

**CROSSING THE THRESHOLD TO SAFETY:
STORIES OF IMMIGRANT CRIME VICTIMS
WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM ATTAINING U-VISAS**

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In collaboration with member organizations of the
National Network on Behalf of Battered Immigrant Women

August 16, 2001

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ARIZONA: Domestic Violence Victim

Dina² has lived in the United States for 16 years. For 20 years she suffered abuse at the hands of Geoff, her husband and the father of her children. Dina and Geoff's eldest children, including their 18 year old daughter Roberta, were born in Mexico while the younger children were born in the United States. Geoff is currently serving over 15 years in prison for shooting his wife Dina in the chest, an act of violence that was witnessed by their 9 year old child. This was not the first but only one of many, many incidents of physical abuse in an abusive marriage in which not only Dina but her children suffered numerous beatings and degradation.

Dina agreed to cooperate with the prosecutor and testified against Geoff at trial. Because Geoff attained his temporary residential status through the amnesty program and failed to adjust his status to permanent residency, Dina and her non-U.S. citizen children are not eligible to file for self-petitions or for cancellation of removal under VAWA. Due to Geoff's domestic violence conviction he will never be able to attain lawful permanent residency, thus further denying Dina and her children eligibility.

Before Geoff was imprisoned he provided economic support for the family, but because of his conviction no one in the family is authorized to work. The family now subsists on public benefits that Dina's U.S. born citizen children qualify for. If Dina were put into removal proceedings by the INS she would probably be eligible for 10-year cancellation because of hardship to her citizen children, but even if this were to happen Dina would only be able to get immigration relief for herself while her Mexican born daughter Roberta would remain undocumented. If Roberta were put in proceedings she would have no qualifying relative and would be ineligible for cancellation.

Roberta, despite all the violence in the family, was a superior student and won a full scholarship - tuition and a stipend - to attend college. When the college discovered she was undocumented she lost the scholarship and could no longer continue to afford her education. She is now not only unable to continue her education but is also unqualified to work.

Dina's family deserves the protection that the U-visa would offer. As a result of Geoff's domestic violence conviction he will be deported back to Mexico once he has completed his sentence. Without the relief of the U-visa, Dina and Roberta are both at risk of being deported back to Mexico where they will not be protected against any potential retaliatory actions on the part of Geoff.

² All names and certain identifying information have been changed to protect the identities of those involved in these cases.

CALIFORNIA: Domestic Violence Victim

Leslie, an H-4 dependent spouse, has been battered and threatened by her husband Andre who has legal permission to work in the United States on an H-1 visa. Andre was convicted of assault and served time, but upon his release from jail he continued to assault Leslie. Although their U.S. born infant child is currently residing in Leslie's custody, Andre has managed to get significant visitation rights. Though there is a protection order issued against him, he frequently threatens Leslie, harangues her, and intimidates her into not reporting the ongoing physical violence or his violations of the order by threatening to take away the child and ceasing to pay child and spousal support.

In addition to these threats he repeatedly tells Leslie that he will report her to the INS and get her deported. In the meantime, Andre's family has threatened to have her killed if she returns to their home country without giving Andre custody of the child. Leslie wants to report Andre to the police and have him prosecuted for the abuse and violations of the protection order but is afraid to for fear of deportation and the subsequent loss of her child. Yet she desperately fears that the child will suffer in Andre's custody. Leslie knows that if she is deported back to her home country she will be harmed by Andre's relatives.

If Leslie can obtain a U-visa she will be eligible for legal immigration status and will be able to separate from Andre, report his ongoing violence to police and cooperate in his prosecution. Gaining legal immigration status will also help her gain legal custody of her child and provide her with the means to support the infant in the United States where they can be safe from Andre and his family.

CALIFORNIA: Domestic Violence Victim

Jhoo married and moved to the United States with her husband Paul who entered the United States on an H1 work visa. Her legal permission to be in the United States was as Paul's dependant spouse. During the first 8 weeks of Jhoo and Paul's marriage Jhoo was repeatedly raped by her husband approximately 22 times. When she became pregnant Paul insisted that she have an abortion. The morning before the abortion he raped her again. Following this last incident of rape, Jhoo garnered the courage to flee. Once she was on her own she found out that there was no relief available for her under VAWA and was forced to return to her home country without ensuring that Paul was prosecuted for the crimes he committed against her. Meanwhile Paul obtained a divorce, and is now free to find another wife whom he can subject to the same abuse. Under the new U-visa provisions, Jhoo will be able to return to the United States and pursue criminal charges against Paul.

FLORIDA: Domestic Slavery Victim

Sela, born in Ethiopia but of Eritrean heritage, fled the civil war in Eritrea by going to work as a domestic servant in the home of a wealthy business person with political ties in Saudi Arabia. Sela suffered horrific violence at the hands of the couple for whom she worked, both in Saudi Arabia and in the United States where the family frequently spent time for business and pleasure.

In 1996 while on an extended visit in Florida, Sela was burned with cigarettes, beaten with a belt and sexually assaulted. Fearing that she would attempt to flee, she was locked in her room for hours and even days when the family would go out. Because the family held her passport, Sela was afraid to even attempt escape. Moreover, Sela knew no one in the U.S. and spoke little English.

After months of suffering terrible treatment by the family, Sela could not take it any more. She left one morning and survived on the street until receiving help from a kind stranger. Sadly, not knowing where to turn, Sela never informed any authorities of her severe mistreatment. Thus, her employers were never held accountable for the abuse and instead were free to hire another servant they could torture with impunity. Obtaining a U-visa would allow Sela to report her abusive employers to law enforcement authorities and participate in their prosecution to help assure they will never be able to perpetrate such offenses against their servants again the United States.

FLORIDA: Domestic Slavery Victim

Daniela is a national of Bolivia brought to the United States in December of 1998 as the nanny for the two children of her Bolivian employers. They obtained a visitor's visa for her and before departing promised to reasonably remunerate her for her work. Yet upon arriving in the U.S. Daniela was forced to work 7 days a week from 7:00am to 11:00pm cleaning, cooking, and taking care of two children and never received the promised payment. She was not allowed to leave the household grounds even in the company of her employers. They confiscated her passport and other identification papers and she was not allowed to contact her family or see her relatives when they came to the United States to visit her.

One year after Daniela entered the U.S., her feet had open sores from cleaning the floors with chemicals without shoes. Fed up with the abuse, Daniela ran away from the house. Not knowing where she was, she approached a woman on the street, and with the help of this stranger fled her employers with only the clothes on her back.

Daniela's employers managed to find her and through counsel offered her a ticket back to Bolivia along with the threat to turn her over to the INS. To this day, Daniela's employers have not returned her documents to her, and under their various threats she has suffered from fear and isolation for a long time. Daniela knows of other members of the family who are bringing more women into the U.S. under the same pretenses. In fact, Daniela replaced a Bolivian woman that was sent back to Bolivia when she could not take the abuse anymore. She has been willing to supply this information concerning her employer's activity and has done so.

Daniela needs to attain a lawful immigration status through the U-visa to be able to fully participate without fear of deportation in the prosecution of her employers. Without U-visa protection, there is great possibility that her previous employers would retaliate against her. She is afraid to return to her country for that reason.

FLORIDA: Domestic Violence Victim

Luisa was severely battered by her husband Jorge, a naturalized United States citizen. Jorge's severe and regular beatings caused Luisa to suffer through three miscarriages and one stillborn birth. Distraught about Luisa's attempts to leave, Jorge threatened to kill her and himself on numerous occasions. On one occasion he put a noose around his neck and threatened to hang himself. Finally, Luisa broke free from Jorge and moved to the home of a sympathetic friend taking her son with her.

Having no financial resources of her own, Luisa was totally dependent on Jorge as her sole source of support. Luisa's friend who was helping her suggested that Luisa use her own United States birth certificate to apply for a U.S. passport in order for Luisa to find work in the U.S. Desperate to find a way to survive apart from her husband Luisa took her friend's bad advice. She was caught, admitted her offense immediately, and received probation. Making a false claim of U.S. citizenship is not a waivable offense, and Luisa is now without the U-visa and the waivers of inadmissibility and is unable to attain legal immigration status under VAWA.

Luisa and her son would greatly benefit from a U-visa. However, uncertain at this point of its implementation she is terrified by what her husband may do if she reports him and he is detained for the abuse. Without the U-visa protections she fears he can have her deported and retaliate against her once she back in her home country.

FLORIDA: Domestic Violence Victim

Esperanza is a 27 year old Guatemalan woman married to Eduardo, a British citizen originally from Guatemala with legal permission to live and work in the U.S. Esperanza was subject to violence throughout their marriage, and for the last three months of their marriage Eduardo punched, cursed, screamed, and threatened to harm her physically. He threatened to beat her until one of them was dead. He also threatened to

kill himself and would sit on a chair for hours at a time screaming at her, even while she was breastfeeding their U.S. citizen infant daughter.

After years of abuse Esperanza finally divorced Eduardo. After a long divorce trial, the family judge found that there was domestic violence in her marriage and limited Esperanza's ex-husband's visitation to supervised visitation with their daughter. Esperanza was also able to get a permanent injunction for protection against domestic violence. However, she returned to Guatemala because she could not remain legally in the United States. While living in Guatemala, she was threatened and harassed by her ex-husband's family who threatened to kidnap her daughter. She returned to the United States because she could not obtain protection from Guatemalan authorities from Eduardo and his family. Esperanza desperately wants her husband to be held accountable for his abuse and wants to remain in the United States with a U-visa so that she and her daughter can be protected from any further violence.

FLORIDA: Felonious Assault and Aggravated Battery Victim

Alexandria, a 30 year old Nigerian woman, left her country in the fall of 1999 to escape her violently abusive husband who is a high ranking military officer in Nigeria. After arriving in the U.S. with her 4 year old daughter she met and moved in with a man named Eric who had two teenage children by a previous relationship. They lived together for 10 months, during which Eric's son Sam who was jealous of his father's affections for Alexandria exhibited abusive behavior towards her. On one occasion 15 year old Sam hit Alexandria on the head with a hammer and stabbed her while sitting on top of her. On a different occasion he tried to strangle her. The strangling was so severe that Alexandria almost choked on her own blood. In addition to this incident, it appears that Eric's two teenage sons conspired to murder Alexandria and her daughter. When Alexandria approached Eric about bringing charges against his son, he threatened to have her deported if she testified against him.

Sam eventually was charged with aggravated battery. Alexandria has been cooperating with the prosecution and has informed the judge about the details of the abuse she and her daughter suffered. Alexandria needs to obtain a U-visa so that she can continue to cooperate without reservation in the prosecution of Sam. If she is deported to her home country, not only will she lose the opportunity to ensure that Eric's son is prosecuted, but she will be at grave risk of harm from her abusive former spouse.

KENTUCKY: Domestic Violence Victim

Since arriving in the United States Hanna has been exposed to severe violence at the hands of her husband Georgio. After Georgio beat her with a belt in front of her four year old daughter, Hanna left her home and began wandering the streets searching for the police to help her. She finally encountered an officer, although he did not speak Spanish and did not get an interpreter, Hanna was able to convey what had happened

to her. When her husband arrived on the scene, the officer by that time had enough evidence to place him under arrest.

Though a criminal case against Hanna's husband arose out of this incident, she never received any information about it nor was she informed about any protections available to her to help stop domestic violence. Only months later after leaving her home to seek help at a shelter, did she speak to an advocate who advised her on the various means available to help her.

Hanna was able to obtain a U-visa which has allowed her to apply for interim relief, and she was granted deferred action status and employment authorization in July 2001. Hanna's case also raised awareness with local law enforcement officials about the barriers battered immigrant women encounter and the need to receive assistance in immigration matters. Speaking about her experience, Hanna said: "I speak what is in my heart. First, it [the U-visa] has brought some happiness to me. But it is also very sad for me to realize that I have papers because of violence. I would have liked to have gotten my papers without having suffered so much. For me, the U-visa is so important because it allows me to live in the United States without fear of retribution or ongoing abuse from Georgia."

KENTUCKY: Domestic Violence Victim

Gaia and her children suffered domestic violence from Gaia's husband Sam. After suffering much abuse, Gaia fled her home along with her four children and sought safety at a battered women's shelter. During Gaia's marriage to Sam Gaia was prevented from learning English and was rarely allowed to leave her home, and was not aware of any services available to her. When Gaia ultimately fled, she contacted the police and child protective services to report the violence. The local courts granted Gaia a civil protection order and Gaia filed a criminal complaint against her abuser. She has filed for interim relief under the U-visa provision. As she explains: "I was very afraid to call the police. But I knew I had to save myself and my children. For me, the U-visa is very important because I need to have a work permit to be able to move on and support my daughters. With four children, it is impossible to survive without a work permit."

MASSACHUSETTS: Domestic Slavery and Sexual Assault Victim

Anna is a native of Sri Lanka who was promised a lucrative job as a housekeeper and eldercare provider by a George, a U.S. citizen visiting Sri Lanka. Claiming to need a helper for his ailing mother in the U.S., Anna's family agreed and George brought Anna to the United States. It was discovered later that instead of bringing Anna in on a work visa he brought her in on a tourist visa. When Anna arrived in the United States, George made her a virtual prisoner, physically and sexually abused her on a regular basis. Anna eventually bore three children as a result of these numerous incidents of rape.

Anna lived in captivity and isolation for five years. She finally ended her captivity one day when she left the home in order to take her ailing son to the hospital. At the hospital she met with a medical assistant who spoke her language and for the first time was able to communicate with someone details about the abuse she was suffering. The medic connected her with the domestic violence program at the hospital and she and her son were taken to a shelter.

Since then, George had done everything he could to obtain custody of the children and at one point kidnapped the children from a safe house. The battered women's program with which she was working spent months working with federal authorities trying to retrieve the children. Charges were brought against George, but in the end although the Anna got the children back George received a minimal penalty.

Since George never married Anna she does not qualify under VAWA and remains undocumented. Though Anna spent about 7 terrifying years living with George, bearing his children as a result of many incidents of rape, Anna cannot apply for VAWA protection because George held her hostage used her but never married her.

Anna called criminal authorities to obtain assistance when her abuser kidnapped her children and endangered their safety. She would have liked to prosecute George further, felt that she could not safely assert any rights to obtain protection or have George prosecuted because she had no legal immigration status. Anna desperately needs to be able to apply for and receive a U-visa that would enable her to report the multiple crimes she suffered and have George prosecuted without fear of deportation.

MASSACHUSETTS: Domestic Violence Victim

Marie is a native of Uganda who has been in the U.S. since 1993. She has been dating, but never married, an abusive man, Richard, also a native of Uganda, with whom she has lived for three years and with whom she has one three year old U.S. citizen child.

During their relationship the Richard was mentally and extremely physically abusive. During her pregnancy Richard beat her on many occasions including kicking her in the stomach and back. This caused her to flee to a battered woman's shelter. Despite

Marie's attempt to leave Richard and seek help to stop the domestic violence, Marie and Richard reconciled. After the reconciliation Richard continued to beat Marie, leaving numerous visible scars on her body from his beatings. During a recent incident, he became upset because she had used a humidifier and began arguing with her. When Marie tried to walk away so he would calm down, Richard followed her, pushed her until she fell and continued beating her, until she finally told him she would call the police. The next day Marie got a restraining order. Marie has considered returning to their country Uganda, but she is afraid her Richard will fulfill his threats to follow her there.

Marie consulted with legal aid services in 1998 and learned that she was ineligible for VAWA because she was not married and Richard her abuser was undocumented. In 1999 she subsequently learned Richard obtained status as a lawful permanent resident, but even so she was informed that she still could not get protection under VAWA because she and Richard had never married. Marie was willing to call the police to report Richard's crimes and wanted to obtain a protection order. However, she was afraid of involving criminal authorities would lead to her deportation. She had not protection from deportation because she was ineligible under VAWA. Without the relief provided by the U-visa, Marie would be forced to make a terrible choice between leaving her abuser or being deported.

MASSACHUSETTS: Domestic Violence Victim

Carmen is a native of El Salvador who is involved with an abusive lawful permanent resident boyfriend Joe, with whom she has one two year old U.S. citizen daughter.

She lived with her boyfriend Joe for two years. During this period Joe continually physically, mentally and verbally abused Carmen. While Carmen was pregnant with their child, Joe her boyfriend repeatedly beat and raped her. On one occasion during this time Joe kidnapped her, forced her into a car, and drove her to from the Northeast to the Mid-Atlantic region. During their car ride he drank continuously and when Carmen protested his orders to get an abortion he became angry, and punched her with his fists in her stomach, chest and face. He told her there would be nobody to help her. Since she didn't speak English, no one would want to help her. He threatened that if she tried to report what he was doing, he would report her to INS and have her deported. Upon arrival at their destination, he locked her in the hotel room for almost 48 hours. Part of the time she was locked in the room she was locked in the bathroom.

Upon returning to Massachusetts, Joe's beatings and rapes became more frequent. He would often leave visible bruises or marks on Carmen's wrists that resulted from Joe forcibly holding her down. Joe would usually cover Carmen's mouth or punch her in the mouth to prevent her from shouting during his assaults. Joe drank frequently and excessively, during which time he would grab her arms, kick her, punch her in the stomach and face and bite her hands. One day when Carmen was 8 months pregnant

with their child Joe punched her in the mouth, splitting her lip open. He then told her to stay in the bedroom, ripped the telephone cord out of the wall and left.

Joe's drinking continued, and during his binges, in addition to abusing her, he would scream loudly at their child. Their child as a result of this emotional abuse and witnessing physical abuse of him mother now exhibits nervous tendencies and cries continually. Joe continues to terrorize Carmen mentally. He has maintained another girlfriend who, at Joe's direction, began calling Carmen's employer, impersonating INS and telling them that Carmen did not have lawful immigration status.

Despite year of continual abuse, when Joe left Carmen he was able to obtain unsupervised visitation. However, in June of 1999 during one of his visits with the child Joe attacked Carmen, kicking her in the leg, and twisting her finger. Joe then fled the scene and Carmen called the police. The police who arrived observed her injuries and went and found Joe who had returned home. Joe told the police that he and Carmen had had an argument in which Carmen assaulted him, striking him in the face and neck. He told the police that he did not respond with retaliation. However, the police noticed that Joe had no marks indicating such attacks and the police arrested Joe and charged him with assault and battery. Since Carmen is not married to Joe, Carmen is ineligible for protection under VAWA. Carmen needs to be able to attain a U-visa if she is to be able to report the crimes that have been committed against her to the police without fearing that Joe will retaliate by turning her into INS for deportation.

MASSACHUSETTS: Sexual Assault Victim

Clarice first came to the United States on a student visa in 1995. While living in the United States on her student visa she met William, who came from the same Caribbean country, as did Clarice. She started dating William and together they had a son who is now three and one-half years old. When her boyfriend William returned to their home country Clarice followed him and began living with him and their son. However, William became violent, refused to help her support their child and refused to pay doctor bills. William threatened to kidnap the child from Clarice and told her that he will retaliate if she attempted to obtain support from him. To escape William's abuse and threats, Clarice returned to the United States with her infant son.

Upon returning to the U.S. Clarice found a room for herself and her child in the home of an employer, who was also a native from her country. In exchange, Clarice had to work at his store from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. each day. Her employer, James is a lawful permanent resident of the U.S. James was married, but his wife remained in his home country. James began telling people in the community that Clarice was his wife. James also began forcing Clarice to have sex with him. James would become angry if her son touched any of his things. When Clarice's son began crying, James would hit him with a stick or a belt. James verbally abused the child, calling him a pig, stupid and telling him he acted like an animal. After James moved Clarice and her son to another room with

no bed and a lock for which he kept the key, Clarice began barricading the door at nights with suitcases and chairs to protect herself from continued rape by James. To get to her, James would bang the door until Clarice would let him in. James consistently threatened that if Clarice did not do as he said he would report her to immigration and have her deported.

Someone finally informed Clarice that she could obtain public assistance, which would allow her to leave this job and still be able to support her son. She then moved into shelter. While Clarice was packing and preparing to leave, James warned her that she'd better not cause trouble for him because he was planning on running for public office in her country and he had family there who could hurt her if she tried to tell anyone what he had done to her.

She has remained in shelter, and has since obtained a restraining order after learning from friends that James had been searching for her. Clarice has tried to protect herself by obtaining a police protection, enforcing her protection order and cooperating with criminal authorities in the prosecution of James for the crimes he committed against her. However, Clarice remains fearful of deportation and retaliation from James and his friends and family members if she is forced to return to her home country. She is also concerned that she will be tracked down and that she and her son will be harmed by William if she is forced to return.

Clarice has suffered ongoing and extreme physical, sexual and emotional abuse she endured at the hands of James her employer. She is terrified that her cooperation with law enforcement will lead to her deportation when James turns her in to INS. As someone who has sought to cooperate with law enforcement to have James prosecuted, Clarice needs the protection of the U-visa to be able to fully cooperate in the prosecution of James her employer.

MASSACHUSETTS: Domestic Violence Victim

Cruz is an undocumented woman from Guatemala. She is married to Manuel from Guatemala who is also undocumented. Cruz and Manuel married in Guatemala and began living together there. Shortly after their marriage while still living in Guatemala Manuel began to subject Cruz to extreme emotional and physical abuse. She left him, returning to live with her family. However, he stalked her and Cruz went to the Guatemalan police to obtain protection, but they refused, saying that it was a personal matter. She was accosted by Manuel husband on the street and was beaten to the point at which she required hospitalization. The police still did nothing to protect her or to take action against her husband. Manuel continued to stalk her.

Cruz finally fled Guatemala and came to the United States. Manuel followed her to the United States and found her in New York. Manuel forced Cruz to live with him and submit to continuing abuse by using the fact that he was her husband, and threatening

that if she refused he would turn her in to INS. Manuel assured Cruz that if he could get her deported he would follow her back to their home country where he could follow her and could continue to treat her as he wished.

Finally, Cruz fled New York and moved to the Boston area. Again, Manuel followed her. He stalked her and attacked her repeatedly. She finally contacted the police and Manuel was arrested. The case went before a grand jury which returned indictments for six counts of Assault and Battery, four counts of Threats, three counts of Assault and Battery by Means of a Dangerous Weapon and one count of Rape. Despite this Manuel was released on bail. He failed to show up for his trial. There is an outstanding warrant for his arrest.

Cruz obtained a protection order and feels that in the United States she can be protected from her husband's future attacks. However, since Manuel is undocumented and not a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident Cruz cannot file for relief under VAWA and must be able to obtain a U-visa to protect her from deportation so that she can cooperate in Manuel's prosecution. Cruz fears that Manuel may have returned to Guatemala and fears for her life if she is deported. Only the U-visa can prevent this tragedy. Without it, battered immigrants like Cruz will never be able to come forward to testify against their abusers who have subjected them to violent crimes.

NEW YORK: Attempted Murder Victim

Lance, a native of Uganda, has resided for many years in the U.S. In 2000 he fell victim to the so-called Prospect Park Slasher, believed to be responsible for several attacks on gay men in Brooklyn. The New York Post listed this serial crime among the 10 most serious unsolved crimes of 2000. Lance was walking past Prospect Park one evening when he was attacked by a man with a muscular frame dressed in black clothes and face covered with a mask. He wielded a long serrated knife. This attack hospitalized Lance with multiple stab wounds, including ones to the thorax and Achilles tendon. Lance was unable to work for several months.

Lance is a crime victim who needs to be able to attain a U-visa that will allow him to live and work in the United States so that he can cooperate in the prosecution of his attacker and receive the medical and mental health care he needs to overcome the effects of this attack. While to date no one has been arrested for this crime, the investigation is ongoing and Lance is a material witness. Lance has submitted a deferred action request as potential U-visa applicant. Along with this request Lance has submitted: a) a letter from the investigating detective of the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force, asserting that Lance was the victim of felonious assault and that he continues to cooperate in the investigation and b) hospital records relating to his injuries. To date Lance has received no response from the INS District office on his deferred action request.

NEW YORK: Attempted Murder Victim

Martha is from the Ivory Coast, and has been in the U.S. since 1999. She was living with her sister, a lawful permanent resident. During the summer of 2000, an individual assaulted Martha and murdered her sister. Martha was traumatized by these events and mourns her sister's death. As an eyewitness, Martha has been cooperating with the police and the District Attorney. She identified the person who attacked her and murdered her sister from a lineup. Her permanent resident sister had supported Martha since she did not have legal permission to work in the United States. She is currently living with friends. The only avenue open to Martha to remain in the United States and support herself while she cooperates in the prosecution of her sister's murderer and her attacker is obtaining a U-visa. Martha qualifies for a U-visa on two grounds as the victim of her sister's murder and as a victim on felonious assault and attempted murder. Both the detective in charge and the Assistant District Attorney signed certifications in support of Martha's deferred action request. No response has currently been received from the INS District Office in New York.

NEW JERSEY: Sexual Assault Victim and Trafficking Victim

Laura was brought from Mexico by a couple that posed as her relatives. She was about 11 years old at the time. Once in the U.S. she became a nanny and all-purpose maid for the couple and their two children. Juan who posed as her uncle repeatedly sexually abused Laura. Laura was also often beaten to "keep her in line". Eventually Juan and his wife allowed Laura to go to school. There one of the teachers developed a relationship with Laura and questioned her because of her sullen and withdrawn demeanor. After Laura revealed to her teacher a portion of the abuse she had suffered, the teacher contacted Department of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). Laura was taken to a safe place and the police called in the couple that had been holding Laura hostage and abusing her. Laura became ward of the state. The couple fled the country before criminal chargers could be filed against them.

Laura remains without any documentary evidence about her identity or country of origin. The only evidence there is as to her identity is Laura's testimony to DYFS and the court and the testimony the police elicited from the couple. There is a strong indication that the couple falsified Laura's birth date to make her appear older and thus escape child abuse charges. There are also questions as to her real name. She has no passport. There is a great possibility that the birth certificate that the couple provided to police as Laura's birth certificate was obtained from local Mexican officials who were bribed to change the birth date.

The advocates working on Laura's case attempted to secure Special Juvenile status for Laura, but INS questioned whether Laura was still a juvenile at the time the application was filed and the case became entrenched in the unclarity of Laura's identity. Until the advocates can prove that the birth certificate that is in INS possession was falsified as

to her birth date, Laura's status continues to be mired with uncertainty. It is clear that Laura suffered abuse, that she was kidnapped from Mexico at a young age and that she would be at risk of ending up abused again if she were returned to Mexico where her capturers have likely fled. A U-visa would provide Laura the protection she needs to recover from the horrible abduction and abuse she has experienced.

NORTH CAROLINA: Domestic Violence Victim

Rosa is an undocumented battered Mexican woman. She has three children with a lawful permanent resident Jerry with whom she lived for nine years. They lived together eight years in North Carolina and one year in California. Rosa has never married Jerry, and where she currently resides North Carolina does not recognize common law marriage. Therefore, Rosa is not eligible to self-petition. Jerry had abused Rosa in front of their children but he has not been directly physically abusive to the children. However, the children have been affected by having witnessed the abuse of their mother and there is some evidence of Jerry's mental cruelty to the children. Despite this, it is unlikely that Rosa would qualify for VAWA cancellation of removal based on Jerry's emotional abuse of the children it would be much more appropriate for Rosa to seek a U-visa based on the severe abuse she suffered that was perpetrated by Jerry.

Rosa has suffered through a very long history of domestic violence. Examples of some of the incidents of abuse she suffered include the following. In June 1991, Jerry threw her up against a wall and threatened to kill her. He pulled her by the hair and choked her. In September 1992, he hit her while one of the children was in her arms and left her in another town on the street in the dark about 20 miles from their home. In December 1993, Jerry hit her several times. In February 1998, during one occasion when Rosa had separated from Jerry, he came to the home where Rosa was living and repeatedly hit and kicked her in the back in front of their oldest daughter who was seven years old at the time. He also threatened to harm their daughter if she screamed. Rosa had bruises on her back and face and was in severe pain as a result of this beating.

Jerry convinced Rosa to return to him and they resumed living together off and on between February 1998 until December 1998. He beat Rosa on numerous occasions in front of the children and told the children that he was going to further hurt their mommy if they weren't quiet. In December 1998, he forced her to have sex with him by dragging her by the hair into the bedroom, throwing her to the bed, and forcibly opening her legs. He then beat Rosa by kicking her numerous times in the back so severely that she could not walk. This beating occurred in front of the three children who are all under the age of 8.

Jerry has told his children to tell him if Mommy ever talks to other men and has often harassed the children about what mommy does when he's not home. On one occasion,

the oldest daughter intervened when her father was hitting her mother, and when the daughter told him to stop, he told the daughter he was going to do it again.

Jerry has been charged with second-degree rape, but the trial is still pending. Rosa has cooperated with the police and DA's office at all times, and is willing to testify against him. Jerry has threatened to call INS and have her deported on numerous occasions. Rosa fears that Jerry will retaliate against her because she is cooperating in his prosecution by having her deported. Rosa needs to be able to obtain a U-visa based on the domestic violence Jerry committed against her. This family needs and deserves the protection that only the U-visa can offer.

OHIO: Domestic Violence Victim

Maria and her husband Miguel came to the United States from Nicaragua in 1992. They have lived in the United States since then and have three U.S. citizen children. Both Maria and Miguel are undocumented. Miguel has abused Maria for many years. The abuse already began in Nicaragua, where, while she was pregnant, Miguel threw Maria against the wall and kicked her in the stomach in an attempt to make her to abort the pregnancy.

The abuse continued when the couple moved to the United States with the level of severity of abuse escalating over time. Twice, Miguel fired a loaded gun at Maria. On one occasion in 2000, the husband threatened Maria and told her, "I will kill you like a deer" and "make you paralyzed." He then choked her, put a knife to her throat, punctured the left side of her neck/ear with a screwdriver, and cut the sofa and the phone cord so that she could not call for help. He beat her from 10 p.m. till 6 a.m. In the morning the Maria's sister called the police who arrived at the couple's home and arrested Miguel. Subsequently Maria obtained a temporary protection order and is willing to cooperating in the criminal case against Miguel.

However, Maria fears that cooperating without any protection against deportation to Nicaragua would endanger her and her children further. Maria fears being forced to return to Nicaragua. She and her children would have to return to the same town in which her family and Miguel's family reside. She has overheard her husband Miguel telling his brother, that in Nicaragua he would take away her children. She also frets because she fears her own family would be unsupportive since her father has abused her mother for years. She knows first hand from her mother's experience about Nicaragua's dismissive attitude in general towards domestic violence. Granting Maria a U-visa would provide Maria and her children the protection, security and ability to survive economically they need and would allow Maria to fully cooperate in Miguel's criminal case.

OHIO: Felonious Assault Victim

Chu is a Taiwanese woman who came to the U.S. in 1997 on a J-1 visa. She attends a university in Ohio. Before leaving Taiwan she sought a divorce from her husband Wha, who is also the father of her 10-year-old son. Her husband would not consent to a divorce at that point in time but about a year after Chu's arrival in the US, he insisted that he come visit to discuss a divorce. Within a few days of Wha's arrival, he threatened to kill Chu, forced her to have sex with him, and severely abused her, including burning her breasts with cigarettes.

Wha informed Chu that she had only two options. One was to return to Taiwan with him; the other was to be tortured. He forced Chu to take off her clothes. He told the Chu that since he had scars on his body (from a skin disease), that no one else would ever marry him and so he was going to disfigure her as well so that no one else would find her attractive. He then lit a cigarette and told her that if screamed or cried that he would make it even worse for her. He then began burning the Chu's breasts with the cigarette. He then told her that she would either have to burn herself or he would burn her very badly. Chu took the cigarette and burnt her own breasts several times. Wha told her that she had burnt them too lightly and took the cigarette back. He burnt Chu's breasts in several more areas. The next day, Wha threatened to kill her and himself if she told anyone about the incident. Nonetheless Chu went to the hospital but was terrified and afraid to press charges. Hospital records showed 25 burns on her left breast and 7 on the right breast.

A week later Chu despite her fears of deportation and of Wha decided to report Wha to the police for the cigarette burning incident. Wha was arrested the same day and indicted a month later.

The case was widely publicized and the community turned against Chu for bringing bad publicity to the community. Taiwanese nationals in the town expressed their dissent and misgivings about the "mischaracterization" of the abuse and the bad publicity that had been brought on Taiwan, including advertising the fact that Taiwan lacked the protections that other countries provided to battered women. Community members turned on Chu and pressured her to drop charges. Chu maintained the charges and fully cooperated with the prosecution. Wha was convicted of Felonious Assault. He was subsequently deported.

Chu as well as the prosecutors in this case expressed the need for Chu to remain lawfully in the United States and the urgent need for Chu to be able to bring her son to the United States in order to protect him from Wha. Since Chu had pursued criminal charges against Wha, she was afraid of returning to Taiwan where Wha could retaliate against her for having him jailed and deported. Her prosecution of Wha for his criminal acts has resulted in Chu being ostracized from her family, community and workplace. If Chu were forced to return to Taiwan she would have no protection from any retaliation

on the part of her husband and his family. Chu needs to be able to apply for a U-visa for herself and she needs to be able to bring her child to the United States on a U-visa where he can be protected from his father's abuse.

OREGON: Domestic Violence Victim and Sexual Assault

Sara and Ian began living together in their home country in 1987. At the time Sara started seeing Ian she had already had one daughter Stella from a previous relationship. Ian and Stella had two children together but never married. They moved to the United States together with all of their children in 1994 after Ian attained lawful permanent residence. Ian never married Sara and never filed immigration papers for any of the children he had with Sara.

Ian was physically abusive to Sara both in the United States and before. Ian controlled all of the family finances and money and was abused Sara emotionally in this and other ways. Ian was also emotionally abusive to the children. However, his abuse of the children was not limited to emotional abuse. He physically abused one of their sons. In addition, in 1996 Sara she discovered that he had been sexually abusing Sara's daughter, Stella, from a previous relationship. Stella was 16 and like her mother and her stepsiblings was also undocumented. Sara discovered that the sexual abuse of Sara had been going on for a year. Sara contacted the police, reported the abuse and Ian was arrested. He was let out on bail however and never showed up for his court hearing. Sara, Stella and Sara's other children live in fear of what Ian will do to them because of the arrest. Sara was able to file VAWA self-petitions her two younger children since Ian, a lawful permanent resident, was their abusive father. These self-petitions were approved. However, since Ian never married Sara, both Sara and her daughter Stella remain undocumented. Prosecutors will need the testimony of both Sara and Stella to convict Ian of the criminal charges that have been lodged against him. Both Sara and Stella are willing to testify and help the prosecution, but fear that this will bring them to the attention of INS and they will be deported. They need to be able to apply for U-visas so they can be protected against deportation. If deported, Ian will be able to harm them further.

OREGON: Domestic Violence Victim

Vera lived with her abusive husband Diego from 1981-1995. They were married Diego was only a temporary resident under the Special Agricultural Worker's program (SAW). Diego never became a lawful permanent resident. Vera and Diego had 5 children together, two of whom were born in the United States and three of whom are undocumented.

Vera suffered years of threats, insults and physical and sexual abuse. Two of the most dangerous incidents were two occasions in which Diego attempted to kill Vera. The first time Diego attempted to kill Vera using a gun. The second time he tried to strangle her

to death. Diego repeatedly told Vera and the children that he could apply for their legal immigration papers, but said he did not want to because they weren't worth it.

Eventually, after years of abuse Vera called the police reported the abuse included the attempts to murder her and left her husband. After Vera left the home taking all of her children with her, Vera's daughter Maria Elena divulged to her that Diego had raped her when she was eight years old. Maria Elena had always been too afraid to tell anyone due to her father's threats to harm her further if she told anyone.

Although, Diego was arrested he was never convicted. Vera is not sure what happened to his case. Vera says that if she had understood the legal system better and knew that her status in the country would not have been jeopardized, that she would have been more aggressive about pressing charges against him and about pushing prosecutors to seriously pursue his case. The U-visa provides just such a remedy for Vera and other battered immigrants who stay with their abusers rather than risk deportation.

OREGON: Domestic Violence Victim

Lydia is an undocumented Guatemalan who entered the US without inspection in 1994 with her long-time partner, Enrique who is also Guatemalan. Lydia and Enrique lived together but never married. They had three children together. The couple settled in Oregon, near Portland. Lydia suffered abuse from Enrique both in Guatemala and in the US, but the abuse intensified in 1998, when she was severely beaten and tortured by Enrique. He choked her, beat her for several hours and ended up cutting up Lydia's face with a knife, permanently disfiguring her. Lydia spent two days in intensive care and a total of ten days in the hospital. Lydia reported the crime to the police and an arrest warrant was issued for Enrique. Although Enrique fled Oregon he was eventually tracked down in Florida. Lydia testified at his trial and Enrique is now incarcerated. Lydia is a crime victim who has been helpful to a criminal prosecution. She needs a U-visa to be able to remain in the U.S. where she can live in safety and raise her children without fear of Enrique's abuse and retaliation. Once Enrique has served his jail sentence, he will be deported to Guatemala. Lydia is afraid that she too will be deported and someday face her abuser in their home country.

VIRGINIA: Domestic Violence Victim

Mai is a 20 yr. old Korean national who is married to a student visa holding abuser Sun, also in his twenties and from Korea. Upon arriving in the United States on a derivative visa for the spouse of a student visa holder, Mai found out that Sun husband was openly engaged in an extramarital affair. Almost every night he would bring his girlfriend into the couple's home to sleep with him, forcing Mai to sleep on the hardwood floor in the living room. Mai, who loved her husband and wished to make the marriage work, often begged her husband to end the affair. This however would anger Sun immensely.

The physical abuse started occurring almost immediately after Mai's arrival to the United States. Sun would push her against the wall, warning her with raised fists to "get off his back." Mai held hostage in their home. She was never allowed leave the home. When Sun attempted to force her to have sexual relations with his girlfriend, Mai tried to run out of the house. Sun blocked the door, grabbed her purse and threw Mai to the ground. He began kicking her, as Mai continued trying to escape. Sun then grabbed her by the shoulders and demanded that Mai hand over her passport and other photo ID's, which he then hid.

Having her passport stolen left Mai feeling even more vulnerable and alone. She now had no identification in this new country and was barely able to speak the language. Weeks later, Mai's husband found Mai searching through his personal belongings for her passport. Sun grabbed her once again by the shoulders and punched her repeatedly in the face. A neighbor called the police in response to her screams for help. When the police arrived, they found Mai's face covered in blood. After investigating the incident, police arrested Sun and charged him with assault and battery. The U-visa in this case, would enable Mai to feel confident that she can safely remain in the United States after she has cooperated with authorities in prosecuting Sun. Since her visa to live legally in the United States is tied to Sun's student visa she fears that if the prosecution leads to Sun's deportation she will be deported too. If both Sun and Mai are removed from the United States, Mai fear Sun's retribution and retaliation once they are both back in Korea.

VIRGINIA: Rape/Sexual Assault and Kidnapping Victim

Ana is a seventeen year old Cameroonian national. One evening after leaving the restaurant where she worked, she was kidnapped. While walking to the bus stop, she was grabbed from behind, her wrists were tied together with rope and she was thrown into the assailant's nearby van. The assailant was not a stranger, but a customer who frequented the restaurant where the Ana worked. Ana struggled to extricate herself from the knots but was unable to free herself. The assailant drove her out of state to a secluded wooded area, where she was repeatedly raped and sodomized. The assailant pummeled her face with punches with both hands, leaving Ana nearly unconscious. The assailant then left Ana to die in the woods and fled the scene.

Because Ana is undocumented, she is terrified about contacting the police and reporting the crimes that were committed against her for fear that the police will turn her in the INS and have her deported. She is deeply ashamed of the incident and finds it hard to believe that the police would assist her. In her home country rape is not considered a crime worthy of punishment and women are often blamed for such an attack. Ana sought help from a program that assists rape victims and has been attending free therapy sessions for several months to help her cope with the emotional and physical aftermath of the crime. Ana would be willing to file a criminal complaint to bring her rapist to justice if she felt confident that the legal system would protect her. Obtaining a

U-visa would allow Ana to cooperate with police in bringing her rapist to justice and would hopefully prevent others from suffering as she did.

VIRGINIA: Domestic Violence Victim

Doi is a victim of domestic violence both at the hands of her mother-in-law, Li, and her U.N. diplomat husband Wen. They all come from the same Asian country. Since coming to the U.S., Doi has been severely beaten by both Wen and Li. Her mother-in-law would accuse her of being a terrible wife and not fulfilling her duties, such as housekeeping and cooking, in an acceptable manner. Her husband Wen would lash out on her for no apparent reason. The numerous severe beatings from Wen and Li have caused permanent injuries to Doi resulting in her having to wear a neck brace. During one incident Doi tried to call the police but Li ripped the phone off the wall and beat her on the head with the cordless phone receiver.

Wen and Li also attempted to control Doi's actions through psychological abuse. She was told that she had no rights in this country and that she would be deported if she ever sought assistance from the authorities. Doi was isolated from the outside world. She was not allowed to make phone calls or keep in contact with family or friends. She was prohibited from leaving the house and was not given a key to the house or mailbox. So if she received any mail her husband and mother-in-law were able to read it first.

Doi was forced to cook and clean the entire house and did not once step out of the house in her entire first five months in the U.S., for fear of their violent reprisals. Doi grew agitated and nervous as a result of the attacks and her confinement. She dropped and cracked a piece of pottery art while cleaning. As a result her mother-in-law urged Doi's husband to "teach her a lesson." Wen responded by grabbing Doi around the neck with one hand and banging her head repeatedly against the dining room wall.

A servant in the house who had knowledge about Doi's abuse had heard about a legal aid center that could help Doi and contacted the legal aid center on Doi's behalf. Doi is now a client of that legal aid center. A U-visa would protect Doi and allow her to report the crime to the police. Although it will be difficult to prosecute Doi's diplomatic husband for his crimes, her mother-in-law could be prosecuted and Wen's criminal actions against Doi could be brought to the attention of U.S. State Department officials who control Wen's diplomatic visa.

A U-visa is particularly necessary in case of spouses of diplomats who need to be able to remain safely in the United States where they can be protected from further abuse and harm that can come to them if they are forced to return to their home countries after having reported abuse that led to their well connected and powerful diplomat husbands having to leave the United States. If Doi were deported back to her home country, she would suffer retaliation from her spouse's relatives and further, since her

spouse is a powerful man, he could easily have her harmed if she is returned to her home country.

VIRGINIA: Domestic Violence Victim

Lee, who is from Asia is a derivative of her husband Chou's H-1B visa who came to the United States to work for a U.S. based company. Lee and Chou came to the United States together. Chou's abuse against Lee began shortly after the couple's arrival in the United States. On a weekly basis, Chou would severely beat Lee, punching her in the stomach and face. She was left severely bruised and swollen and out of shame Lee was afraid to interact with the general public.

Chou told her that if she ever spoke out about her injuries, he would lose his visa and she would inevitably be deported. As a derivative of her husband's visa, she thus felt bound to keep silent about the attacks. One evening though, Chou was especially tense and verbally abusive. He accused her of being worthless and of no use to him; Lee "might as well die" for all he cared. He then proceeded to alternately strangle and punch her. This vicious attack made Lee fear for her life. Lee managed to break free from Chou's grip long enough to call the police. Her husband was subsequently arrested for battery and assault. Lee believes what Chou has told her that if he is prosecuted for his assault against her both Chou and Lee will be deported.

She worries for her life and safety if her report to the police leads to both Chou's and Lee's deportation. However, with a U-visa Lee could act to stop the violence that has been escalating to a life-threatening level. The U-visa in this case would help Lee come forward and cooperate with police in Chou's prosecution safe in the knowledge that she has a grounds for legal immigration status separate from Chou's and therefore his deportation for his domestic violence crimes will not result in her being sent back to her home country where he will be waiting to retaliate against her.

VIRGINIA: Domestic Violence Victim

Suda is an undocumented Burmese woman married to an undocumented Thai man, Chan. They met, married and began living together in Asia and then came together to the United States. Prior to the couple's arrival in the United States Chan's abuse of Suda had been primarily emotional abuse. However, Chan's emotional abuse of Suda escalated into physical violence shortly after they arrived in the United States.

Chan would throw her against the wall when she would not comply with his wishes or refused to be sexually intimate with him on days she was not feeling physically well. Throughout the following year on many occasions Chan would kick and punch Suda and would pull her hair. The periods of physical violence were followed with promises that he would control his temper. But Chan would always find a reason that Suda was not fulfilling his expectations and retaliated with more violence.

Suda became pregnant in this time-period and despite her pleas not to have intercourse; in numerous incidents Chan pinned her down and raped her. Suda not only felt that she was in danger, but also worried tremendously about her unborn child, and the damage her husband's attacks might be inflicting on it. Suda contacted the local abused women's shelter and planned for an escape. Suda was ultimately able to flee her home, while her husband was out running errands. She is willing to assist in his prosecution, but without any guarantees that she will not be deported, she is hesitant to come forward about the crimes committed against her. A U-visa will provide her the protection she needs so that she can feel safe cooperating in Chan's prosecution.

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Domestic Violence Victim

Elizabeth was an ambassador's wife and was suffering extreme physical, emotional and psychological abuse at the hands of the ambassador, Francois. She and her small child were very afraid to seek help or to leave Francois, because they are afraid of being deported. Elizabeth's home country is very small and the community of people in power is very tight knit. Francois is very well respected and connected, which is why he was chosen to be their country's ambassador to the United States. Elizabeth's husband is a very important person in her home country, being the U.S. ambassador, and he has many powerful friends there. He tried to keep her from seeking help by telling her, "If you leave me, the United States will deport you and I will pay someone \$50 to cut you up into little bits back in our home country."

Unfortunately, he was right about her immigration status. As the wife of a diplomat, when she sought help she was told originally that there wasn't much that could be done to help her obtain secure immigration status independent of Francois. Elizabeth could not qualify for VAWA, and her child--though born in the U.S.--was not considered a U.S. citizen because she was born to diplomat parents. Unfortunately, she sought help for a legal services program before the U-visa became law. The U-visa could have helped this woman immensely. As it turned out, she had to flee her husband and hope that he would never find her, knowing that she and her child would probably have to make their way as refugees in the United States without access to legal immigration status.

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Domestic Violence and Hostage Victim

Jasmine came to the U.S. from the Czech republic on a J-1 exchange program visa. She was promised by the agency that arranged the visa that a job and an apartment would be waiting for her in New Jersey. When Jasmine arrived she found that there was no job and no apartment. She and two other women in the same program were in the same predicament and conversed on the street, when Steve approached them, inquiring if they needed any help.

They shared their story with him and he offered them aid in finding a place to stay. He wound up renting the three women a room in his house. Jasmine was grateful and

became dependent on Steve and developed an emotional attachment to him. They began an intimate relationship and Steve proposed to Jasmine. He said that they could get married as soon as he had enough money to buy a house, so Jasmine gave him the \$3000 she had managed to save up. In December of the same year Jasmine got sick. Steve gave her "medicine" that left her unable to walk, talk, or think clearly. She was in and out of consciousness for three days. Steve told her she was having a bad reaction to the antibiotics he had obtained from a doctor and kept her locked in his apartment for several more days. When she finally recovered, Jasmine told Steve that she wanted to go home, but he refused to give her passport to her. He said that only he loved her and could protect her.

Jasmine managed to escape and went to a shelter for abused women, but Steve found her and began stalking her and her co-worker. Jasmine filed for and received a protection order, but Steve continued to contact Jasmine. In addition, Steve tracked down and made contact with Jasmine's family in the Czech Republic seeking their help in forcing Jasmine to return to him. She complained of these protection order violations to the police and Steve was prosecuted and found guilty of criminal contempt for violations of the protection order. Finally, Jasmine took her protection order with her and fled to another state to hide from Steve.

Jasmine does not have current legal status or employment authorization and fears to return to the Czech Republic because Steve has already demonstrated his resourcefulness in finding her family and believes he would be able to track her down there. Steve is a U.S. citizen and is free to travel to the Czech Republic if she were forced to return there. Jasmine is currently enrolled in a therapy program with a domestic violence organization and is slowly regaining her confidence. As a cooperating witness in Steve's criminal contempt trial that led to Steve's conviction for violation of the protection order, U-visa is necessary to guarantee her safety and peace of mind. It will allow her to live and work in the United States where there are laws that can protect Jasmine against Steve's ongoing violence.

Trafficking Stories for T-Visas

CALIFORNIA:

Sara, Sandra, and Sheena are underage girls who were trafficked into the United States for sexual and physical labor in the Greater Bay Area. Sara (15-years old) died while in captivity by the traffickers. The police took Sandra and Sheena into protective custody. These girls have nowhere to go as their perpetrator's supporters in their home country have threatened to kill them (and their families) if they return to testify in the courts in the home country against their traffickers. They are testifying here against their trafficker who held them hostage and forced them to work in physical and sexual labor in the United States. Sandra and Sheena need to be able to obtain a T-visa or U-visa to receive the protection they need to cooperate in their trafficker's prosecution. Without a T-visa or a U-visa they have a very uncertain future. Returning home to where their trafficker's supporters live would mean death for these young girls.

FLORIDA:

Delia was fourteen when a man came to her parents' house in Mexico and asked if Delia was interested in making money in the United States. He said Delia could make many times the amount of money she was making doing the same work that she was doing in Mexico. At the time, Delia was working in a hotel cleaning rooms and she also helped her parents by watching her brothers and sisters. He said Delia would be in good hands, and would meet many other Mexican girls who had taken advantage of this great opportunity. Delia's parents didn't want her to go, but Delia persuaded them.

A week later, Delia was trafficked into the United States through Texas to Florida. It was then the men who trafficked her told her that her employment would consist of having sex with men for money. Delia had never had sex before, and had never imagined selling my body.

And so Delia's nightmare began. Because Delia was a virgin, the men who trafficked her decided to initiate her by raping her again and again, to teach her how to have sex. Over the next three months, Delia was taken to a different trailer every 15 days. Every night Delia had to sleep in the same bed in which she had been forced to service customers all day.

Delia couldn't do anything to stop it. She wasn't allowed to go outside without a guard. Many of the bosses had guns. She was constantly afraid. One of the bosses carried Delia off to a hotel one night, where he raped her. She could do nothing to stop him.

Because she was so young, Delia was always in demand with customers. It was awful. Although the men were supposed to wear condoms, some didn't so eventually Delia became pregnant and was forced to have an abortion. The traffickers sent her back to the brothel almost immediately after the abortion.

Delia cannot forget what has happened. She can't put it behind her. Delia finds it nearly impossible to trust people. She still feels shame. Delia was a decent girl in Mexico. She used to go to church with my family. She only wishes none of this had ever happened. The T-visa will allow her to ensure that she can safely cooperate in her trafficker's prosecution.

Florida:

Juliamaria was approached in Mexico in May of 1997 by an acquaintance about some jobs in the United States. She told me that there were jobs available in restaurants or bars. Juliamaria was working as a domestic helper in Mexico and had a job in a general retail store. The work in the U.S. seemed like a great opportunity for her to earn money to support her daughter and family. She accepted the job and soon was brought by a coyote to Texas.

Once over the border, Juliamaria was kept at a safe house. Then, she was transported to Florida. Once in Florida, one of the ringleaders, told her she would be working at a brothel as a prostitute. Juliamaria told him he was mistaken and that she was going to be working in a restaurant, not a brothel. He then ordered her to work in a brothel. He said Juliamaria owed him a smuggling debt of thousands of dollars and the sooner she paid it off the sooner she could leave. Juliamaria was eighteen years old and had never been far and had no money or way to get home.

Next, Juliamaria was given tight clothes to wear and was told what she must do. There would be armed men selling tickets to customers in the trailer. Tickets were condoms. Each ticket would be sold for \$22 to \$25 each. The client would then point at the girl he wanted and the girl would take him to one of the bedrooms. At the end of the night, Juliamaria turned in the condom wrappers. Each wrapper represented a supposed deduction to her smuggling fee. Juliamaria and the other girls who were captive tried to keep their own records, but the Bosses would destroy them. They were never sure what they owed.

There were up to four girls at each brothel. They were constantly guarded and abused. If anyone refused to be with a customer, they were beaten. If they adamantly refused, the Bosses would show them a lesson by raping them brutally. The bosses told the girls that if they refuse again it would be even worse the next time. They were transported every fifteen days to another trailer in a nearby city. This was to give customers a variety of girls and also so that Juliamaria and the other girls would never know where

we were in case they tried to escape. Juliamaria could not believe this was happening to her.

They worked six days a week and twelve-hour days. They mostly had to serve 32-35 clients a day. Weekends were worse. Their bodies were utterly sore and swollen. The bosses did not care. They worked no matter what. This included during menstruation. Clients would become enraged if they found out. The Bosses instructed them to place a piece of clothing over the lamps to darken the room. This, however, did not protect Juliamaria and the other girls from client beatings. Also, at the end of the night their work did not end. It was now the Bosses turn with them. If anyone became pregnant they were forced to have abortions. The cost of the abortion would be then added to their smuggling debt.

The Bosses carried weapons. They scared Juliamaria. The brothels were often in isolated areas. Juliamaria never knew where she was. It was all so strange to her. They were not allowed to go outside the brothels. Juliamaria knew if she tried to escape she would not get far because everything was so unfamiliar. The Bosses told Juliamaria that if she escaped, INS would catch her, beat her and tie her up. This frightened her. Juliamaria did know of a girl who escaped. The Bosses searched for her and said they were going to get the money she owed them from her family. They said they were going to get the money one way or another.

Juliamaria knew another girl that escaped and was hunted down. The Bosses found her and beat her severely. The Bosses would show the girl that they meant business by beating and raping her brutally. All Juliamaria could do was stand there and watch. She was too afraid to try to escape. She also did not want her family put in danger.

Juliamaria was enslaved for several months, other women were enslaved for up to a years. Their enslavement finally ended when the INS, FBI, and local enforcement raided the brothels and rescued them. They weren't sure what was happening on the day of the raids. Their captors had told hem over and over never to tell the police of their conditions. They told Juliamaria and the other girls that if they told they would find themselves in prison for the rest of their lives. The bosses told them that the INS would rape them and kill them. But Juliamaria and the other girls learned to trust INS and FBI and assisted them in the prosecution of the enslavers. Unfortunately, this was difficult. After the INS and FBI freed them from the brothels Juliamaria and the other girls were placed in a detention center for many months. Their captors had been correct. They thought they would be imprisoned for the rest of their lives.

Later, their attorneys were able to get them released to a women's domestic violence center where they received comprehensive medical attention, including gynecological exams, and mental health counseling.

Thanks to the United States government some of their captors were brought to justice and were sent to prison. Unfortunately, not all. Some of them are living in Mexico in their hometowns. They have threatened some of their families. They have even threatened to force the girls' younger sisters to the United States and force them to work in brothels as well.

Juliamaria would never have done this work. No one she knows would have done this work. She is speaking out now because she never wants this to happen to anyone else. The T-visa can protect Juliamaria and others like her from such horror by giving them ultimately lawful permanent residence. Juliamaria came to the United States to find a better future not to be a prostitute. If anyone thinks that providing protection to trafficking survivors by affording them permanent residency status is a magnet for other immigrants like Juliamaria; they are wrong. No woman or child would want to be a sex slave and endure the evil Juliamaria has gone through. She is in fear for her life more than ever since she helped put these evil men in jail.