

# A Year in Review: Demanding Justice for Refugees, Steadfastly Defending Human Rights

In 2018 the Trump Administration unleashed a slew of cruel and illegal attacks on immigrants and refugees. When the communities we serve came under threat, CGRS's small team of dedicated advocates mobilized to fight back.



Ms. A.B. asks that we protect her identity, in fear that her abuser may locate her.\*

\* Photo Credit: Kevin D. Liles for NPR

## Litigating to Defend Progress

- Immediately following former Attorney General Jeff Sessions' ruling in *Matter of A-B-*, CGRS began pursuing all possible opportunities to challenge the decision in the courts.
- We developed a national tracking system to monitor the application of *A-B-*, shining a light on the decision's devastating impact. We used this system to begin identifying and intervening in cases on their way to the appellate courts that will provide opportunities to challenge the principles underpinning *A-B-*.
- We continued to litigate Ms. A.B.'s case, which will ultimately be heard in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.
- We began litigating a series of model asylum cases in the Ninth Circuit, through which we will secure positive precedential decisions that improve the legal landscape for victims of gang violence.

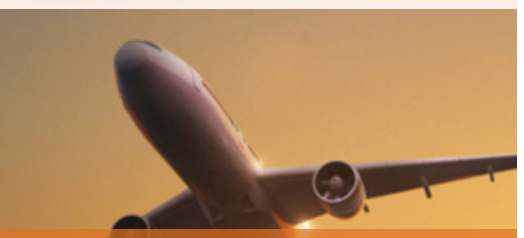
## Promoting Government Accountability

- We joined forces with the ACLU and Human Rights First to file a class action lawsuit, *Damus v. Nielsen*, challenging the federal government's unlawful detention of asylum seekers. We won a preliminary injunction forcing several Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) field offices to provide asylum seekers with a fair parole process.
- We teamed up with the ACLU to file a federal lawsuit, *Grace v. Sessions*, challenging the implementation of *A-B-* at the border, where asylum officers have been directed to turn away domestic violence and gang violence survivors before they even have the opportunity to apply. Two days after we filed the suit a federal court granted an emergency stay, blocking the deportation of our refugee plaintiffs.
- We utilized Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to demand transparency from government agencies that have power over how asylum cases are decided. For example, this year we used data obtained through our FOIA efforts to support our class action lawsuit *Damus v. Nielsen* and to expose irregularities surrounding Jeff Sessions' intervention in *Matter of A-B-*.



Federal judge orders return of deportation flight carrying 2 plaintiffs in asylum-policy challenge

BY DEBRA CASSENS WEISS  
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The judge in *Grace v. Sessions* orders the government to "turn the plane around."



CGRS Director Karen Musalo presents on refugee issues as part of Washington University's prestigious "Access to Justice" speaker series.

## Supporting Advocates through Expert Consultation, Training, and Resources

- This year CGRS provided critical support in over 7,000 individual asylum cases. 87 percent of these cases involved clients fleeing gender-based harms, gang violence, or anti-LGBTQ persecution.
- We also offered over 60 trainings and workshops, reaching over 8,000 practitioners.
- Our staff produced critical new resources for advocates, covering such topics as:
  - Effective litigation strategies in domestic violence cases post-*Matter of A-B*
  - Overcoming legal obstacles in children's asylum cases
  - Strategies for cases involving trafficking, sexual violence, and other gender-based harms
  - Avenues for asylum and related protections for DACA recipients
  - Human rights conditions in refugee-sending countries
- We developed the first ever free, searchable online database of expert witnesses who provide critical testimony in asylum cases.

## Advocating for the Just Treatment of Refugees

- We launched a national education and advocacy campaign under the banner of #ImmigrantWomenToo to mobilize public and congressional support for asylum-seeking women.
- We collaborated with community-based organizations in northern California to strengthen rapid response networks designed to support those targeted by immigration raids in the region.
- We provided extensive expert testimony in support of a legal challenge to the Safe Third Country Agreement, under which refugees who pass through the United States are barred from applying for asylum in Canada. We argued that under the Trump Administration's repressive policies, the United States can no longer be considered a "safe third country" for refugees.



A child traveling with the migrant caravan in November finds respite in a Mexico City baseball stadium.\*

\* Photo Credit: David McClain, Partner at Kazan McClain Satterley & Greenwood

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