	.15	FTE	St. Paul, Justicia		
	.30	FTE	Ayuda		
	.40	FTE	Admin.	1.0	FTE
Edmundo Lijo (Attorney)	.50	FTE	Mpls., Justicia	1.0	FTE
	.50	FTE	St. Paul, Justicia		
Phillips Gonzales (ILP Atty.)	1.00	FTE		1.0	FTE
Amaya Maura (Paralegal)	1.00	FTE	Ayuda	1.0	FTE
Christine Rosario	.20	FTE	Mpls., Justicia		
(Secretary)	.20	FTE	St. Paul, Justicia		
	.50	FTE	Ayuda		
	.10	FTE	Admin.	1.0	FTE
Estela O'Brien (Temporary	.25	FTE	Mpls., Justicia		
Secretary)	.25	FTE	St. Paul, Justicia	1.0	FTE
				Total	5.50 FTE

CENTRO LEGAL, INC.
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

APRIL, 1989





CENTRO LEGAL, INC.

A NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY LAW OFFICE

179 E. ROBIE ST.
ST. PAUL, MN 55107
(612) 291-0110

EDMUNDO D. LIJO
Attorney at Law
PHILLIPS F. GONZALEZ GONZALEZ
Attorney at Law

2929 4TH AVE. SO. SUITE L
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55408
(612) 825-5503

KARIM EL-GHAZZAWY
Chief Legal Officer
AMAYA MAURA
Paralegal

TO: Board of Directors and Staff
FROM: Irene Gomez-Bethke, President *IBB/cr*
RE: Annual Meeting of 1990
DATE: December 10, 1990

On behalf of the Executive Committee and myself, I would like to thank you for your particular participation in the Annual Meeting of Centro Legal, Inc., on December 5, 1990 at the San Antonio Bar & Grill.

Your sincerity, energy and commitment to justice contributed to the Annual Meeting coming together in a very meaningful way.

It is with deep gratitude that I thank you for making this year at Centro Legal and the Annual Meeting a success. We were privileged to have a wonderful speaker in Judge Rosas.

I have enjoyed working with each of you and I am privileged to call you my friends.

God Bless you and your families. Have a very Happy Holiday and Happy New Year.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is my privilege to extend a very warm welcome to you to our Annual Meeting. While our organization enjoys the successful attainment of financial and management goals and the respect of the community, we do not intend to rest on our laurels. We are the first to recognize that there is always room for improvement. We are aware that much is yet to be done, and that we cannot afford to remain inert. A progressive organization must look to the future, more than to the past, but, lest we forget, from time to time it is also important that we review our achievements and the challenges of the past. •

As we look to the past, we see that Centro Legal has a history of meeting the challenges. In response to the reduction of services for low-income and Hispanic clients by the government, the challenge was met by the incorporation of Centro Legal, Inc. in August, 1981. Centro Legal was founded to provide legal representation for people in the low-income segment of our society and with an emphasis on bilingual services for the Hispanic community in the State of Minnesota. Therefore, this agency is unique in that Centro Legal fills a niche in the provision of legal services that other traditional legal providers do not fill. Our strength is in language and cultural sensitivity, enhancing our services to that population not able to access other legal services.

I want to express to the Board of Directors and to the Staff our our organization my deep appreciation for their cooperation which they have given me as President. This support has not been passive or mere approval; it has been spontaneous, active and enthusiastic. They have been loyal and unswerving in their support and dedication to the agency's mission, for which I am very grateful. Many of the

Board Members have willingly accepted difficult committee assignments. Many have taken time cut from their vocations to render services to the organization at great personal sacrifice and even some financial loss. On behalf of the Board of Directors, our sincere thanks to the Staff, no one could have a more loyal and hardworking one, and their devotion to their work is one we shall never forget!

Karim El-Ghazzawy, our Chief Legal Officer, has demonstrated outstanding leadership. His vision, is in keeping with past leadership; to improve the condition not only of the organization but ultimately the human condition as well.

The Board of Directors makes formal acknowledgement of its appreciation for the services rendered by him at this time, and duly acknowledge the contributions which he has made to the organization.

The challenge Centro Legal faces for the future is to meet the increasing demand for our services, in an economic environment of decreasing resources. The Board gratefully acknowledges the support of the foundations, and all our other funders for their confidence in Centro Legal in continuing to meet the challenges of the future.

The Board of Directors wishes you Happy Holidays.

Sincerely,

Irene Gomez-Bethke

Irene Gomez-Bethke
President

Centro Legal, Inc.

A NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY LAW OFFICE

DESPACHO DE ABOGADOS SIN ANIMO DE LUCRO



10th Year Anniversary

ANNUAL MEETING

November 15, 1991

ANNUAL MEETING
CENTRO LEGAL, INC.
NOVEMBER 15, 1991

6:30 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.: Social Hour with the music of the
"Mariachi Serenata"

Welcome and Introductions: Phillips F. González González

Invocation: Reverend Sunthi Paul Chookiatsirichai

Dinner

Chief Legal Officer's Report: Phillips F. González González

Remarks from former clients

Guest Speaker: Representative Carlos Mariani
Minnesota House of Representatives

will speak on: "Centro Legal's integral role in meeting the
increased demand for affordable legal services in the
Hispanic Community".

Greetings from Senator Paul J. Wellstone presented by his
daughter Miss Marcia Wellstone.

Awards: Irene Gomez-Bethke and Thomas J. Barrett

Conclusion: Phillips F. González González

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER'S REPORT
1991

Today we are celebrating Centro Legal's Tenth Year of service to Minnesota.

Centro Legal was created in 1981 with a lot of enthusiasm, little fanfare and even less money. Since then Centro Legal has not only survived but it has also matured and grown; indeed it has become a very important legal services provider in Minnesota. Let us not forget that survival for non profits is an even more admirable feat than for regular businesses. After all, we must always rely on the kindness and charity of strangers.

To better understand Centro Legal's role in Minnesota it is necessary to look first at the sad reality of certain facts. There are large numbers of people living in the United States who have trouble obtaining health care or justice because they do not speak English. In the United States almost nobody can receive full and complete information, give informed consent; express his own needs, desires, and viewpoints, or defend himself in court if he does not speak English.

The 1990 Census identified 55,000 persons of Hispanic origin in Minnesota. Many Hispanic residents do not speak English. To Non English speakers, an accident, a sudden illness, a brush with the law, a divorce, an immigration hearing, and even minor emergencies can be doubly traumatic. The existence of a language barrier raises questions about the proper exercise of civil rights, about equal access to public services, and equal justice under the law. Federal laws and regulations have tried recently to solve this problem by providing interpreting services.

However, it is extraordinarily difficult for complex legal problems to be resolved through an interpreter. Here lies in part, the great significance of our labor.

Centro Legal is the only law firm staffed with completely bilingual (Spanish-English) and culturally sensitive personnel in the State of Minnesota.

It must be clarified that although our services target the Spanish speaking population, we also represent people of any ethnic background and nationality.

Centro Legal's lawyers practice mostly in the areas of immigration law, and family law. Our work in immigration law has helped many individuals fulfill their dream of leading productive, stable lives in the United States.

In 1987 and 1988 Centro Legal played an important and effective role in helping many aliens legalize their immigration status under the Amnesty Law.

Centro Legal currently operates one special crisis intervention project. At the end of 1987, in response to community demand, Centro Legal developed Proyecto Ayuda, ("Project Help"), to provide legal representation, advice and appropriate referrals to Hispanic and other battered women. The project's work in the Twin Cities and outstate Minnesota has received excellent reviews from clients, Shelter Directors, and Advocates.

Many legal problems can be avoided and reduced through education on legal rights and issues. Consequently, during the past decade Centro Legal has provided outreach and community legal education via articles in community newspapers, public access television videos, radio shows, seminars and workshops.

In collaboration with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services we made a series of videos entitled: "The New Immigrants: Problems and Solutions". This series has been aired several times by Minneapolis Cable Access and Metro Regional.

Northern Dakota County Community Television and Saint Paul Public Access TV trained us on the basics of video production. We wrote our own scripts, worked as interviewers, and interviewees, operated the TV cameras, the audio and the video controls, and struggled through the post-production details. All our shows were bilingual (Spanish-English). We dubbed some and subtitled others. It was a madening, challenging and fun experience.

Although our ability to serve has increased, the demand for our services keeps growing by leaps and bounds. Centro Legal's Minneapolis and Saint Paul's offices operate with a minimum of support and professional staff. It is our hope to find enough financial assistance in the future to increase our professional and clerical staff.

Tonight we acknowledge the help received so far but also appeal to all who can to continue their much appreciated support. At this time we need, among other things: adequate office space, new telephone systems, faxes, and other office equipment.

This year we want to express our gratitude to all those who in one way or another, have been a part of the history of Centro Legal. Thanks a million to our past and current funders, staff and volunteers. Thanks specially to our golden volunteer, Mr. Gerald W. Carr, who since the Autumn of 1986, has invested much time, effort and love in our cause, and has become our fast friend.

Phillips F. González González
Attorney at Law
Chief Legal Officer

STATISTICS FOR 1990

The following is a statistical breakdown of the casework that Centro Legal accomplished in 1990. In total we served 817 clients. The increase over our 1989 figure was due to the demand for legalization related issues and work authorization problems as well as individuals in our battered women's program. The following are the 1990 statistics for the agency as a whole.

GEOGRAPHY

Hennepin County	55.4%
Ramsey County	31.8%
Metro Area	9.4%
Greater Minn.	3.3%

GENDER

Male	55.20%
Female	44.67%

ETHNICITY

Hispanic	68%
Caucasian	17%
Black	8%
Asian	2%
Native American	2%
Other	3%

AGE

0-18	0.12%
19-29	59.11%
30-39	26.56%
40-49	11.38%
50-59	1.34%
60+	1.59%

CASE TYPE

Immigration	65.48%
Family Law	24.6%
Other	9.91%

ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME

Below \$ 5,000	28.78%	5,000 - 7,499	21.35%
7,500 - 9,999	11.47%	10,000 - 14,999	17.73%
15,000 - 19,999	14.30%	20,000 +	6.97%

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Centro Legal wishes to thank the following agencies, foundations, and corporations for their current or past support and encouragement:

United Way of Minneapolis
United Way of St. Paul
Lawyers Trust Account Board
Legal Services Advisory Committee
Minnesota Department of Corrections
Dayton-Hudson Foundation
General Mills Foundation
Northern States Power
Minnesota State Bar Foundation
Hennepin County Bar Association
Fingerhut Family Foundation
Northwestern Bell
3M
Otto Bremer Foundation
St. Paul Foundation
F.R. Bigelow Foundation
Minneapolis Foundation
Gannett Foundation
Minnesota Women's Fund
Popham, Haik, Schnobrich & Kaufman, Ltd.
Dorsey & Witney
Frederickson & Byron
Spicer, Watson & Carp

1991

FULL TIME EQUIVALENCIES

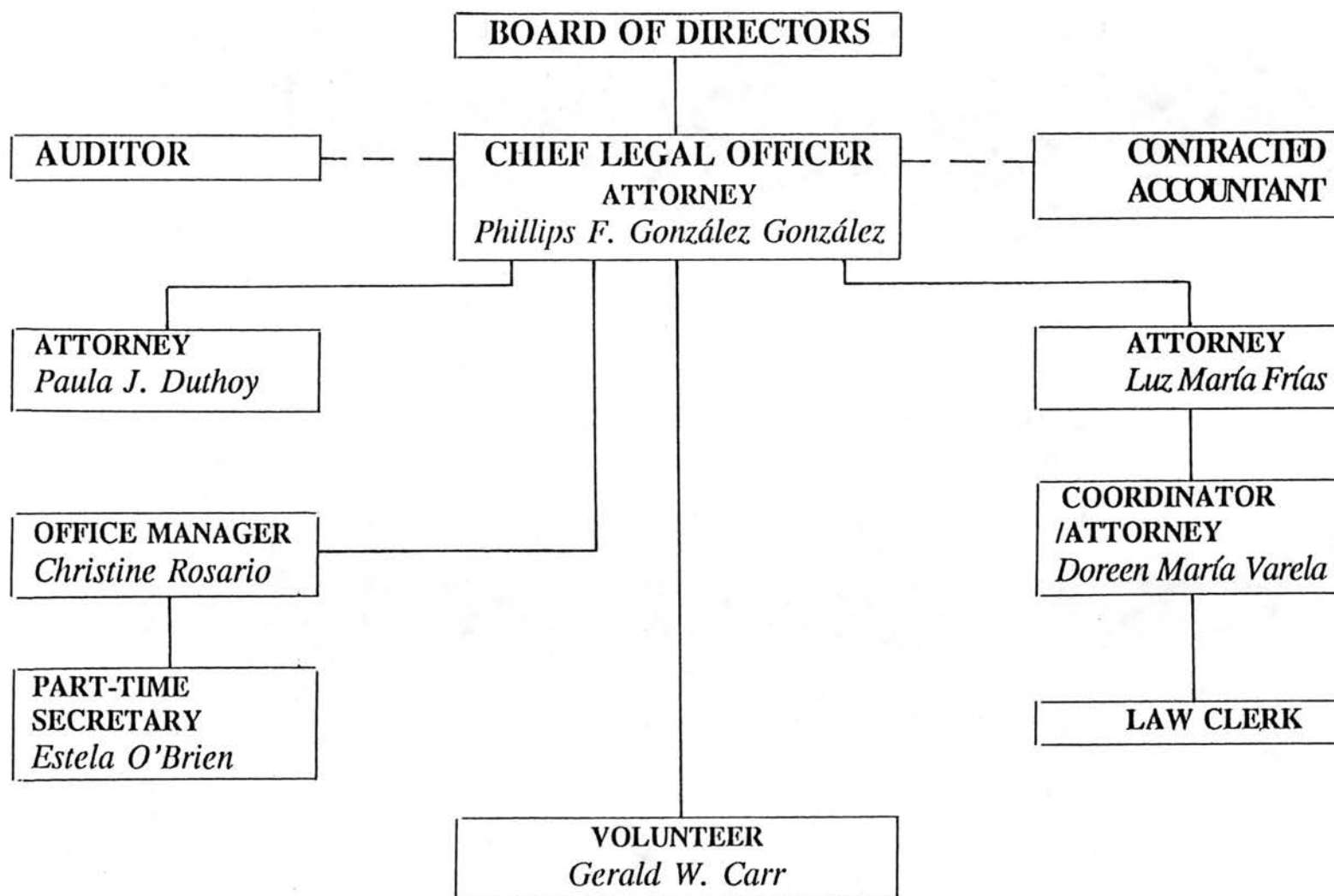
BY PROJECT AND STAFF MEMBER

Phillips F. Gonzalez Gonzalez (CLO)	.25 FTE	Mpls., Justicia		
	.25 FTE	St. Paul, Justicia		
	.05 FTE	Ayuda		
	.45 FTE	Admn.	1.0	FTE
Paula J. Duthoy (Attorney)	.50 FTE	Mpls., Justicia	1.0	FTE
	.50 FTE	St. Paul, Justicia		
Luz Maria Frias (Attorney)			1.0	FTE
	.35 FTE	Mpls. Justicia		
	.35 FTE	St. Paul, Justicia		
	.30 FTE	Ayuda		
Doreen Maria Varela (Coordinator/Attorney)	1.00 FTE	Ayuda	1.0	FTE
Christine Rosario (Secretary)	.20 FTE	Mpls., Justicia		
	.20 FTE	St. Paul, Justicia		
	.50 FTE	Ayuda		
	.10 FTE	Admn.	1.0	FTE
Estela O'Brien (Part-time Secretary)	.25 FTE	Mpls. Justicia		
	.25 FTE	St. Paul Justicia	0.5	FTE
		Total	5.50	FTE

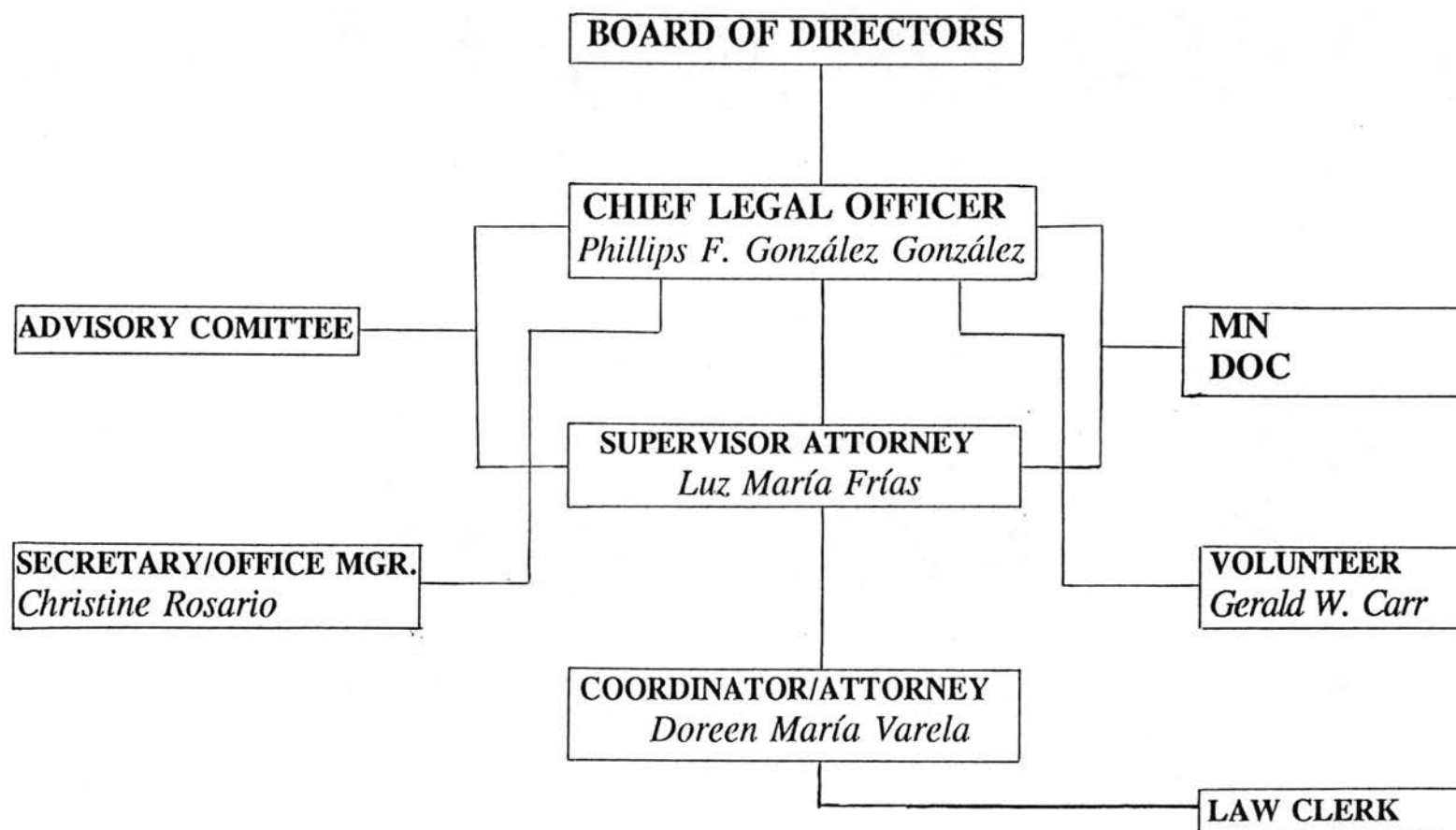
CENTRO LEGAL, INC.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

OCTOBER, 1991



PROYECTO AYUDA



MINNESOTA LAW JOURNAL

Volume 3 No. 8

MINNESOTA'S JOURNAL OF LAW, POLITICS & PUBLIC POLICY

DECEMBER 1989

Necesito Ayuda Inmediatamente

If you are a Minnesota lawyer, you probably don't understand the headline above. It is written in Spanish and there are only about 20 fluent Spanish-speaking lawyers in the state. Yet the population of Spanish-speaking residents has grown dramatically over the past year and will continue to do so. Because many of those people speak little or no English and have limited financial capability, finding and securing competent legal assistance can be a real problem. That's where Centro Legal comes in.

Centro Legal is a non-profit community law office that was established in 1981 to work with clients of Hispanic origin. The staff is small, consisting of three attorneys, one paralegal, two secretaries and a volunteer. All staff members speak Spanish and are familiar with Hispanic culture. Although Centro Legal does serve some non-Hispanic low-income clients, its mandate is to provide legal representation in civil matters for members of the Hispanic community; Hispanic clients make up about 70 percent of the caseload. Because of the growth in that community, the complexity of many of the legal issues, and the always stretched-to-the-absolute-limit resources, Centro Legal has its hands full.

Karim El-Ghazzawy, chief legal officer of the organization, has the primary responsibility for fundraising and administrat-

Centro Legal Provides Legal Service to Hispanic Community

by Lauren Pacelli

caseload. He says every person who works at Centro Legal puts in overtime on a regular basis and they still have more work than they can possibly handle. "The hardest part of this job is regularly having to turn away desperate people because of our limited resources," says El-Ghazzawy. "They may call, for example, because they are being threatened with deportation, or are seeking protection from an abusive spouse. Unfortunately, if we have to turn them away, we know there is very little chance that they will find help anywhere else."

Funding for Centro Legal comes from a variety of sources, but El-Ghazzawy says that competing for limited resources requires that he spend increasing amounts of time and energy. "As a small organization, we need to work very hard to attract the attention of new funders and to maintain the loyalty of our existing funders," he says. "Many people underestimate the size and diversity of Minnesota's Hispanic population and the extent of their legal needs."



"The kind of people Centro Legal hires are those who feel their clients are equal to them in worth and that their own lives can be enriched by virtue of knowing and helping those people."

Karim El-Ghazzawy

The current Hispanic population in Minnesota is estimated to be about 70,000. It has increased in the past two years as a result of the amnesty provisions in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act. Centro Legal played an important role in helping hundreds of applicants file petitions to qualify under those provisions. Immigration has always been a big part of Centro Legal's work. In addition, Proyecto Ayuda — a project designed to help battered women in the Hispanic community — has been operating since 1987. Many women who faced social, economic, and ethnic barriers to the legal system were

able to obtain marriage dissolutions, custody arrangements, and child support with legal assistance that they would otherwise have been unable to secure.

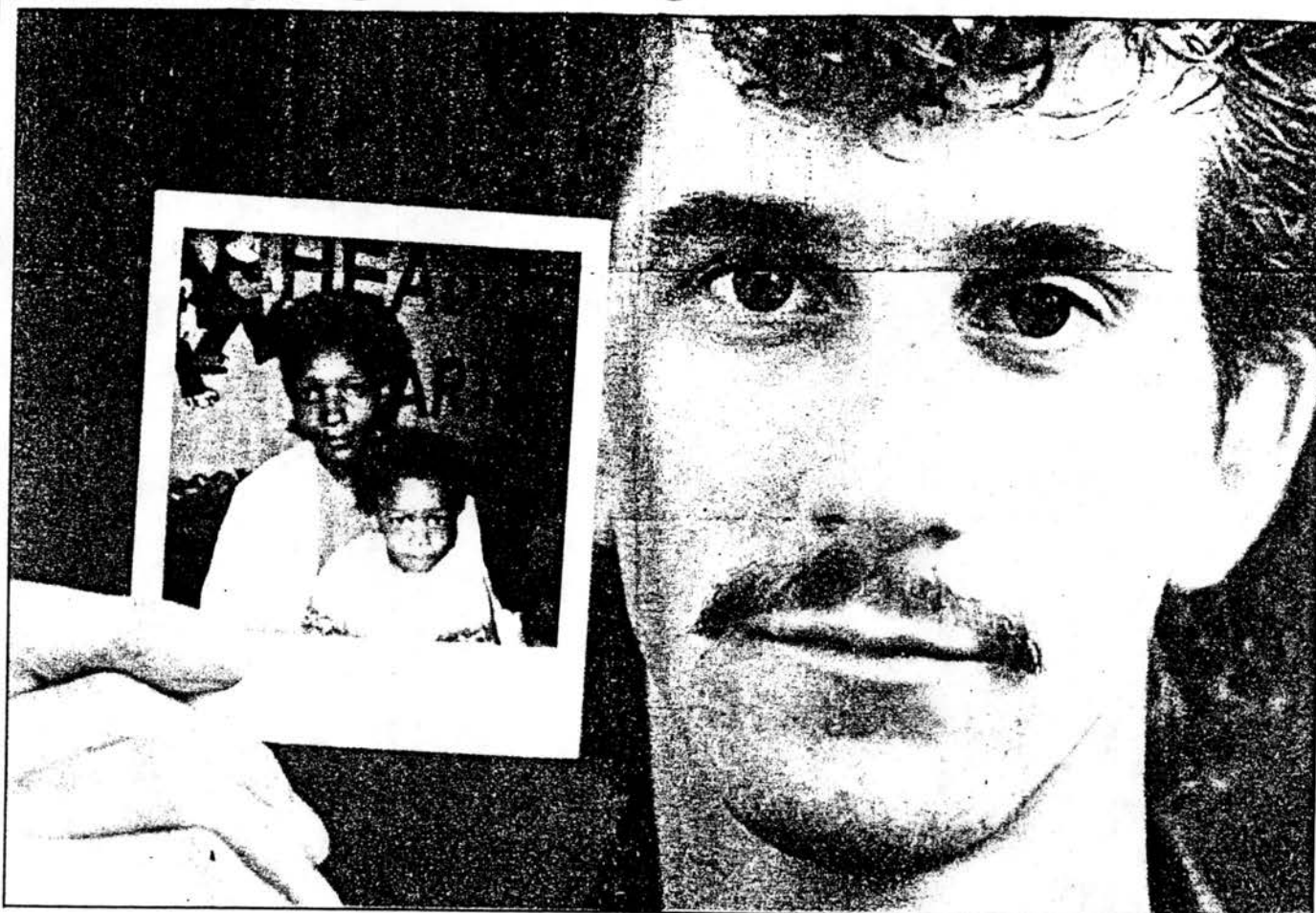
Judge Isabel Gomez is very familiar with Centro Legal and commends its work in the community. Gomez recognizes, from her experience practicing law and being on the bench — and because she is Hispanic — that minorities are often particularly disadvantaged in court by their inability to communicate in English. Many of those people may have only recently arrived in this country. Or they may

have lived in the migrant community where they had no opportunity to learn English. "For true access to the legal system, full communication with your attorney is essential. An interpreter just doesn't do it, because you can never be sure that you are being understood."

Gomez praises Centro Legal for going beyond what is required in working with clients. "It's more than just a matter of language — it's an understanding of the Hispanic culture. The kind of people Centro Legal hires are those who feel their clients are equal to them in worth and that their own lives can be enriched by virtue of knowing and helping those people."

The Spanish title above, by the way, means "I need help immediately," — which, El-Ghazawy says, is the way many telephone calls to Centro Legal begin. A good day, he adds, is when none of those needing legal assistance has to be turned away.

'I'm not going to let her go'



Argus Leader photo by DEAN CURTIS

Todd Boelter holds a photograph of his fiancée, Lucy Mutua, and one of her two daughters. The Mutuas may face deportation this week.

Local man fights to keep fiancée in U.S.

By STEVE ERPENBACH
Argus Leader Staff

Immigration authorities took Lucy Mutua and her two daughters from their Sioux Falls home 13 days ago.

This week, they plan to have them deported to her native Kenya.

There, she would face rejection from her family and limited opportunity for herself and her American-born children, she said. Her other option is putting them up for adoption.

Mutua and federal authorities

agree on one point: She is an illegal alien. But the central issue involving the 28-year-old from Nairobi, Kenya, is when she became one.

Mutua's lawyers contend she has been an illegal alien since 1979, the year she violated the conditions of her student visa.

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service officials say she was first identified as an illegal alien in 1985.

For Mutua, the six-year discrepancy is the difference between amnesty and deportation.

Her supporters are taking legal action, believing Mutua qualifies for amnesty.

Her fiancé, Todd Boelter, has played an impatient waiting game since Sept. 30, the day federal authorities took Mutua and her two daughters.

Time is running out, he says.

For now, 5-year-old Monica and 3-year-old Michelle stay in a foster home in St. Paul, Minn., location of the immigration service's district office. Across the river, their mother is in Pierce County jail in Ellsworth, Wis. They are sepa-

rated because immigration officials say they did not have a place to keep them together.

An attempt to deport them last Wednesday was stopped when Mutua's lawyer filed for a stay. It was denied, but lawyers now will take Mutua's case to the Board of Immigration and Appeals in Washington, D.C.

Boelter, 24, says he feels powerless in the face of government bureaucracy.

Telephone numbers are scrib-

Deport/See 2A

Deport: Man fights to save fiancée

Continued from 1A

bled on a handful of tattered notebook pages. They include those of congressmen, senators, lawyers, immigration authorities and the separate facilities where Mutua and the girls are being held.

He walks from room to room, talking on a portable phone. His voice is tired, growing hoarse. He's lost six pounds off his already slim build.

Thirteen days ago, three Sioux Falls police officers knocked on the couple's door about 5 p.m. with complaints that their stereo was too loud. "We don't have a stereo," Boelter said Thursday.

Immigration authorities accompanying police then took Mutua and the children. Three hours later, their flight to St. Paul left from Sioux Falls.

Tom Schiltgen, deputy district director in St. Paul, said the immigration service has given Mutua several opportunities to leave the country on her own.

"She basically was uncooperative to us," he said Friday. "We were very lenient with Lucy. Basically, we've gotten to the point ... where it's time to actually enforce her departure."

Mutua first came to the United States on a student visa in 1977 when she enrolled as a full-time art student at Augustana College. Two years later, she dropped to part time for one semester, a violation of her visa. She returned to full-time studies in June 1979. After two years out of school, she enrolled as a part-time student at Sioux Falls

College in February 1982.

Her supporters tracked her past, looking through her school records, among others. Friday, they found what they think could be the answer.

The law stipulates that to qualify for amnesty, a person must have entered the U.S. illegally before Jan. 1, 1982. If not and they came legally, the person's status would have to expire before Jan. 1, 1982. The time on Mutua's visa didn't run out until Jan. 30, 1982, Schiltgen said.

"She does not meet the criteria for legalization," he said.

Mutua's lawyer, Mike Davis, disagrees. In January 1979, she traveled to Kenya with a group from Augustana. Davis, of St. Paul's Centro Legal Department, says the trip and return to the United States violated the conditions of her visa, making her an illegal alien at that time. That would mean she meets the legal requirements for amnesty.

"What we're praying for is that she broke the law," Boelter says.

Schiltgen says in May 1986, Mutua was sent a letter saying she was scheduled for deportation in June. Officials say she was granted several extensions; Boelter says she received one extension in July for medical reasons.

Schiltgen says in October of that year, an administrative judge gave Mutua 30 days to leave the country voluntarily.

It would cost Mutua \$1,200 to return to her native country. She doesn't have that money, or the additional money for taking her children.

But the problems run much deeper than economics, Boelter says. Mutua's parents don't know about the children; her former fiancé and the children's father left Mutua and returned to his homeland of Nigeria.

Because of that, she's not likely to be accepted by her family, Boelter says.

Boelter met Mutua at a party in February 1986. Seven months later, they moved in together. They plan to marry.

He now worries that the immigration service will send her back to Kenya, where Mutua must stay for five years before she can attempt to return to the United States.

He also worries about the children, who were separated from their mother for the first time a day after immigration officers took all three to St. Paul.

Mutua was unable to contact them for four days, he says. The oldest, Monica, has since developed a urinary infection; Michelle developed an ear infection and is again wearing diapers.

A week ago, Monica told her mother by telephone that they were wearing the same clothes and had not bathed. Both were treated by doctors for the infections and are under close observation, Schiltgen says. They are being taken care of, he says.

Through his phone conversations with her, Boelter says he can tell Mutua is scared and confused. "She even told me, 'I'm ready to bang my head up against the bars.'"

But Boelter says: "I'm not going to let her go."

Group Works to stop deportation

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Wednesday, Oct. 21, 1987

By STEVE ERPENBACH
Argus Leader Staff

A local support group plans to circulate a petition this week in hopes of persuading immigration officials to stop the deportation of a Sioux Falls woman.

Lucy Mutua, a 28-year-old illegal alien, could be deported to her native Kenya as early as next week.

Immigration authorities took Mutua and her two American-born daughters from their Sioux Falls home Sept. 30.

Since then, daughters Michelle and Monica have stayed in a St. Paul, Minn., foster home. Mutua remains in the Pierce County jail in Ellsworth, Wis.

Members of YWCA Mothers Support Group agreed to help Mutua. The small, informal group meets once a week.

Mutua was involved in the support group for about three years. Group members described Mutua as being active in the group, a caring mother and a talented artist.

Its members this week will circulate petitions on Mutua's behalf. The petitions, then given to Mutua's lawyer, Mike Davis of St. Paul's Centro Legal Department.

Her fiancée, Todd Boelter, 24, has contacted politicians and government officials since Sept. 30, attempting to stop deportation.

They met in February 1986. Boelter said he is scheduled to meet today with representatives of the Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls.

Lawyers for Mutua received a stay of deportation, which expires Oct. 28. That represents the earliest date she could be deported.

Tom Schillgen, deputy district director for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, said Mutua was identified as an illegal alien in 1985.

Mutua's supporters contend she's been illegal since 1979; they say she qualifies for amnesty.

Mutua, a Nairobi, Kenya, native, first came to the United States on a student visa in 1977, when she enrolled as a full-time art student at Augustana College.

LOST IN AMERICA

Despite new immigration rulings, some people, like Stella Ugoajah, are still going to fall through the cracks

BY MARTHA THOMAS

On Friday, March 13, a Hennepin County social worker escorted 17-year-old Stella Ugoajah, against her doctor's advice, from St. Joe's shelter in Minneapolis to the downtown Government Center. From there, Stella, a native Nigerian, was transferred suddenly to the care of two strangers who placed her in the back seat of a car and drove away. While the men in the front seat chatted and laughed, Stella wondered what was going on. No one was telling her anything, but she had an idea.

When they reached their destination, they led Stella into a room and asked her to sit down. "They took fingerprints and photographs. They didn't lock me up — the door was open," she recalls. But "they talked like I was a criminal."

They took her passport and the return ticket to Nigeria she had saved since her arrival in this country eight months earlier. Someone came into the room and examined her face, counting the small slash marks that had been tattooed on her cheeks when she was a small child in the village. Stella soon realized she was in the custody of Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). Her temporary visa had expired. They were talking about an afternoon flight out of the Twin Cities.

While Stella sat there, a legion of attorneys and advocates were working to get her out. She was unfit to leave the country, they argued. There was no one to meet her in Nigeria. Her only family, a father whom she didn't know and a grandmother pushing 90 years old, live far from the city in a remote village that Stella had little hope of finding.

Put her on that plane and send her, unchaperoned, back to Nigeria, argued Bill Johnson, a mental health advocate, and Stella would have little future. "Her fate would have been to become a prostitute or a slave," he said.

She didn't even have the medication they'd prescribed and given her at the shelter. And based on the root of her "situational depression" — her overwhelming fear of being returned to what she considered a hostile native land — there was every indication that Stella would have tried to kill herself if she had been put on an airplane that day.

Though Stella had suddenly become entangled with Immigration, she was officially in the custody of Hennepin County Child Protection Services. She had been undergoing treatment for depression linked to abuse, abandonment and the death of her brother. How and why the county abandoned her says much about its constant battle between compassion and expedience. Why this powerless teenager, alone in America, was about to be cast beyond the border by the INS says much about this country's heart.

The details of Stella's case are unique, but she shares much with countless "aliens" currently living in the United States. She is seeking refuge here, in a country founded to provide sanctuary to the "huddled masses." But Stella has no means, under the law, to cash in on Miss Liberty's promise.

Stella Ugoajah was born in a small village in Nigeria. Her mother died when Stella was very young, and her father had several wives and many children. She was raised by her grandmother until she was nine, when she went to live with her brother Frank. Excluding a year-long sojourn with another brother in Lagos, Stella lived with Frank and his family in Nigeria, London

and Minneapolis—until late February, when she ran from home, claiming Frank and his wife beat her, treated her like a slave and did not fulfill their promise to send her to school.

"I came (to the United States) with them because they promised I was to go to school," Stella said. "I didn't know they were just using me." She claimed she spent her days caring for the couple's two small children. Her brother beat her when things were out of place or when Stella crossed his wife.

On February 21, Stella ran from home after Frank had hit her on the side of her head. With the help of a friend she'd met at a garage sale, she contacted Crisis Intervention. Doctors there noted "local swelling of her right ear" and she was referred to the Bridge and then to St. Joseph's Shelter. When St. Joseph's reported depression and talk of suicide, Stella was admitted to Willow Street Center.

According to an account of what Stella told doctors upon admission to Willow Street Center at Abbott Northwestern Hospital, "Frank would threaten her with throwing her out of the family. He would hit her at times. He also threatened to contact her father and members of the village in which he lives and see to it that she would be ostracized from the village, driven away with a knife." This was to be punishment for her continued bad conduct.

Her doctor noted in his report that "it was quite possible that the adjustment disorder had moved on to the level of a major depression." She wasn't sleeping and her eating was erratic. The mere mention of her brother Frank or the possibility of returning to Nigeria sent her into fits of crying. According to the doctor, "she was frequently tearful and seen as impulsive and dangerous to herself."

A week after Stella entered Willow Street, her brother Frank died of apparent chronic intestinal disorders en route from a work-related trip to Nigeria. The following day her social worker, Katie Pearson, informed Stella of Frank's death. According to hospital records, "This set off a three- or four-hour episode of continuous crying and wailing on the part of the patient because she felt that she should have died instead." Stella was put on tranquilizers and later prescribed Cogentin to combat reactions to the tranquilizers.

Katie Pearson recognized that Stella was in a bind. In her official report she noted that "Stella is now a child without a caretaker or legal guardian in this country. Her status with Immigration is also very uncertain. . . . Stella continues to be a very depressed child who does not know when to go or whom to turn to for help. She has several different adults in her life trying to help her. However, it is difficult for her to sort out where her future lies, let alone the many issues she has in dealing with her past up to and including her brother's sudden death." Nevertheless, Pearson decided to stop treatment and pulled her out of the hospital.

Stella's advocates included a couple of attorneys — public defender William Briere and Susan Conley, an immigration specialist and executive director of Center Legal, a legal aid organization for immigrants. Bill Johnson of the Mental Health Association was also involved in the case.

Stella's physician at Willow Street, Dr. William Guerrero, prescribed continued hospitalization. But Pearson would not authorize payment for more treatment. Guerrero noted in his report that "apparently, (Pearson) had made arrangements for the patient to be placed in some form of foster home." But Guerrero didn't think such an arrangement would be in Stella's best interest.

"Because of the liability of the situation and the patient's behavior, because of the numerous unknown quantities," he wrote, "I could not agree with such a plan and insisted that the patient be discharged against medical advice."

When Susan Conley heard that Child Protection had removed Stella from the hospital, she was furious. "The relationship between Child Protection and the child should be like parents," she said. "If a parent yanked a kid out against medical advice, the county would be all over them for neglect."

But removal from the hospital was hardly the worst part of Stella's nightmare. Katie Pearson stated in her report, "Prior to departure from Willow Street, I received a message from my supervisor that Immigration was going to need to see Stella. I was to bring her back to the office where they would meet us."

It isn't clear who placed the call to Immigration. Child Protection would not discuss the particulars of Stella's case, and there is no indication in the report. Hennepin County's Director of Social Services Mike Weber said Immigration contacted Child Protection and insisted on seeing Stella. George Hungate, the INS's acting assistant director for investigations disagreed. "We did not make initial contact. We were contacted by Hennepin Social Services," he said.

Why would Child Protection, charged with caring for children who have no one else, terminate Stella's treatment against doctor's advice, and turn her over to the Immigration authorities, who are clearly the source of her greatest anxiety?

"I'm sure there was a reason," Weber said. "Whether it was a reason I'd agree with, I can't comment."

The hospital report indicates that the price of treatment, about \$300 a day, may have had something to do with it. "The social worker... was asked to authorize payment for additional hospitalization. After some lengthy explorations, both within her agency and through conversations with us, she decided to not authorize further hospitalization."

Weber denied the decision was based on money. "We do not make decisions based solely on finances," he said. Katie Pearson refused comment.

While Stella was with Immigration officials, Briere hastily gathered a group of people for an informal hearing before Judge Allen Oleisky. Briere hoped that Oleisky would order Stella back into treatment and thus save her from being put on the plane to Nigeria. Oleisky recalled that hearing, at which Nan Beman, Katie Pearson's supervisor, was present. Oleisky said he asked Beman where Stella was at the time of the hearing and was told "she was in a foster home or shelter. I don't remember anything about her being at INS." In fact, Oleisky was surprised to hear, more than two weeks later, that INS is precisely where Stella was that day.

Beman, who apparently had informed Katie Pearson of INS's "need to see Stella," probably knew that Stella was not at a foster home, but at the INS office. Phone calls to Beman were not returned.

Relying upon information provided by Beman, Oleisky refused to order Stella back into treatment. A doctor, he said, offered to be on 24-hour call and see her the next morning. That order would not necessarily keep Stella off that plane, though. Something had to be done quickly. Most people who face deportation, according to the INS's Hungate, choose to leave immediately because the alternative is incarceration pending a hearing. In Stella's case, he said, "it is difficult to keep a 17-year old in a controlled environment." Put a different way, there are no locked facilities for juveniles in



At home with Bill Johnson and Mary Olympia: bureaucratic discretion.

Minnesota.

In the meantime, the folks at INS were scratching their heads. According to Hungate, Immigration did not know that when Stella was picked up, she had just been taken from the hospital against medical advice. "Often when calls come from government agencies, we don't get the entire story," Hungate said. And in Stella's case, "we couldn't tell who was doing what till we sorted it all out." Once it was sorted out, he explained, "we released her to Hennepin County authorities, believing they would do psychological evaluation."

Bill Johnson and his wife, Mary Olympia, also a mental health advocate, offered to provide foster care to Stella. "Mary and I have been advocates for a long time and have never been faced with something so appalling," Johnson said.

Olympia called the county's dealings with Stella "Greyhound treatment," referring to a controversial practice a few years back when the county offered bus tickets to out-of-state welfare applicants. "It's cheaper to give them a bus ticket than deal with the problem."

There are no easy answers. While the circumstances surrounding Stella's case are bizarre, she is but one of many immigrants who will, as Susan Conley put it, "fall through the cracks" of current immigration laws. Though her advocates have managed to keep her off the plane for the time being, Stella has no legal means — short of congressional action — for becoming a citizen of this country.

Stella obviously isn't the only non-citizen in the United States who would like to live here permanently. Beginning May 6th, when the new immigration laws go into effect, INS expects to be swamped with applications. Officials estimate between 5,000 and 250,000 undocumented

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The relationship between Child Protection and the child should be like parents. If a parent yanked a kid out against medical advice, the county would be all over them for neglect."

— SUSAN CONLEY OF CENTRO LEGAL

◀ *previous page*

residents will be seeking legal status in the district covered by the St. Paul INS office (Minnesota and the Dakotas). "Nobody has any idea (of the potential onslaught)," said Dean Hove, acting deputy district director at INS. Organizations such as Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, Minnesota Legal Assistance and Centro Legal are gearing up for what may be an administrative nightmare.

To qualify as a permanent resident, applicants will have to prove that they have lived in the U.S. since January 1, 1982. Gathering proof of residency may be a feat in itself. As Ellen Erickson, director of refugee resettlement for Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota said, "when you're living in hiding, you don't exactly leave a paper trail behind."

Chances are, when the new law goes into effect next week, applications will trickle in. Undocumented residents are

traditionally terrified of INS—some will not go to informational meetings fearing they'll be picked up or tracked down. "I believe there are a lot of people who know what's going on but want to wait and see what's going to happen," said Conley. Even Centro Legal is not sure of how the law will work. "We're not satisfied with how Immigration will interpret various aspects of the law," she said. "We're convinced that many cases will challenge the law as we go along."

Despite what appear to be specific guidelines for residents of five years or more and migrant workers, the new laws will take some time to flesh out. And they do nothing for Stella, now living happily with Johnson and Olympia in St. Paul and eagerly anticipating attending summer school in June. She, said Conley, "will have to rely on the discretion of Immigration."

Stella, whose visa is good through June,

could stay here under deferred action, in which the INS decides that it would be "humanitarian" to keep her here, Conley explained. After seven years, she could qualify for suspension of deportation. Though it's unlikely that Stella could continue to defer leaving the U.S. for seven years, Conley said she has had cases in which people, "for compelling reasons, had to stay in the country until they had finally accumulated enough years for suspension of deportation."

It won't do her any good to run, either. "Going underground is not an option," said Conley. "Once (Immigration) gets their hooks in you, you have to continue to communicate." Conley likened Stella's case to a few she's had in which people come to this country for medical treatment and stay because they can't get the follow-up care they need in their home countries. As far as Immigration is concerned, decisions in those cases are discretionary.

In 1907, the United States welcomed 1,285,000 immigrants; in 1985, 487,000. Despite the recently celebrated welcome inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, this country has decided that enough is enough. The borders are closing up. "If we opened up to everyone who wants to come here, there'd be millions and millions and millions in no time," says Dean Hove at the INS.

Chances are, your great-grandparents, your grandparents, or even your parents came to the U.S. from another country. Chances are, they came full of hope, with high expectations for a life in this land of opportunity. Nobody called them "aliens" or accused them of taking jobs from more deserving Americans. But that's ancient history. The country has been deemed full to capacity and the doors slammed shut, leaving Stella Ubgoajah and millions like her on the doorstep. ■

LOST IN AMERICA



U.S. Department of Justice

Executive Office for Immigration Review

Office of the Immigration Judge

*Dirksen Federal Office Building, Room 484
219 South Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60604*

March 30, 1990

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter to provide unqualified support for Centro Legal, Inc. and its funding proposals for the current year.

For the past three years I have been the presiding immigration judge for the Immigration Court in Minnesota. During this time, Centro Legal attorneys have appeared before me on numerous occasions. During all of these appearances, the representation by Centro Legal attorneys has been with great competence and professionalism.

Many of the individuals who appear before the Court are low-income, monolingual Spanish speakers who need legal assistance because of the complex legal issues involved. Many of these cases involve threats to "life and freedom" and the stakes are very high. Despite carrying a heavy caseload, Centro Legal attorneys have accepted these cases and have provided excellent legal services. Thus, I feel a great service is being provided to the community and to the Court.

Accordingly, I support unequivocally the continued funding of Centro Legal, Inc.

Very truly yours,

Robert D. Vinikoor
U.S. Immigration Judge



STATE OF MINNESOTA

DISTRICT COURT, SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

LAWRENCE D. COHEN
Judge

March 20, 1991

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I have had the opportunity to observe the quality of the representation of clients by Centro Legal, Inc., in the Family Court of Ramsey County.

The cases presented by their attorneys are handled efficiently and competently. If it were not for Centro Legal, many of these people would go unrepresented in exceedingly important areas of not just their lives but those lives of their children.

They render a great service to this community and to the court, and I recommend Centro Legal, Inc., for continued funding.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Lawrence D. Cohen", is written over the typed name.

LAWRENCE D. COHEN

STATE OF MINNESOTA
SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT
FAMILY COURT DIVISION
1700 COURTHOUSE
SAINT PAUL, MN 55102

EARL F. BEDDOW, JR.
Referee in District Court
298-4875



March 13, 1990

To Whom it May Concern:

I have observed the in-Court representation of clients by attorneys from Centro Legal, Inc. over the past four years.

Centro Legal attorneys are always well prepared and effective in representing clients. The attorneys manage a heavy case load and provide very high quality representation in all matters, many of which are difficult or complex cases.

The value of the service provided by Centro Legal, Inc. cannot be overstated. Centro Legal's mission is unique and is of great value to the community and to the Court.

I am writing this letter to provide unreserved support for Centro Legal's current grant proposals. I recommend Centro Legal, Inc. for your serious consideration for the most beneficial funding.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Earl F. Beddow, Jr.", is written over the typed name.

Earl F. Beddow, Jr., Referee

EFB/wdd