



The Torch

Maxwell Street Legal Clinic Newsletter
A program of Kentucky Equal Justice Center

Holiday 2019

In the last year

Maxwell Street Legal Clinic has handled **534 cases** including:

- **157 DACA** renewals
- **36 U visas** for victims of crime
- **11 T visas** for victims of human trafficking
- **46 citizenship** applications

We answer, return and make over **600 calls** a month.

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Our First 20 Years: Q & A with Marilyn Daniel

The Clinic is turning 20! How did it get started?

It all began when Roman Catholic priest, Father Jay, and Presbyterian seminarian, Mike Pentecost, were working with the Hispanic community in central Kentucky in 1999 and realized there was nowhere for these families to get legal help. They gathered private attorneys, legal aid attorneys, interested individuals and faith leaders to address the issue, which resulted in the Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church offering office space for an all-volunteer legal services group.

In October 1999, Maxwell Street Legal Clinic opened for business with several volunteer attorneys and interpreters. We were open about five hours on Sunday afternoons for walk-ins and learned quickly that the real need was for advice and assistance with immigration issues. None of us had any immigration law experience. So, as your GPS would say: recalculating! Bob Rodriguez and I went off for training with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, a relationship that continues to this day. Old dogs did, indeed, learn new tricks!

What has it taken to get to 2019?

It took committed volunteers, continuous training, and money. The demand for services grew exponentially. We increased our hours, recruited office volunteers, experimented with numerous intake models and began to build a practice where clients and their families

returned for additional help.

Since MSLC became a program of Kentucky Equal Justice Center, we have been able to hire staff attorneys.

We have gradually increased our staff through KEJC support, grants, client fees and individual and organizational donations. The type of immigration work we can do has broadened and deepened, and we have served clients from more than 100 countries.

What are MSLC's biggest wins?

Every client who obtains legal status, becomes a US citizen, or whose Temporary Protected Status is renewed; every family that is reunited; every DACA recipient whose work permit is renewed; and every victim of crime, abuse or human trafficking who obtains status is a success!

Two of my fondest memories are watching a mother be reunited with her four children, whom she had not seen for seven years, and obtaining a green card for a mother whose husband and six children were all U.S. citizens.

This is work that gives you the chance to help make one day in someone's life transformative and full of joy.



Personal experience: becoming a citizen



Maxwell Street DOJ Accredited Representative Nathalie Dietrich

With guidance from Maxwell Street Legal Clinic, **Nathalie Dietrich** became a naturalized United States citizen this past April. Her immigration story began when she moved to the United States in 2002. It took seven years of renewing her immigration status each year before Nathalie obtained legal permanent residency in 2009.

2009 also happened to be the year Nathalie began volunteering as an interpreter and translator at Maxwell Street Legal Clinic. Two years later, she was hired on as a part-time legal

assistant.

Nathalie faced a dilemma in 2012 when she had to leave MSLC and return to Spain for eight months. Permanent residents risk their status when traveling abroad for long periods of time. She says the legal advice she received from MSLC was crucial to keeping her status as a permanent resident and being able to return to the U.S.

“I had already bought a house. I could have lost everything,” Nathalie said. “But because of MSLC’s legal counsel, I was able to provide receipts and documents that proved I had not given up my status as a permanent resident of the U.S. and I was allowed back into the country.”

In 2018, Nathalie decided to file for citizenship. Although she is a DOJ Accredited Representative, she was grateful to receive legal support from her colleagues at MSLC.

“Everything is discretionary in immigration and we live in a very hostile environment. I know of

naturalized citizens having trouble reentering the country,” Nathalie said. “Even though I didn’t expect to have any problems with my application, I wanted to have a representative who could advocate for me.”

Becoming a client of MSLC and going through the naturalization process herself has given Nathalie a new perspective in her role as a representative. Even though she knew the ins and outs of the process and had permanent residency to fall back on, she says applying and interviewing still made her extremely nervous.

“This experience has taught me that even if you always had status and never have been deportable, it is still nerve-wracking to go into that citizenship interview because there is so much at stake. Our clients mostly have more at stake because they don’t have an immigration status to fall back to,” Nathalie said. “I now have a better understanding of some of the anxiety my clients experience when going into an interview.”



Public Charge

Public charge is a long-standing rule that allows immigration officers to deny entrance or permanent residency to immigrants who may become “primarily dependent” on the government for support. Proposed changes to the rule dramatically expand who could be considered a public charge.

Blocked in court: Federal courts have issued injunctions blocking implementation of the new rule by the Department of Homeland Security. The injunctions do not block the State Department from implementing its own parallel rule.

Outreach Coordinator **Miranda Brown** says the new rule would directly affect few Maxwell Street clients but many are dropping benefits, like Medicaid and SNAP, for fear of being deemed a public charge. Miranda says MSLC’s main goal is to reduce fear among immigrant communities and to reassure people of their rights to access healthcare.

Help and advice: The Clinic will continue helping people enroll in healthcare, providing immigration and healthcare consultations, and sharing resources and information about public charge with both state agencies and the community.

DONATE today
For our Victim of Crime Act grant, we must provide \$32,076 in cash match.
Help us meet the match!
Donate during the holidays at bggives.org/
kyequaljustice

Maxwell Street staff news

Maxwell Street Legal Clinic's 20th year is finishing strong. In our new and improved building, seven staff members take on new challenges and expand our caseload.

Michelle Haubner and **Allison Hight**, part of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) team, now help refugees and asylees gain citizenship.

Leah Engle, program director, took Maxwell Street's first deportation case. **Nathalie Dietrich** continues to help our neighbors gain and renew their status, while earning citizenship status herself. **Adam Kuhn** and **Gaby Dawson** joined the Maxwell Street team as our two new Spanish-speaking legal assistants. **Maddy Clark**, VOCA Legal Assistant, has expanded her role to translating documents and interpreting

during appointments. With the help of these three, there is no doubt Maxwell Street's capacity continues to grow.



Staff (left to right): Adam Kuhn, Gabriela Dawson, Allison Hight, Leah Engle, Nathalie Dietrich, Michelle Haubner, Maddy Clark.

**Maxwell Street
Legal Clinic**

**Celebrating
20 Years**

Watch for news of a special event in spring 2020!

From compassion to action

Volunteer Spotlight

Volunteers and interns make the work of Maxwell Street Legal Clinic possible. For the last year, **Benji Smith** has served as one of the clinic's indispensable volunteers. He commutes from Louisville to Lexington to help in the office, work with clients on their English and provide tutoring for citizenship tests.

Benji was inspired to volunteer at MSLC after receiving legal assistance. He was so grateful to the attorney who helped him learn his rights that he wanted to pay it forward by helping others learn their rights, too.

Benji enjoys every aspect of his volunteer role, especially getting to know MSLC clients. "I think my favorite thing so far is learning how much I have in common with the clients just through our conversations, whether it is a past or current experience, similarities we find in our family and upbringings, or a shared sense of humor," Benji said.

Benji's time at MSLC has inspired him to return to college with the goal of starting law school in 2020. He hopes to practice immigration law.



YOU can help!

Donate during the holidays!

Your generous gift will help:

- Pay fees for **DACA applications** for families facing severe hardship
- Pay for **Language Line** phone interpretation to fulfill our "211 for immigrants" role
- Or go **wherever needed** most

To make a secure donation online, visit:

www.bggives.org/kyequaljustice

Educate: To host a "Know Your Rights" session, call us at:

1-859-667-4559

Volunteer: For current volunteer opportunities, email:

leahengle@kyequaljustice.org



Maxwell Street Legal Clinic is a program of Kentucky Equal Justice Center. The Clinic is located conveniently between the University of Kentucky and downtown Lexington.

We are a trusted source of high quality, low-cost legal assistance for the immigrant and refugee communities in Central and Eastern Kentucky. Many thanks to 2018-2019 supporters of our work:

- **Blue Grass Community Foundation**
- **Fayette County Bar Foundation**
- **Kentucky Bar Foundation**
- **Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet**
- **Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church**
- **Lexington Catholic Diocese Mission and Ministry Fund**
- **United Way of the Bluegrass**

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And over 200 individual and family donors, congregations and law firms. We couldn't do it without you!

Be a partner in our work! Donate online through December 31, 2019, at www.bggives.org/kyequaljustice.

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