

HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE OF NORTH TEXAS

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2016





“

FOR TO BE **FREE** IS NOT MERELY TO
CAST OFF ONE'S CHAINS, BUT TO
LIVE IN A WAY THAT **RESPECTS** AND
ENHANCES THE FREEDOM OF OTHERS.

”

NELSON MANDELA



WHAT WE BELIEVE.

OUR MISSION

HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE OF NORTH TEXAS PROVIDES LEGAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS WHO HAVE SUFFERED HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES; ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE; AND PROMOTES INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS. OUR WORK WITH THIS IMMIGRANT POPULATION FILLS A CRUCIAL GAP IN SERVICES AND OFFERS SURVIVORS A WAY OUT OF THEIR TRAUMATIC AND VIOLENT PASTS.

OUR VISION

TO SEE A WORLD IN WHICH ABUSE, TORTURE, ASSAULT, OR OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE ARE NO LONGER USED AS TOOLS TO OVERPOWER AND CONTROL ANY HUMAN BEING.

OUR MODEL

HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE IS PROUD OF OUR INNOVATIVE AND EFFICIENT MODEL TO PROVIDE THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF SERVICES WITH THE LOWEST COST TO DONORS. OUR LEGAL SERVICES ARE ALWAYS 100% FREE TO THE CLIENT. WE ARE ABLE TO DO THIS THROUGH A LARGE, AWARD-WINNING NETWORK OF VOLUNTEER PROFESSIONALS WHO DONATE THEIR TIME TO HELP OUR CAUSE. IN TURN, HRI OFFERS FREE TRAINING AND SUPPORT TO THE PROFESSIONALS AS THEY WORK ON EACH LEGAL CASE. THIS MODEL ALLOWS US TO ASSIST OVER 450 CLIENTS EACH YEAR.



THE HRI TEAM

Thank
you

THANKS
YOU



THE HRI TEAM

THIS YEAR HUMAN
RIGHTS INITIATIVE
HIRED **THREE** NEW
STAFF MEMBERS.
WE ARE NOW A TEAM
OF 14.

TOP ROW LEFT TO RIGHT

CHRISTINE MANSOUR, APPELLATE & ADVOCACY DIRECTOR
ELISANDRA DE LA CRUZ, CLIENT INTAKE MANAGER
DE'JONNAE BOYD, MARKETING & SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR
MARY DURBIN, ASYLUM PROGRAM ATTORNEY
ZAINAB ELLIS, SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR
ELISABETH HAGBERG, VOLUNTEER & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR
CAROL JABLONSKI, VOLUNTEER ATTORNEY
KAVITA KHANDEKAR, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

BOTTOM ROW LEFT TO RIGHT

MELLISA WEAVER, WOMEN & CHILDREN'S PROGRAM ATTORNEY
BILL HOLSTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
KRISTINA MORALES, LEGAL ASSISTANT & CASE MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR
ELEAN MARTINEZ, CLIENT INTAKE MANAGER
ZEYLA GONZALEZ, CASE MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR & LEGAL ASSISTANT
MARCELA EVANS, ATTORNEY, IMMIGRANT CHILDREN'S PROJECT

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

WHEN I WAS TEN YEARS OLD, I CAME HOME FROM SCHOOL TO SOME UPSETTING NEWS. IT WAS THE FRIDAY BEFORE SPRING BREAK AND MY PARENTS INFORMED MY OLDER SISTER AND ME THAT THERE WOULD BE NO ACTUAL BREAK. WE WERE MOVING THAT VERY WEEKEND AND WOULD BE ENROLLED IN A NEW SCHOOL ON MONDAY. THROUGH THE LENS OF A TEN YEAR OLD, THIS WAS THE END OF THE WORLD. THERE WAS NO REAL CHANCE TO SAY GOODBYE TO MY FRIENDS AND THIS WAS COUPLED WITH THE STRESS OF LEAVING BEHIND MY HOME AND FACING THE FRIGHTENING UNKNOWN OF A NEW SCHOOL.

IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH MY PERSPECTIVE HAS CHANGED, NOT ONLY AS I'VE AGED, BUT AS I WITNESS TRUE DESPAIR ACROSS THE WORLD. JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES RELEASED A REPORT STATING THAT IN THE LAST YEAR 12.4 MILLION PEOPLE WERE NEWLY DISPLACED DUE TO CONFLICT OR PERSECUTION, RESULTING IN AN AGGREGATE NUMBER OF 65.3 MILLION FORCIBLE DISPLACED WORLDWIDE. TO PUT THOSE NUMBERS INTO PERSPECTIVE, TODAY DFW HAS A POPULATION JUST OVER 7 MILLION AND THE ENTIRE STATE OF TEXAS IS HOME TO AN ESTIMATED 27.5 MILLION PEOPLE. ON A MACRO LEVEL, THESE NUMBERS BOGGLE THE MIND AND ON THE MICRO LEVEL, IT'S HARD NOT TO IMAGINE THE PAIN, FEAR, AND HELPLESSNESS THAT EACH OF THESE INDIVIDUALS MUST HAVE FELT AS THEY LEFT BEHIND ALL OF THE COMFORTS OF HOME, WERE SEPARATED FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS, AND ARRIVED IN A NEW PLACE WITH COMPLETELY FOREIGN CUSTOMS, LAWS, AND OFTEN LANGUAGE.

SOMETIMES WHEN WE ARE INUNDATED WITH STATISTICS, IMAGES, AND SENSATIONALIZED NEWS STORIES, IT IS ALL TOO EASY TO BECOME DESENSITIZED OR DISENGAGED. BUT, DEAR FRIENDS, I WANT TO CHALLENGE EACH OF YOU TO REMEMBER A TIME IN YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU WERE "DISPLACED", EVEN IN A VERY MINOR WAY, AND THE HUGE IMPACT IT HAD ON YOUR LIFE. CONSIDER HOW THESE 65.3 MILLION PEOPLE MUST FEEL. AND ASK YOURSELF WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT.

HRI IS A TINY ORGANIZATION THAT HAS HAD A HUGE IMPACT ON THIS COMMUNITY AND ON COUNTLESS LIVES. FEWER THAN 15 PAID STAFF, TOGETHER WITH A FIERCE PRO BONO NETWORK, HAVE FACILITATED ALL OF THE INCREDIBLE WORK DESCRIBED IN THIS ANNUAL REPORT. YOUR MONETARY DONATION NOT ONLY ENABLES THIS WORK BUT IT ALSO SENDS A MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY, TO OUR STATE, TO OUR COUNTRY AND TO THE WORLD THAT YOU VALUE THE RIGHTS OF EVERY HUMAN BEING. THIS YEAR MORE THAN EVER, WE APPRECIATE YOUR DEDICATION TO HRI AND YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT.

PEACE,

AUBREY L. MEYERS
BOARD CHAIR



**OUR CLIENTS COME TO US
FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.**



EL SALVADOR

EVA WAS TERRORIZED BY THE GANGS IN HER HOMETOWN. FEARING FOR EVA'S LIFE, HER FAMILY DECIDED TO SEND HER TO THE U.S. ALONE. EVA IS NOW LIVING WITH A LOVING FOSTER FAMILY AND IS EXCELLING IN HER STUDIES.



COLOMBIA

DARIUS WAS COMMITTED TO FIGHTING AGAINST THE INJUSTICE IN HIS COMMUNITY. HE QUICKLY BECAME A TARGET FOR THE REBEL MILITIA. AFTER BEING THREATENED, KIDNAPPED, AND HARASSED HE AND HIS FAMILY FLED FOR THE U.S.



SRI LANKA

MOOVAN WAS ARRESTED AND TORTURED BY SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR FOR BEING TAMIL, A MINORITY ETHNIC GROUP. AFTER BEING RELEASED ON BAIL, MOOVAN FLED THE COUNTRY LEAVING BEHIND HIS FAMILY WHO WAS FORCED TO RELOCATE DUE TO THE CONTINUED THREATS AGAINST MOOVAN.



CAMEROON

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IS STILL WIDELY PRACTICED IN MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES. SYBIL, AFTER MARRYING INTO A DIFFERENT TRIBE, FLED FROM HER HUSBAND'S FAMILY TO PROTECT HER INFANT DAUGHTER, ROSEMARY, FROM THE PRACTICE.

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark hair and eyes, looking directly at the camera. The image is overlaid with a dark, semi-transparent filter. The text "OUR IMPACT" is centered in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

OUR IMPACT



OUR IMPACT

**DURING FISCAL YEAR 2016
HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE
FACILITATED A NUMBER OF
OUTREACH PRESENTATIONS TO
THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THESE
PRESENTATIONS EDUCATED
MORE THAN 2,700 PEOPLE
THROUGHOUT THE
DALLAS DFW AREA.**

140 STUDENTS EDUCATED
THROUGH HRI CURRICULUM



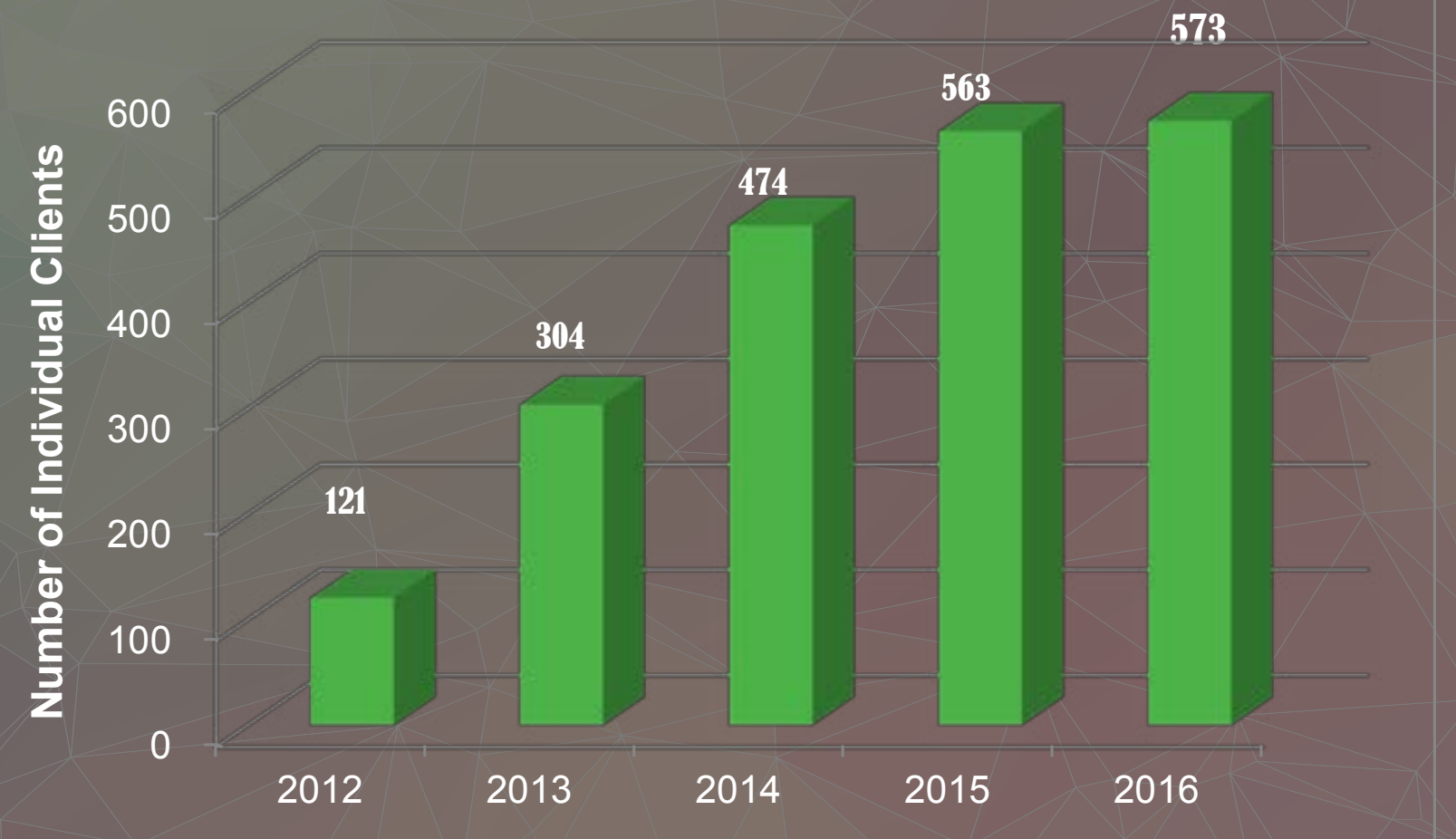
116 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
PRESENTATIONS FACILITATED



2791 IMPACTED THROUGH GENERAL OUTREACH



HRI Caseload Analysis FY2012 - FY2016



573
INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS



DURING FY2016 THE LEGAL
DEPARTMENT CONDUCTED 337
IN-HOUSE CONSULTATIONS,
WORKED ON 1211 CASES,
OPENED 527 NEW CASES AND
SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED 571
CASES.

A man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue and grey long-sleeved shirt, is leaning forward with his arms crossed. He is in a workshop or studio with shelves of various objects in the background. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

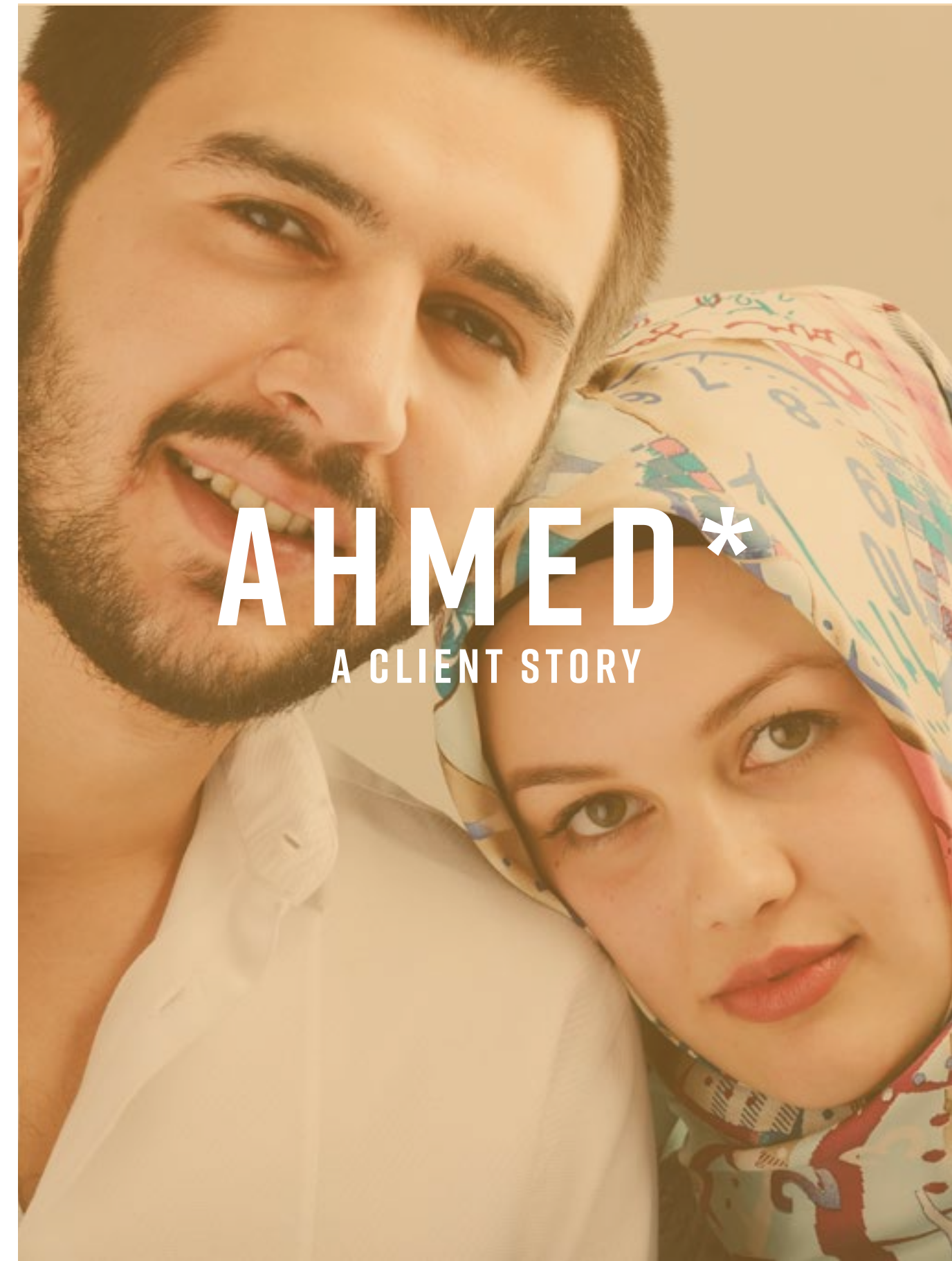
THE ASYLUM PROGRAM

AHMED AND A FRIEND WERE INVESTIGATING AN AIR STRIKE INITIATED BY NATO FORCES DURING WHICH BOTH TALIBAN MEMBERS AND CIVILIANS WERE KILLED. HE WAS ACCUSED BY THE TALIBAN OF BEING A SPY FOR THE AMERICANS AND WAS THREATENED THAT REVENGE WOULD BE TAKEN. SHORTLY THEREAFTER HIS FRIEND WAS CAPTURED AND MURDERED BY THE TALIBAN. HE LEFT THE COUNTRY FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME TO ATTEND UNIVERSITY IN GERMANY, HOPING THE THREATS WOULD GO AWAY OVER TIME.

UPON RETURNING TO AFGHANISTAN FOR A SCHOOL BREAK HE MARRIED HIS LONGTIME SECRET GIRLFRIEND WHO, BECAUSE OF FAMILY TRADITION, HAD BEEN PROMISED TO ANOTHER MAN. AHMED AND HIS WIFE DECIDED IT TO KEEP THEIR MARRIAGE A SECRET UNTIL AFTER AHMED COMPLETED HIS EDUCATION IN GERMANY. UNFORTUNATELY, HE AND HIS WIFE WERE FOUND OUT BY HER BROTHERS AND THEY BEAT AHMED SEVERELY. A MONTH LATER AHMED'S WIFE FOUND OUT THAT SHE WAS PREGNANT WITH HIS CHILD, THE SAME WEEK THAT HER FAMILY HAD SET A DATE FOR HER ARRANGED MARRIAGE TO ANOTHER MAN. UPON HEARING THIS TROUBLING NEWS, AHMED PLANNED TO LEAVE FOR KABUL WITH HIS WIFE. WHEN HIS WIFE'S FAMILY LEARNED OF THE PLANS THEY THREATENED TO KILL AHMED IF THEY EVER FOUND HIM.

AHMED'S FAMILY DECIDED TO GO TO A TRIBAL COURT TO RESOLVE THE MATTER BETWEEN THE TWO FAMILIES. THE TRIBAL COURT RULED THAT THE COUPLE COULD EITHER DIVORCE OR BE PUBLICLY STONED TO DEATH. DURING THIS TIME AHMED HAD BEGUN WORKING AS A TRANSLATOR FOR NATO. THIS ONCE AGAIN PUT HIM AND HIS FAMILY IN DANGER OF THE TALIBAN'S REVENGE. AS AN ACT OF VENGEANCE, THE TALIBAN KILLED AHMED'S BROTHER AND GRANDFATHER. FEARING FOR HIS LIFE, AHMED FLED TO PAKISTAN WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILD. AFTER MUCH CONSIDERATION, HE DECIDED TO SEEK ASYLUM IN THE US. UPON GAINING LEGAL STATUS, AHMED WAS REUNITED WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILD. HE IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF ARRANGING FOR HIS MOTHER TO JOIN HIM IN THE US.

AHMED WORKS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE, HELPING TO RESETTLE AFGHANI TRANSLATORS WHO COME TO THE U.S. AS PART OF A SPECIAL VISA PROGRAM.



23
**DEFENSIVE
CASES**

32
**AFFIRMATIVE
CASES**

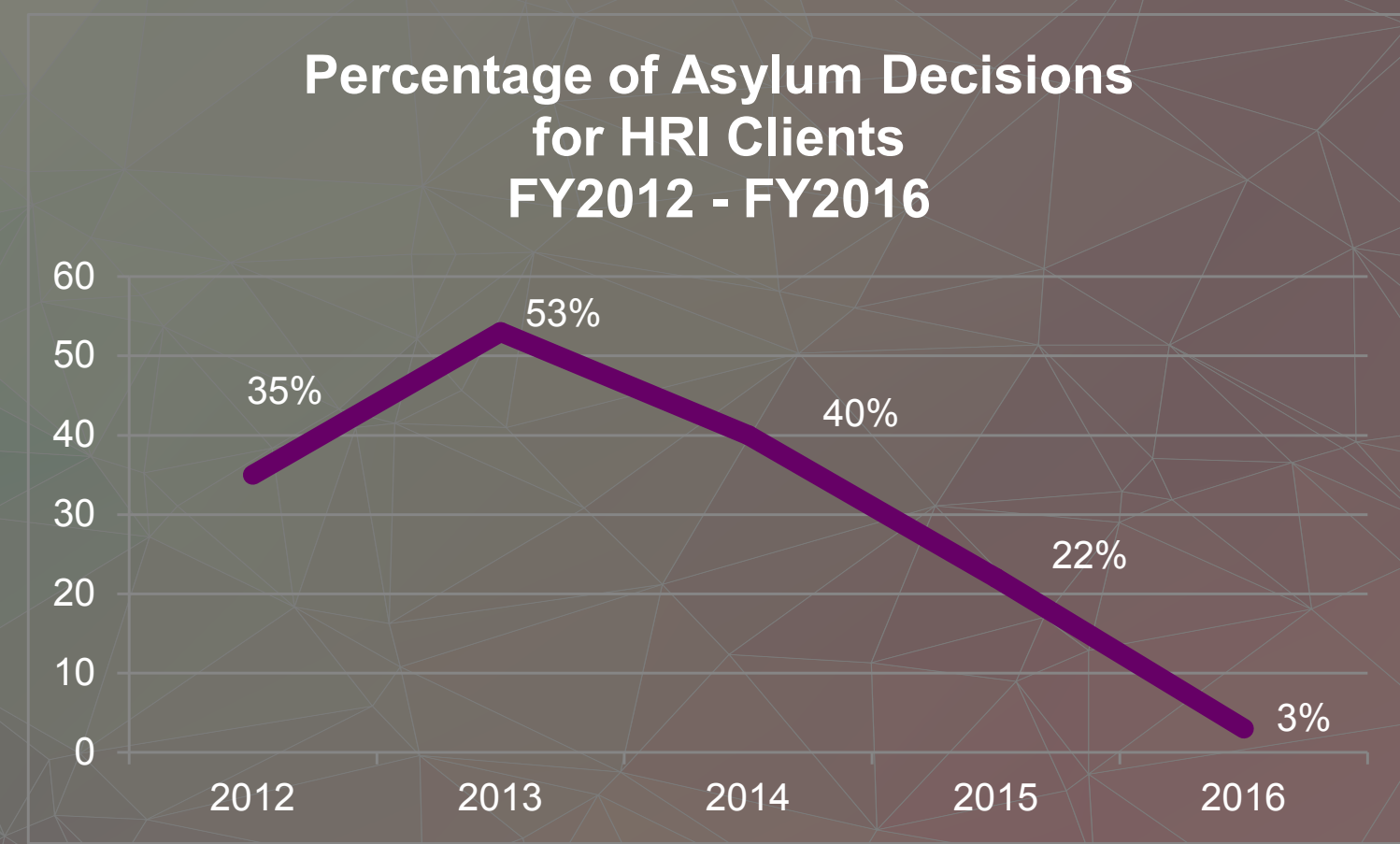


FY2016 QUICK FACTS

59
**PRO BONO
ATTORNEYS**

20
AOS CASES

45
EAD CASES



DUE TO A NATIONWIDE BACKLOG IN BOTH IMMIGRATION COURTS AND ASYLUM OFFICES, THE PERCENTAGE OF CLIENTS RECEIVING DECISIONS ON THEIR CASE HAS PLUMMETED OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS. THIS MEANS MANY ASYLUM-SEEKERS WAIT OVER TWO YEARS TO RECEIVE A FINAL DECISION ON THEIR CASE.





DALLAS JUDGE'S GRANT RATES LOWER THAN NATIONAL AVERAGE

PART OF THE REASON THE DALLAS JUDGES HAVE SUCH LOW GRANT RATES IS BASED ON WHERE THE ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN THEIR COURTS COME FROM. ALL FOUR DALLAS JUDGES IN THE REPORT HEARD THE MOST CASES FOR INDIVIDUALS FROM EL SALVADOR, WITH HONDURAS COMING IN SECOND FOR ALL OF THEM BUT ONE, FOR WHOM CASES FROM MEXICO CAME IN SECOND. ASYLUM CASES FROM CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO ARE NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT TO WIN, SINCE MANY OF THESE PEOPLE ARE FLEEING GANG VIOLENCE, WHICH IS NOT RECOGNIZED AS A BASIS FOR ASYLUM IN MOST OF THE UNITED STATES, OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, WHICH IS A DEVELOPING AND CONTROVERSIAL AREA OF ASYLUM LAW.


ANOTHER REASON FOR THE DISPARITY BETWEEN ASYLUM GRANT RATES IN DALLAS AND THE NATIONAL AVERAGE IS THE AMOUNT OF DISCRETION IMMIGRATION JUDGES ARE GIVEN. SEVERAL STUDIES HAVE CONCLUDED THAT ASYLUM OUTCOMES ARE INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT UPON THE IDENTITY OF THE JUDGE ASSIGNED TO THE CASE.[8] THE INDIVIDUALIZED TRAC REPORTS BEAR THIS OUT, SHOWING A WIDE DISPARITY ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN ASYLUM GRANT RATES, AS WELL AS WITHIN INDIVIDUAL COURTS.

HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE OF NORTH TEXAS CONTINUES TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN OBTAINING ASYLUM FOR OUR CLIENTS DESPITE THE OBSTACLES FACING US IN THE DALLAS IMMIGRATION COURTS. BUT THESE NUMBERS DEMONSTRATE HOW TRULY CHALLENGING THE WORK IS HERE.

CHRISTINE MANSOUR
APPELLATE & ADVOCACY DIRECTOR
FULL ARTICLE AT [HRIONLINE.ORG/BLOG](https://hrionline.org/blog)



THE WOMEN & CHILDREN'S PROGRAM



JUAN + NORMA

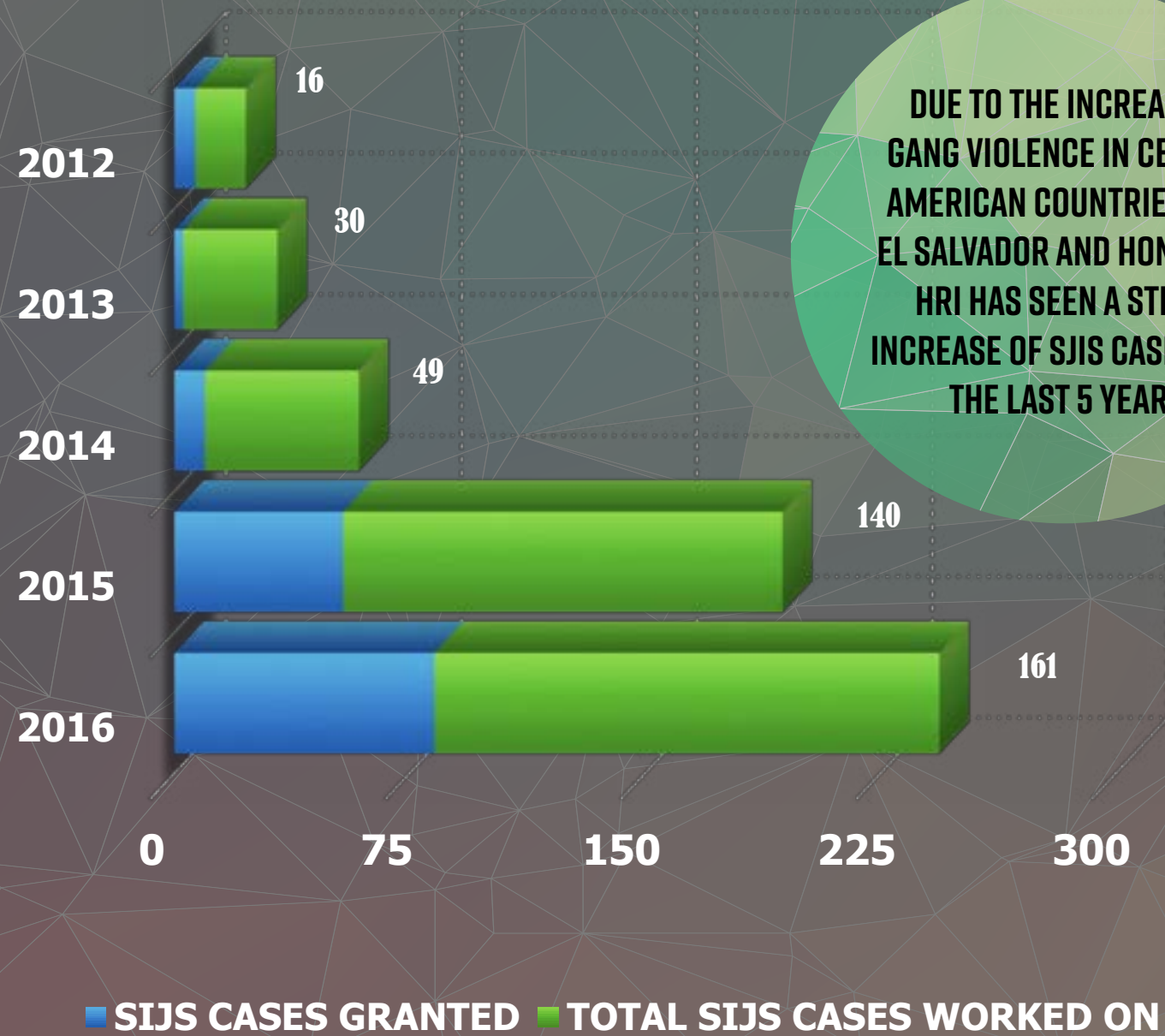
A CLIENT STORY

JUAN AND NORMA WERE BORN IN EL SALVADOR. AT A YOUNG AGE, THEIR FATHER LEFT THEM IN THE CARE OF THEIR MOTHER, TO COME TEXAS TO MAKE A LIVING AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE FAMILY BACK IN EL SALVADOR. JUAN AND NORMA'S MOTHER WOULD FREQUENTLY LEAVE THE CHILDREN AT HOME WITHOUT SUPERVISION FOR SEVERAL DAYS AT A TIME. ONE DAY THEIR MOTHER LEFT AND DID NOT RETURN. AT 4 AND 5 YEARS OLD NORMA AND JUAN WANDERED THE STREETS OF THEIR SMALL TOWN IN SEARCH OF THEIR MOTHER, BUT THEY COULD NOT FIND HER. THE CHILDREN HAVE NOT HEARD FROM HER SINCE THE DAY SHE LEFT. JUAN AND NORMA WERE MANDATED BY THE COURTS TO LIVE WITH THEIR PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS. THEIR FATHER, WHO WAS LIVING IN AMERICA, WAS SENDING MONEY BACK TO EL SALVADOR TO PROVIDE FOR THE CHILDREN. WITH THE HELP OF THEIR FATHER, JUAN AND NORMA'S GRANDPARENTS WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE GREAT CARE FOR THE CHILDREN.

HOWEVER, AFTER A FEW YEARS, THE GANG VIOLENCE IN EL SALVADOR INCREASED TREMENDOUSLY, PUTTING THE FAMILY AT GREAT RISK. THE SITUATION BECAME SO BAD THAT THE CHILDREN WERE UNABLE TO ATTEND SCHOOL. GANG MEMBERS WERE THREATENING TO KIDNAP AND KILL EACH OF THE FAMILY MEMBERS IF THEY WERE NOT PAID MONEY. JUAN AND NORMA'S GRANDPARENTS COMPLAINED TO THE POLICE, BUT THEY DID NOTHING TO STOP THE THREATS. JUAN AND NORMA'S GRANDPARENTS AND FATHER DECIDED THAT THE CHILDREN WOULD BE SAFEST IF THEY JOINED THEIR FATHER IN THE U.S. JUAN AND NORMA ARRIVED IN THE U.S. AS UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AT THE JUST 12 AND 13 YEARS OLD.

JUAN AND NORMA ARE NOW LEGAL CITIZENS. SINCE COMPLETING HIS GED PROGRAM, JUAN HAS BEEN WORKING AND SAVING MONEY TO ENROLL IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAM. HE HOPES TO ONE DAY STUDY SOLAR ENGINEERING. NORMA IS STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL AND IS EXCELLING IN HER STUDIES.

CHILDREN'S CASELOAD ANALYSIS FY2012 - FY2016



DUE TO THE INCREASE IN GANG VIOLENCE IN CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES, LIKE EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS, HRI HAS SEEN A STEADY INCREASE OF SIJS CASES OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS.

100%
GRANT RATE FOR SIJS CASES

HRI HAD A GRANT RATE OF 100% FOR SIJS CASES DURING FY 2016. ACCORDING TO USCIS'S LATEST STATISTICAL REPORTS, THE NATIONAL SIJS APPROVAL RATE IN FY 2013 WAS 86%.

80 KIDS

HRI ALSO FACILITATED 116 SHELTER SCREENINGS HELPING TO IDENTIFY MORE THAN 100 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS WITHOUT LEGAL REPRESENTATION.

FY2016 QUICK FACTS

658 MATTERS

A CHILD WHO IS HELPED BY HRI IN AN IMMIGRANT CHILDREN'S PROJECT CASE TYPICALLY HAS 4 LEGAL MATTERS OPENED FOR THEM. DURING FY2016 HRI WORKED ON A TOTAL OF 658 IMMIGRANT CHILDREN'S PROJECT LEGAL MATTERS. THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME FOR THE COMPLETION OF THESE CASES IN FY2016 WAS 255 DAYS.

100%
GRANT RATE FOR EAD & AOS

HRI HAD A GRANT RATE OF 100% FOR SIJS WORK AUTHORIZATIONS (EAD) AND GREEN CARDS (AOS). HRI ATTORNEYS WORKED ON 177 EAD MATTERS AND 183 AOS MATTERS DURING FY 2016.

Women & Children's Work Authorization Case Analysis FY2012 - FY2016

8

DACA CASES

120

U-VISA CASES

26

VAWA CASES

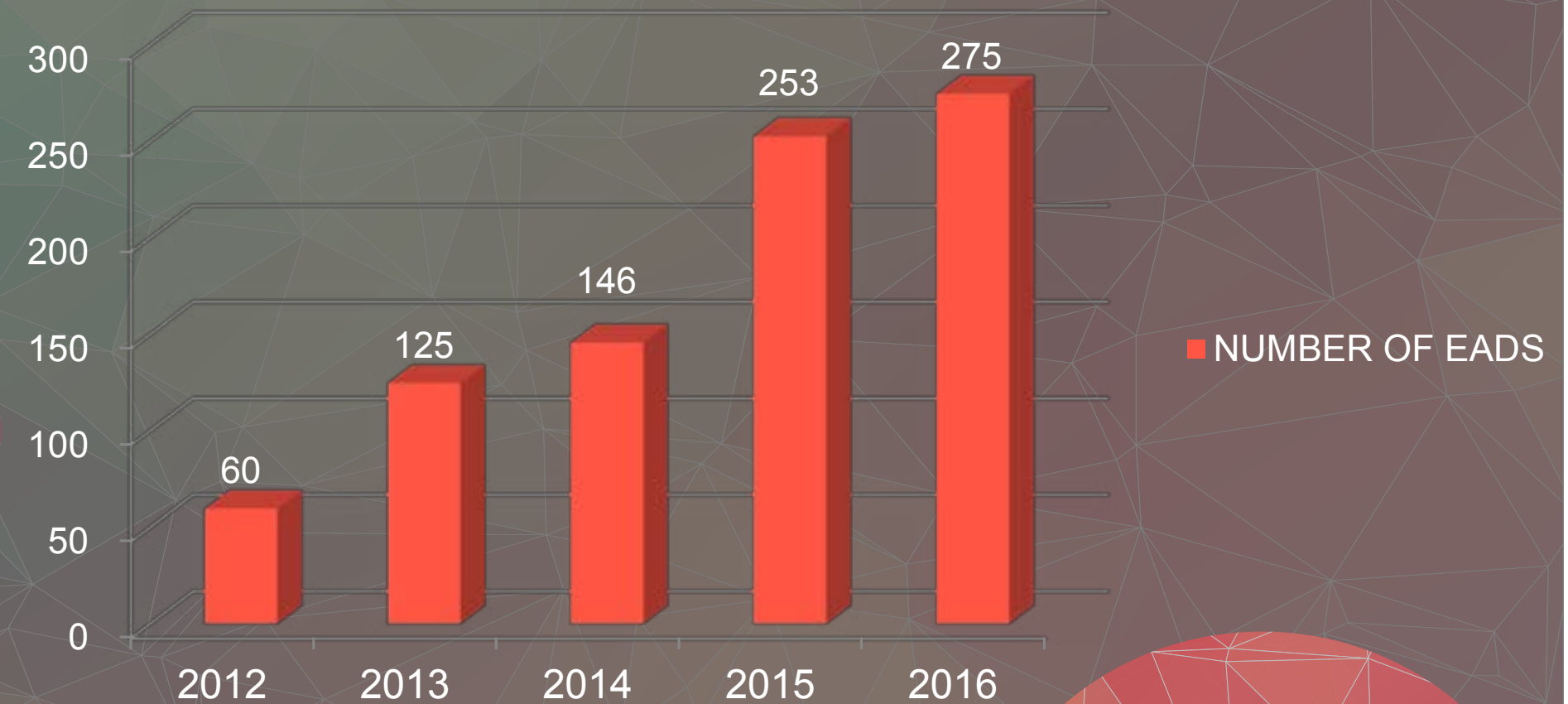
100%

HRI VAWA, DACA, AND U-VISA
GRANT RATES ARE 100% FOR
FY2016. ACCORDING TO USCIS
NATIONAL GRANT RATES FOR THESE
PROGRAMS ARE 68%, 89%, AND 33%
RESPECTIVELY.

230

AOS CASES

FY2016 QUICK FACTS



HRI CLIENTS ARE OFTEN
COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON THE
GENEROSITY OF STRANGERS. WORK
AUTHORIZATION FOR CLIENTS IS THE
START OF A NEW JOURNEY TOWARDS
FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE.



THE SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAM

106 EDUCATION REFERRALS



68 CLOTHING/HOMEWARE
REFERRALS



174 FOOD REFERRALS



500 DART BUS PASSES
PROVIDED



154 MEDICAL REFERRALS



80 PSYCHOLOGICAL
REFERRALS



252 HOLIDAY WISH
PARTICIPANTS



260 FREE EVENT TICKETS
DISTRIBUTED



\$15,233



**OF DIRECT SOCIAL
ASSISTANCE**

397



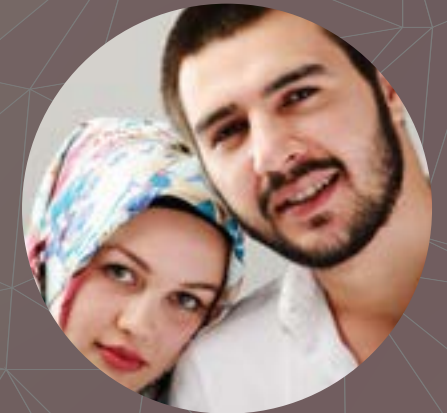
CLIENTS SERVED

“

I NOW FEEL LIKE A PERSON AGAIN BECAUSE THE GREATER PART OF THE STRESS IS GONE. HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE HAS DONE A LOT TO BRING ME UP AGAIN. I'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET A JOB PERMIT AND NOW I'M WORKING, AND ALL THAT MAKES ME HAPPY. MAKES ME REALLY HAPPY AND HAS CHANGED MY SITUATION A LOT.*”

***GLADYS IS NOW A BOARD CERTIFIED RN**

”





LEYLA*

A CLIENT STORY

LEYLA IS A 40-YEAR OLD WOMAN FROM SUDAN. AS A YOUNG GIRL SHE WAS FORCED TO UNDERGO TYPE 4 FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM). THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST EXTREME FORMS OF FGM. SHE WAS ONLY 9 YEARS OLD.

LEYLA LATER MARRIED HER HUSBAND AND HAD TWO SONS AND TWO DAUGHTERS. CHILDBIRTH WAS A VERY PAINFUL PROCESS AND RESULTED IN MANY INFECTIONS AND HOSPITALIZATIONS. DUE TO THE IMMENSE PAIN LEYLA EXPERIENCE BECAUSE OF HER FGM, SHE ALWAYS IMAGINED HER HUSBAND WOULD BE OPPOSED TO THE PRACTICE BEING AFFLICTED UPON THEIR DAUGHTERS. SHE WAS HORRIFIED TO FIND OUT THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE. ONE DAY, WHILE ON A FAMILY TRIP BACK TO THE SUDAN, LEYLA'S HUSBAND ASKED WHEN WOULD BE THE BEST TIME TO HAVE THEIR DAUGHTER CIRCUMCISED.

LEYLA, HER HUSBAND, AND CHILDREN WERE LIVING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AT THE TIME. DURING A FAMILY VACATION, TO THE U.S. LEYLA, HER HUSBAND AND THEIR FOUR CHILDREN VISITED NIAGARA FALLS. WHILE WALKING THROUGH THE MALL LEYLA'S HUSBAND ONCE AGAIN INSISTED THAT IF THEY DID NOT CIRCUMCISE THEIR DAUGHTERS THEY WOULD BECOME PROMISCUOUS. LEYLA* REFUSED TO RETURN THE U.A.E. WITH HER HUSBAND AT THE END OF THE FAMILY VACATION, FEARING THAT HE WOULD SURELY FORCE THEIR DAUGHTERS TO BE CIRCUMCISED. A YEAR LATER LEYLA'S HUSBAND RETURNED TO THE U.S. WITH A NEW WIFE AND ATTEMPTED TO TAKE THEIR CHILDREN SO THAT THE GIRLS COULD BE CIRCUMCISED IN THE SUDAN. IT WAS ONLY AFTER THREATENING TO CALL THE POLICE THAT LEYLA'S HUSBAND LEFT.

LEYLA AND HER CHILDREN WILL SOON BE RECEIVING THEIR GREEN CARDS. THANKS TO OUR MANY SUPPORTERS, DASH NETWORK, AND OUR PRO BONO ATTORNEYS. LEYLA AND HER CHILDREN HAVE SOMEWHERE TO LIVE, ARE SAFE AND ARE THRIVING HERE IN THE U.S.

A LETTER BY REMA, LEYLA'S ELDEST DAUGHTER

My Mom.

The light of my life, a lamp, glowing with love. She is the symbol of compassion, the source of happiness, made of suffering and subjected to cruel circumstances -her story is that of honor, of pride -of heroes.

My mom, she who used denial as energy to rebel against the status quo. She sacrificed and struggled for us. So that we can have more. So that we can make her proud. We, her children.

My Mom. She put her life on the line. She buried her dreams in the depths of her heart. She wove together her grief creating garments of happiness and love for us. Many have said that women are the ones most impacted in the face of adversity. Yet, my Mom has proven that poverty and ignorance and sorrow are not excuses to be used to justify failure; those things should not lead us to despair, but instead motivate us towards success.

My mom is my everything. She is not only my mom, but also my dad, my sister and my friend. I hope that one day I too would embody her many characteristics. Her strength and compassion. Her resilience and tendencies towards leadership. She leads me to do the right thing, encourages me to choose goodness even in the face of wrong.

Even when she had nothing, she still gave to others. I remember once there was a family from Syria. They didn't speak English, the dad couldn't walk, and there were seven kids. My mom decided that she would help them. She gave them a rug and a few chairs for their empty apartment. She helped the dad get a job and helped to enroll the kids into school. The family is doing well now.

My mother is a very strong person. She is currently raising 4 children on her own. It's difficult to raise children alone, especially when she was so used to the help of my father. And to imagine, having to navigate this new world with four children when you only speak Arabic. It wasn't easy -but she did it.

When I was sad or sick, my Mom was the one who would stay up all night. She is the one who teaches us and cheers us on. She is our biggest supporter.

This is my last year in middle school. I'm on my way to high school. I would have never made it this far without her. I want to make her proud. I want for her to one day call me, saying "Dr. Rema, where are you?" -I want her to be the mother of a doctor!

I'm going to graduate from high school and I'm going to Harvard. Yes, I know that's a really hard college to get into, but it is my dream and I know that I can do it. I know I can get in. I know I will become a doctor -which will make my mom proud!

When I grow up I want to be like my mom. She is my role model. She is my friend. One day I will tell the whole world about my mom. I'm not sure if she knows all that I'm writing in this letter. But it's true. I love her and I want to be like her.

So yes, I chose my mom as the person that I desire to be like in the future, because she is the one who buried her dreams so that mine, my brother's and my sister's dreams would one day come true.



“

YOU MAKE A LIVING BY WHAT YOU GET.
YOU MAKE A LIFE BY WHAT YOU GIVE.

”

WINSTON CHURCHILL

A photograph of two men standing in a meeting room. The man on the left is older, with glasses and a mustache, wearing a tan blazer over a blue shirt and a patterned bow tie. The man on the right is younger, with a beard, wearing a dark suit and a blue tie, and is holding a small trophy. In the background, there is a whiteboard with several colorful lines and markers. The entire image has a semi-transparent dark red overlay.

THE PRO BONO PROGRAM

“I THINK ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE THE BRAVEST PEOPLE I’VE EVER MET. THEY SUFFER TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR THEIR BELIEFS IN BASIC FREEDOMS THAT I TAKE FOR GRANTED IN MY EVERYDAY LIFE. I AM IN AWE OF THEIR TERRIFIC SACRIFICES. THEY’VE FOUGHT FOR SO LONG, AND THEY DESERVE TO HAVE SOMEBODY FIGHT FOR THEM. IT IS AN EXTRAORDINARY PRIVILEGE TO REPRESENT THEM. THE FIRST TIME A CLIENT TOLD HER STORY, I FELT A CHILL - IT WAS A GLIMPSE INTO A LIFE WHERE FEAR OF THE GOVERNMENT WAS PRESENT AND PERVASIVE FROM AN EARLY AGE. I’M SURE I’VE FELT POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEELINGS ABOUT OUR GOVERNMENT DURING MY LIFE, BUT RAW FEAR IS NOT SOMETHING I’VE EVER EXPERIENCED. IT IS A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE THAT IMPACTS MY WORLD VIEW AND PROVIDES ME WITH A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF HUMANITY. ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE OFTEN UNDER SUCH TREMENDOUS STRESS THAT IT BRINGS INTO SHARP FOCUS WHAT’S MOST IMPORTANT IN LIFE. I HAVE UNENDING GRATITUDE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY, AND A DESIRE TO DO SO MUCH MORE.

I’VE LEARNED THAT TAKING A STAND FOR ONE’S BELIEFS IS NOT A CLEAR-CUT PROPOSITION; THE ADVERSITY THAT ASYLUM SEEKERS FACE IS COMPLEX, THEY MAY FACE GREAT PERSECUTION FROM THEIR TORMENTORS AS WELL AS RESENTMENT FROM FAMILY MEMBERS - ALL AT THE SAME TIME. IT CAN BE A VERY LONELY PLACE TO BE, BUT MY CLIENT MADE AN EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTION TO HER COUNTRY, AND HER EFFORTS WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN. NOW IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP HER FIND A BRIGHTER FUTURE.”

PETER THOMPSON, STRASBURGER & PRICE, LLP

THE PRO BONO PROGRAM





61 TRANSLATORS = **437** HOURS



25 LEGAL INTERNS = **2730** HOURS



46 GENERAL VOLUNTEERS = **188** HOURS



12 NON-LEGAL INTERNS = **1323** HOURS

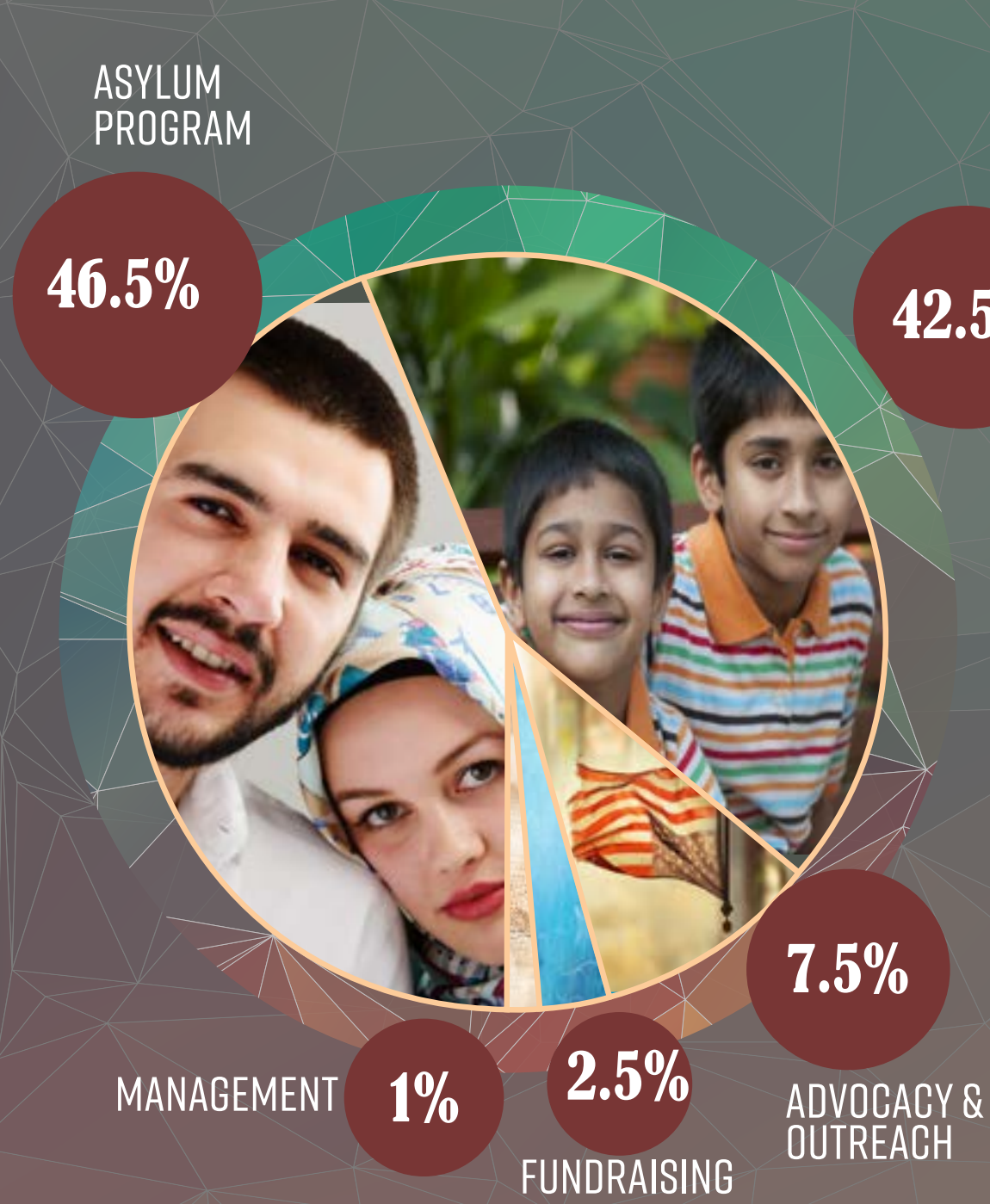
“

VOLUNTEERING FOR HRI HAS PROVIDED ME WITH A NEW PERSPECTIVE. WE LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE WE TAKE MANY THINGS FOR GRANTED, BUT VOLUNTEERING FOR HRI HAS ALLOWED ME TO DISCOVER AND GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE OBSTACLES OTHERS ENDURE AND THE BOUNDARIES THEY HAVE TRANSCENDED.

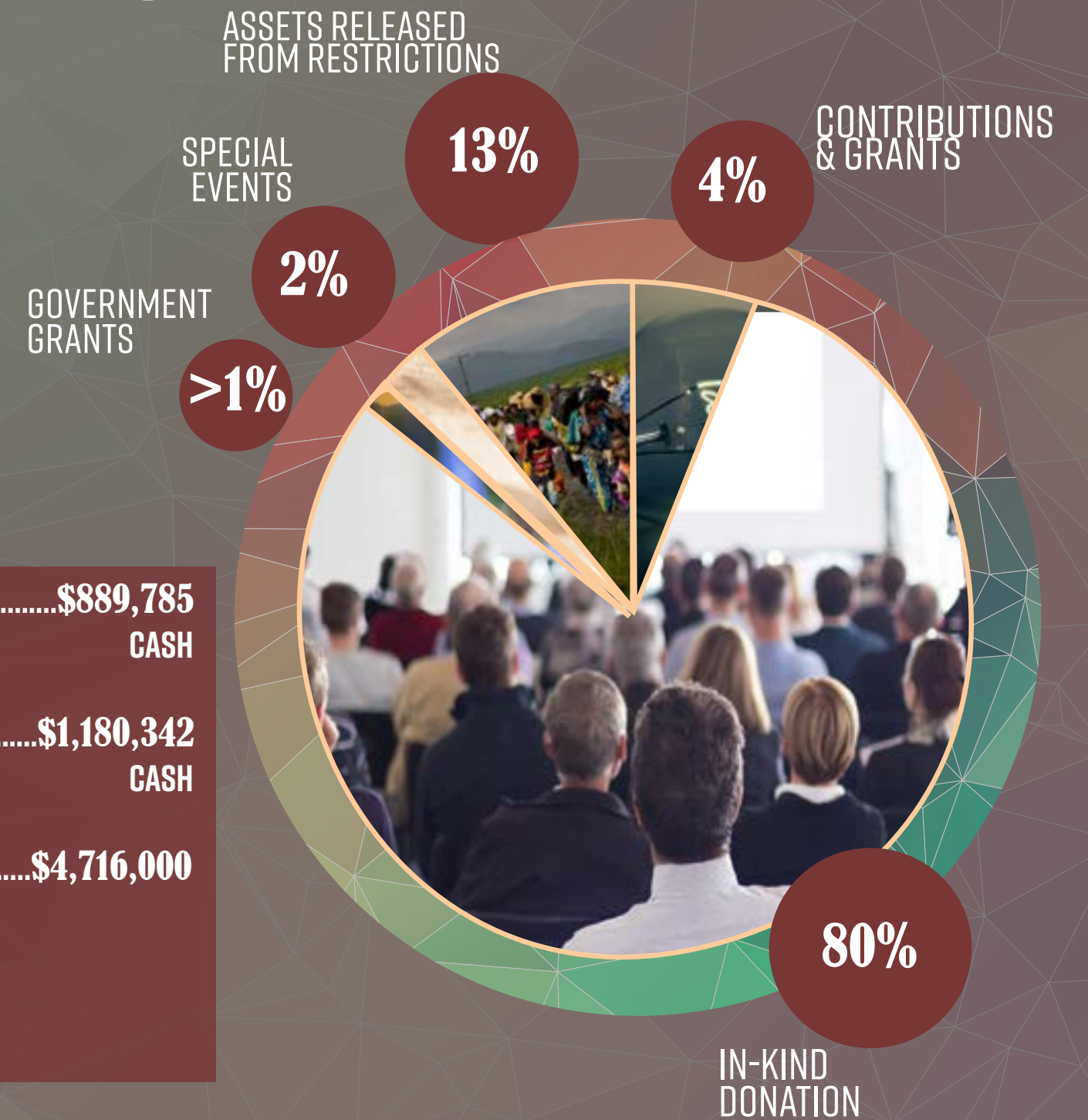
”

-ELODY TIGNOR, BAKER BOTTS, LLP
& HRI FRENCH TRANSLATOR

HRI FINANCIALS



EXPENSES.....	\$889,785
	CASH
REVENUE & SUPPORT.....	\$1,180,342
	CASH
IN-KIND LEGAL SERVICES.....	\$4,716,000
DONATED OFFICE SPACE PROVIDE BY THE MEADOWS FOUNDATION	
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT WWW.HRIONLINE.ORG/FINANCIALS	





**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE
INVESTED IN OUR WORK.
YOU ARE APPRECIATED.**

HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE OF NORTH TEXAS

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2016



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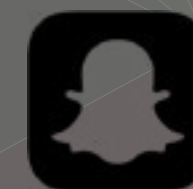
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