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This case originated in Arizona.

PALOMA

Paloma is originally from Mexico. She has a thirteen-year-old son from a prior marriage named Tomás and a seven-year-old daughter from her current marriage named Margarita. Paloma's current husband is named Pedro. Paloma and Pedro met and fell in love eight years ago. Pedro is originally from Mexico, but he is now a lawful permanent resident of the United States.

Paloma, Pedro, and little Tomás settled in Arizona several years ago. A little while after Paloma and Pedro married, Pedro started abusing Paloma. He would hit Paloma repeatedly. He would insult and demean her often. On one occasion, Pedro struck her with such force on the side of the head that she lost her hearing for an entire day. The beatings were regular and severe. Pedro also physically abused Paloma's son Tomás from the time the boy was five years old. Pedro would beat Tomás with a belt as punishment whether or not Tomás had done anything wrong. He imposed arbitrary rules on the child and would punish him severely if the rules were ever broken. He would also impose grueling physical torture on the boy for the smallest acts of misbehavior. For example, if Tomás ever displeased Pedro by talking too loudly or leaving a toy on the floor, Pedro would punish the child by making him kneel against the wall holding heavy books in each of his hands. Tomás would have to raise the books over his own head and hold them there for long periods of time. If the kindergartner ever let his arms droop down from the weight of the books, Pedro would increase the length of the punishment.

Paloma soon became pregnant with Margarita. While she was pregnant, Pedro continued to physically and emotionally torment her. Once, he placed a sharp kitchen knife against Paloma's pregnant stomach and threatened to kill her. He whispered in her ear that if he killed her, no one would ever find out. Paloma believed his threat: she had no friends or family to whom she could turn for help in the U.S. She was completely dependent on Pedro for food and money for her son and new baby. She felt helpless and trapped in the abusive relationship.

After Margarita was born, Paloma decided to save herself and her two children from Pedro's violence. Since she had no support or family in the U.S., she and her children fled to Mexico to seek solace with her parents. She believed she was finally safe from Pedro. Unfortunately, though, Pedro followed her across the border. When Paloma was hospitalized briefly with an illness, Pedro seized the opportunity to kidnap Margarita from Paloma's parents' home. Pedro crossed back into U.S. territory and then filed for divorce and sole custody of Margarita.

Paloma was frantic at the thought of losing her daughter to her abuser. It took Paloma six months to apply for and receive a visitor's visa to reenter the U.S. and begin defending against Pedro's motion for custody. She had to leave Tomás in Mexico with her parents when she returned to the U.S., and she has been separated from her son ever since. Meanwhile, the custody

battle between Paloma and Pedro has dragged on, and the court has ordered Paloma to keep to a particular schedule for visiting Margarita. Pending final resolution of the case, she has shared custody with Pablo. However, if she misses even a day of visitation, Paloma believes that Pedro will report this to the court and move for termination of her custody and visitation with Margarita.

Paloma has received approval of her VAWA petition for residency. If she is forced to return to Mexico as the only way to get her green card under VAWA, Pedro has already demonstrated his willingness and ability to follow her there. If she is forced to go to Mexico, she may never see her daughter Margarita again. One of two things will probably happen. Either Pedro will petition the court for termination of Paloma's custody and visitation rights on the grounds that she abandoned Margarita and returned to Mexico, or he will simply kidnap Margarita again and disappear with her somewhere in the U.S. Paloma wants nothing more than to be reunited with her two children and build a safe, happy life for them away from Pedro's abuse. She risks all of this by returning to Mexico to get her green card.

This case originated in Arizona.

SUSANA

Susana is originally from Mexico. She met her husband, Manuel, in Mexico six or seven years ago. Manuel is a lawful permanent resident of the United States originally from Mexico. The two married after four years of dating and courtship. They later came to live in the United States and eventually had a child, who is a U.S. citizen. Susana also has two children living with her from a prior relationship.

Throughout their marriage, Manuel subjected Susana to severe physical and emotional abuse. Susana did not report many of the beatings to the police because she was afraid that Manuel would treat her more cruelly in retaliation. Susana's fear of Manuel continued to grow throughout the two years of their marriage. Eventually, her fear of Manuel overcame her fear of calling the police.

As soon as Susana began calling the police to help her, Manuel found himself facing charge after charge of domestic assault and battery. Susana called the police and had Manuel arrested after he held her at gunpoint in their home for an entire day. On another occasion, Manuel set fire to the bed while Susana and her sister were sleeping in it. He was charged with arson soon afterwards. The violence and fear in Susana's household reached breaking point when Manuel subjected Susana to an intense, bloody, and horrible beating for which he was later convicted of domestic assault and battery and placed in jail. Following this beating, Susana attempted suicide. She was so depressed and fearful of Manuel that she saw suicide as the only way out of the constant beatings, threats, and violence.

Susana finally decided to flee the U.S. and Manuel and return to her family in Mexico. She escaped with her children to her sister's home in a small Mexican town and attempted to rebuild her life there. Manuel followed her. He had been in jail in the U.S., serving out his sentence for domestic violence against Susana. The moment Manuel received a temporary work release from jail, he seized his opportunity to immediately cross the border to Mexico find Susana. He knew exactly where she lived. Once he located Susana in her sister's home, he attacked and injured both Susana and her sister and trashed Susana's sister's house. Susana called the Mexican police, but they did nothing to protect her. The police did not even take Manuel into custody. Realizing that the only country with laws to protect her from domestic violence was the United States, Susana and her children fled back to Arizona. There, Susana obtained an enforceable restraining order against Manuel.

Susana consulted a lawyer when she returned to the U.S. and filed a VAWA self-petition for residency. Though her visa petition has been approved, Susana remains fearful about the next step in getting her green card. Under the current law, Susana will be forced to return to Mexico as the only way of getting her green card. Once she returns to Mexico, Susana has no doubt that Manuel will follow her and hurt or kill her. Susana knows from experience that the Mexican

police will not protect her from Manuel's violence and abuse. Therefore, the only place where Susana can be protected from injury, torture, and death at the hands of Manuel is the United States. Outside U.S. borders, Susana's restraining order is unenforceable, and Susana faces grave danger, and possibly death if she is forced to leave.

This case originated in Arizona.

ELENA

Elena is originally from Mexico. At a young age, she met and married Pablo, also a Mexican citizen. Pablo subjected Elena to years of physical and emotional abuse and terror. She tried to get police and family members to help her, but no one could keep her safe from Pablo in Mexico. Police never arrested Pablo for constantly beating her, and the laws of Mexico did not hold Pablo accountable for spouse abuse. Eventually, Elena divorced Pablo. This did not end the violence, though. Pablo continued to stalk Elena even after the divorce, and he attempted to kill her on one occasion. Fearing that Pablo would kill her in Mexico and knowing that she could not be safe in that country, Elena fled to Arizona.

In Arizona, she met a man named Kevin, who was a United States citizen. After two years of dating, she and Kevin married. To Elena's shock and dismay, Kevin soon began to mistreat her. He had a drinking problem that continued to worsen. He would lose control and go into rages of destruction and violence. Along with damaging household property and shouting threats and obscenities at Elena, Kevin also attacked her. He would pull her hair, grab her wrists, and chase her out of the house. Once Kevin violently attacked Elena when Elena was in her seventh month of a delicate pregnancy for which she had spent the previous month hospitalized and bedridden. Luckily, the baby was not hurt following Kevin's violent assault on Elena.

Elena called the police more than once during her marriage to Kevin. She ultimately succeeded in obtaining a restraining order against him, granting her legal custody of the child and allowing her to separate from Kevin. Now that she has completed her VAWA petition for residency, she faces the horror of returning to Mexico as the only way of obtaining her green card under VAWA.

Elena originally entered the U.S. because she was fleeing her violent, abusive ex-husband, Pablo. This man stalked her for years, and he attempted to kill her. He is still waiting in Mexico for her to return, and he knows exactly where she would stay if she returned to get her green card. Elena knows that the Mexican police are ineffective at protecting battered women from their violent husbands--their ineffectiveness forced Elena to leave Mexico in the first place, since she was not being protected there by the Mexican government. Elena left Mexico alone, without friends, family, or money, out of sheer terror. She fled in order to save her own life. She has made friends in Arizona and has a support system of friends and service providers helping her and her young child. Now, if she must return to Mexico, the laws of the United States will not protect her, and her life will be in peril once more.

This case originated in Arizona.

MERCEDES

Mercedes is originally from Mexico. She married Scott, a United States citizen whom she met in Mexico. Scott brought Mercedes to live with him in the United States. Scott seemed like a charming, loving person when Mercedes dated and fell in love with him. After they got married though, Mercedes discovered that Scott had a serious substance abuse problem and an inability to control his temper. He began physically and emotionally abusing Mercedes.

Scott kept Mercedes isolated in their home. He monitored her movements very closely, refusing to let her leave the house without him. She was not allowed to talk with others on the telephone or make friends of her own. She wanted to work to help support the family, but Scott refused to file a petition to obtain Mercedes's legal immigration status and work authorization. Consequently, Mercedes was left alone in the house, completely dependent on Scott for all her necessities. Because of Scott's drug and alcohol addictions, he was often fired from jobs. During the three years of their marriage, Scott and Mercedes were frequently homeless, with Scott unemployed and hooked on drugs, and Mercedes unable to work because Scott would not file for her immigration status.

Scott and Mercedes had a child, Alison, who brought much joy to Mercedes's life. Otherwise, Mercedes was absolutely miserable in her marriage. Scott had begun punching, slapping, and kicking Mercedes on a regular basis, and she was very afraid of him. He would go into rages, beating her severely and destroying furniture within their home. Whenever Mercedes would try to call the police, Scott would threaten to have her deported and to take Alison away from her. Nevertheless, Mercedes reported Scott's abuse to the police three times. Each time, the police intervened, and Scott was jailed and prosecuted for domestic violence.

Mercedes fled her home and entered a battered women's shelter after Scott brutally raped and beat her one evening. She consulted with attorneys about initiating a VAWA self-petition. Once her petition is approved, she will have to return to Mexico as the only way of getting her green card under VAWA. This would pose a very grave danger and hardship to Mercedes and her daughter.

If Mercedes is forced to return to Mexico, she will have no one with whom to leave her daughter. She is very afraid that Scott will try to take Alison away from her, either by filing with the court for custody or by kidnaping the little girl. Mercedes cannot afford to make the trip to Mexico, but if she had to return, she would have to take Alison with her.

Scott knows where Mercedes would be staying in Mexico, and she is afraid that he would follow her and take their child away from her. He is a U.S. citizen, so he can enter and leave Mexico easily. He has done so in the past. Mercedes feels that if he found her in Mexico, he could have the opportunity to physically assault her and then take their child. Mercedes would

not be safe from Scott's abuse if she were forced to return to Mexico to get her green card.

This case originated in Arizona.

MARIA

Maria is 41 years old, originally from a small village in Mexico. In Mexico, Maria was a single parent. Her daughter's biological father never took interest in providing emotional or financial support for them. Maria, who has a degree in veterinary medicine, worked for a cooperative farm. She went to Arizona eight years ago, when her daughter was eleven months old, to visit a brother who lived in Nogales, Arizona, and her sister and father, who owned property and lived in Tucson. At a gathering at her sister's house, she met Jim, an American citizen. Maria said Jim "seemed real nice," and when they started dating, he "treated me and my daughter so nice." She said, "I felt so special. I never thought things would change."

Two months after their wedding, the abuse began. The couple lived with Jim's parents for the first four months of their marriage. Jim and his family drink excessively. When Jim was not drinking, Maria found him to be in a bad mood.

During their first argument, Jim grabbed Maria by the neck. His parents pulled him away, but his aggression toward Maria only intensified after this incident. While Jim assured Maria when they married that he would help her file for immigration status, he soon changed his attitude. Jim did the initial filing, but was too drunk to attend the interview meeting. He also began to accuse Maria of marrying him for her papers. Whenever Maria has attempted to call the police or involve his family in their private affairs, Jim has threatened to report her and have her deported.

Maria is a veterinarian, but Jim has forbidden her from working in her field. She now cleans hotel rooms to make ends meet. Maria's young daughter Rosa stays with Jim during the night while Maria is at work. Often Jim wakes Rosa up in the middle of the night to go out and buy alcohol for him, or to make him something to eat.

Maria is subject to many types of abuse from Jim. A large and powerful man, he abuses her physically and has flung her across a room into a wall. He insults and threatens her, refuses to support the family financially, and forces her to perform sexual acts against her will. Rosa, now eight years old, has been witness to it all.

Maria often takes refuge at her sister's house, but Jim always finds her. He has threatened to kill her if she attempts to leave again. She is afraid to enter a shelter, because she would have to change jobs in order for Jim not to find her. This is impossible due to her current immigration status.

Now, four years into the marriage, Maria has been diagnosed with depression and anxiety and is under medical treatment. When she speaks of her experience, she cries and her body shivers as in a trance. This handsome, charismatic man double her size is so different from the

man she originally met. Rosa's behavior has also been affected due to her witnessing the abuse of her stepfather. Recently, the situation has begun to worsen for Maria and Rosa. Jim has begun to experience blackouts and Maria has had to drag him into the apartment on several occasions. Because of his large size and her fear of being seriously injured from an attack, Maria has made arrangements with a neighbor who will call the police when she hears fighting.

Although Maria has filed a self petition without Jim's knowledge, she is unable to return to Mexico to obtain her green card. Jim monitors her whereabouts and will not let her leave; he has threatened to find her anywhere and kill her if she leaves again. In addition, Rosa came to this country as an infant, and it is the only home she knows. Maria cannot uproot Rosa from school and activities for an unknown amount of time to return to Mexico. However, she is, of course, afraid to leave Rosa with Jim. Finally, because she only works as a maid and is the sole supporter of the family, she cannot afford a trip to Mexico. She may have to be there for several months, and has no family, friends, or support system there. For these reasons, Maria should be allowed to obtain her green card here in the United States. Once she has obtained it she will possess the power necessary to leave Jim and end his abuses.

This case originated in Iowa.

AYESHA

Ayesha is originally from Lesotho, a kingdom surrounded by South Africa. She fled to the United States along with her three children after her husband, Omari, was murdered by the head of a counterfeiting gang. The gang had been harassing Omari, who was the paymaster of a mine, for over a year. They had wanted him to switch the real currency of the mine with counterfeit currency. After a year of threats and intimidation, Omari still refused to switch the currency, and the gang shot and killed him in the street. After his murder, police asked Ayesha to assist them in catching those responsible for the crime. As a result, the gang leader and his supporters discovered that Ayesha knew about their schemes. They threatened her life and her children's lives and forced them to seek refuge in the U.S.

While living in the U.S. and taking classes at a state university, Ayesha met Todd, a lawful permanent resident of the United States. Todd helped Ayesha deal with the pain of losing her husband and leaving her country. Soon, Todd and Ayesha became friends and started dating. They later married and settled in Iowa.

Just after they were married, Todd started treating Ayesha and her children cruelly. He would insult the children and scream at them, and most often he would simply neglect them. He would also push and slap Ayesha whenever he would get angry at her. This violence only escalated throughout their marriage.

Todd's alcoholism soon affected his ability to work. He quit working full-time, and Ayesha was forced to assume all his work responsibilities and entirely support the family. She and her children were treated as slaves by Todd, always doing the cooking and cleaning for him. As time passed Todd's behavior only grew more violent and erratic. On one occasion, he punched Ayesha in the face as she was driving the car, causing her to lose control of the car and veer off the road. On other occasions, Todd would wake the entire family up in the middle of the night, ordering all the children to gather around him and listen as he insulted their mother and called her "an awful whore."

In May of 1998, Todd unleashed his rage on Ayesha for the last time. He kicked her leg repeatedly, causing a deep wound and an infection called "cellulitis." Ayesha still limps to this day and suffers leg pain as a result of Todd's abuse. Following this incident, Ayesha called the police and received a no contact order from the court, requiring that Todd stay away from Ayesha and the children. Todd eventually plead guilty to the charge of domestic violence for attacking Ayesha. A month later, he was arrested again for violating the no contact order by calling Ayesha's daughter and threatening Ayesha and her family with physical violence. He has threatened to kill Ayesha for having him arrested.

After separating from Todd, Ayesha consulted an attorney and filed her VAWA self-

petition for residency. Now she must return to South Africa as the only way of getting her green card. Such a return to South Africa will put Ayesha and her children at serious risk of injury or death for several reasons. First, the counterfeiting gang that murdered Ayesha's first husband is eager to retaliate against Ayesha for assisting the South African police in the investigation. They have threatened to kill Ayesha and her family. Second, there is a current political crisis in Lesotho, accompanied by a military invasion from South Africa, which has contributed to instability in the region. Because of the instability, Ayesha and her family are even more vulnerable to terrorist attacks by the counterfeiting gang. Third, Ayesha fears that Todd will travel to South Africa and try to hurt her or kill her. Law enforcement in South Africa does not believe it is their job to intervene to protect victims of domestic violence, and will do nothing to enforce Ayesha's no contact order. Further, there is a general lack of resources available for battered women in Lesotho. Because of all these reasons, forcing Ayesha and her three children to return to Lesotho as the only avenue to obtain her green card under VAWA puts her at risk of torture and death.

This case originated in Iowa.

ALLEGRA

Allegra is originally from Mexico. She came to the United States with her family when she was in high school. Just after graduating from high school, she met Diego, a lawful permanent resident of the United States. The two courted and dated for a year-and-a-half, and then they married in a church before family and friends.

It was only a week after the wedding that Diego began to change. He became very possessive and would not allow Allegra to see her family. Allegra found herself completely isolated from the outside world. She was not allowed to have visitors come to visit or speak to people she knew at church. Eventually Diego forced her to move with him to another state where she knew no one. They stayed at his sister's house where she was often denied food. In time, Diego began sexually abusing her, making her have sex with him against her will. He would rape her so brutally that she suffered bleeding and internal injury. After one of these incidents, Allegra fled to her brother's house, and Diego followed her. He threatened her brother's life, and he told Allegra that unless she came back to him, she would never see her brother again. Someone in Allegra's family called the police to the scene. When they arrived, the police only spoke with Diego, since he was the only English speaker in the group. To Allegra's amazement and horror, the police left without arresting Diego.

A few months later, when Allegra was pregnant with their first child, Diego almost killed her. Allegra was sick with a high fever and the flu. Diego had refused to take her to a doctor, telling her that since she did not have a social security number, she would be deported if she sought medical treatment. As the night wore on, Allegra became cold and asked Diego to turn up the thermostat in the house. When Diego refused to do this, Allegra got up and tried to do it herself. That was when Diego pushed her back to the bed and began to suffocate her. He picked her up by her neck and punched her repeatedly. Then he slammed her head against the door. There was no phone in the house, so she could not call for help. Allegra screamed loudly, and Diego threw her back on the bed and covered her mouth forcefully with his hand, until he drew blood from her mouth. Finally, he raped her and left her there on the bed.

The next day, Allegra miscarried their child. All that day, she begged Diego to take her to the hospital, as she was bleeding profusely and was sick with fever. He told her to stay in bed and responded, "our problems are private ones." Towards the evening, though, Diego finally called Allegra's parents, who came to pick her up and take her to a doctor. Allegra has not had contact with Diego since that day.

Allegra filed a VAWA self-petition for residency on the basis of her abusive relationship with Diego. She has been receiving mental health counseling since her separation from Diego, and she is trying to rebuild her life and make plans for attending college. She wishes to become a teacher.

If Allegra is forced to return to Mexico to get her green card under VAWA, she will face serious danger. Diego knows her address in Mexico and has already called her family members in Mexico, threatening to hurt Allegra if she returns. Allegra knows that Diego has a gun and would not be afraid to use it to kill her. She is certain that Mexico lacks the laws and services to protect her from Diego's abuse. She is also terrified that if she returns to Mexico, Diego will follow her there and finally kill her for leaving him.

This case originated in Iowa.

MARISIA

Marisia is a citizen of Mexico. She met her husband, Nicolo, in Mexico when he was visiting his family there. Nicolo was living in California at the time and was a lawful permanent resident of the United States. Nicolo and Marisia began a long-distance relationship which lasted for the next six years. At the end of that period, Nicolo proposed to Marisia, and the two married in Las Vegas the next year.

After the wedding, Marisia noticed Nicolo's behavior changing. He was almost never home, and he forbade her from leaving the house or making friends. Marisia was required to stay in the house at all times, so if there were no food in the house, Marisia would not eat. In fact, she lost 20 pounds in the first month of their marriage. She was incredibly depressed and lonely, and she was also entirely dependent on Nicolo for all her necessities.

When Nicolo did come home, he was usually drunk or high on marijuana or cocaine. He would yell insults at Marisia and demean her in front of others. When she was pregnant, he would not allow her to see a doctor for check-ups. He also became physically abusive when angry, often pushing her or grabbing her roughly by the arms and leaving welts and bruises on her skin.

Marisia finally decided to leave Nicolo after the birth of their second child. She had grown increasingly fearful of Nicolo and depressed at his mistreatment of her. She received a restraining order against him, but he violated it often. He would come by the house to talk to Marisia and try to convince her to come back to him. He has continued to call her repeatedly to harass and threaten her, even after she received a permanent restraining order. Although he continues to harass and threaten her, the restraining order has made him reduce his physical violence. Marisia is certain that the restraining order is the only thing keeping her safe from Nicolo.

Marisia believes that if she must return to Mexico to get her green card, Nicolo will follow her there. He remains in contact with his family in Mexico. Marisia is afraid that he will try to hurt or kill her there, since her restraining order will not be enforceable outside the jurisdiction of the United States. In addition, Marisia is fearful that Nicolo will try to kidnap the children while she is in Mexico. He has already threatened to do so.

Marisia is trying desperately to rebuild her life after her marriage. She and her children are receiving counseling at a shelter in Iowa. In addition, Marisia's restraining order grants her temporary custody of the children and requires Nicolo to pay child support. Marisia intends to file for divorce, and she knows that Nicolo will "fight her forever" for custody of the children. Once a custody battle ensues, Marisia will not be able to leave the United States to get her green card in Mexico. If she does leave, she will risk losing custody of her children because she will

not be able to comply with any visitation orders while she is out of the country. For these reasons, to be safe, Marisia needs to obtain her green card in the U.S.

This case originated California, moved to New Mexico, and is currently in Iowa.

CONCHITA

Conchita is a 30-year-old woman from Mexico. She entered the United States with her parents at age 4. She attended school in California, and in high school she began dating Simon, an American citizen. When she was 18, Conchita became pregnant, and she and Simon got married and dropped out of high school.

Six months after their marriage Simon became physically abusive. He frequently punched, kicked, hit, and choked Conchita. He was extremely controlling, and verbally and emotionally abusive as well. If Conchita did not abide by Simon's "rules," she was beaten. She was not allowed to leave the house or yard alone; if Simon could not accompany her, he would send one of his siblings. She could not even walk to the corner to buy milk for her child. Simon isolated Conchita from her family, and she was not allowed to visit or call them. Her family did not try to make contact for fear that Simon would attack them or beat Conchita.

Conchita and her family were unaware of her rights and options. She did not want to have any more children, because she feared bringing anyone else into this abusive situation. However, Simon forbade her to take any contraceptive measures, threatening to take their child away from her because she was not a citizen. When Conchita became pregnant with her second child, Simon began to get involved in drugs. This made his violence worse, and she never knew what to expect from him. Conchita was in despair, and her children were the only reason for her to continue living. When she was seven months pregnant with her third child, Simon found out that Conchita's mother was secretly meeting with Conchita and giving her money to buy food for the children. He became enraged at Conchita, and pushed her onto the couch and sat on her stomach, strangling her until she could not breathe.

By 1994, Conchita could not take any more abuse. One day while Simon was out buying drugs, Conchita called her parents to come get her and the children. She was able to hide from him even though he harassed her friends and family. Conchita hid in California and then took the children to New Mexico. However, Simon tracked her down and found her in New Mexico, where he continued to abuse and harass her. She obtained a protective order and often had it enforced. Then Simon began to stalk her, and he would break into the house while she was gone to hide and attack her unexpectedly. He also began abusing the children. Conchita and the children entered a shelter in New Mexico, and then moved to Iowa to be with her sister where her protection order continues to be enforceable.

Conchita wants to become a lawful permanent resident of the United States so that she can provide for her three children. However, returning to Mexico for consular processing could be extremely dangerous. Simon could track her down again, this time in a place where her protective order could not be enforced. Additionally, Conchita cannot afford a trip to Mexico, especially with her three children. Yet if she leaves the children behind, Simon could take them

away or abuse them further. Conchita came to the United States as a young child, and her children are American citizens and half Caucasian. There is no one in Mexico to provide them with shelter or support, and they are unfamiliar with the language and culture. Conchita must be able to receive her green card within the United States in order to ensure the safety and welfare of herself and her three children.

This case originated in Iowa, moved to Kansas, and is currently in Iowa.

TATIANA

Tatiana came to the United States from Mexico to visit her sister and parents in Iowa. While there she met Antonio, a lawful permanent resident. He was very respectful to her family's traditions and asked her parents for permission to date her. Tatiana had her visitor's visa extended, and she and Antonio dated and eventually married.

Immediately after their marriage, Antonio became extremely abusive. When Tatiana expressed her unhappiness, Antonio promised to change and said he would kill himself if she left him. One day she went to talk to her family at the restaurant they owned, because she was considering leaving Antonio. While she was there, Antonio came into the restaurant waving a gun. He threatened to kill her family if she did not leave that moment and go to live with him in Kansas. Naturally she left with him. The police were unable to locate him.

Antonio's behavior only worsened once they were in Kansas, especially since he succeeded in isolating Tatiana from the world. He would not allow her to call her family or talk to the neighbors. She obeyed him out of fear for what he might do to her. Tatiana became pregnant, but lost the baby when Antonio threw her up against the wall during an argument. After this incident, she escaped the apartment and called her sister in Iowa. She returned to Iowa with her sister and obtained a protective order against Antonio.

Tatiana is now receiving counseling in Iowa, and looks forward to living independently and supporting herself. However, returning to Mexico to receive her green card would be dangerous. Her protective order would not be valid there, and Antonio could find her in Mexico and abuse her without fear of legal repercussions. For her own safety, it is necessary that Tatiana be permitted to remain in the United States to become a lawful permanent resident.

This case originated in Michigan.

YAA

Yaa is a 36-year-old mother of two. She is originally from Nigeria. She met her first love, Martin, while he was visiting family in Nigeria. Martin is a lawful permanent resident of the United States. Martin and Yaa courted for a long period of time, after which Martin persuaded Yaa to marry him and join him in the United States. They married according to the customary traditions in Nigeria. Following their marriage, Martin assisted Yaa in obtaining a visitor visa to come to the U.S. He promised to support Yaa in her desire to further her education in the U.S. and to petition for her residency. Yaa trusted her husband completely.

When Yaa arrived in the United States, Martin took her passport and assured her that everything would be fine. They celebrated both court and church weddings in the U.S. Immediately after the wedding, Yaa discovered that she was pregnant. She wanted to go to school, but Martin refused to let her go. Martin's behavior towards her seemed to be changing before her eyes. He would not let her leave the house alone for fear that other men might find her attractive and "steal her away." In fact, he refused to file immigration papers for Yaa and threatened her with deportation if she ever dared disobey his orders.

Martin began physically abusing Yaa after the birth of their first child. He would slap her when she would question his authority or inquire about her immigration status. He would frequently spit on her if she refused to have sex with him. He also used a hidden recording device to tape record all of her telephone conversations. As a result, Yaa felt more and more like a prisoner in her own home.

A very severe incident of abuse occurred when Martin beat Yaa with his fists and a bottle of alcohol. Yaa suffered such severe facial injuries that she was rushed in an ambulance to a local hospital for treatment. The police arrested Martin and charged him with domestic violence. He was prosecuted and convicted of this crime. Following this conviction, Martin decided to punish Yaa by refusing to pay the house mortgage or buy food and other necessities. He also shut off the telephone and the gas. Yaa became desperate and sought assistance from her best friend. She moved out of her and Martin's home and found a job.

Martin's family in Nigeria dislikes Yaa and blames her for Martin's arrest and conviction. They called Yaa from Nigeria and threatened to have her deported because she "brought shame" to the family. They also threatened to take her children away from her. Despite all these threats, Yaa has remained strong and sought legal counsel to help her file a VAWA self-petition for residency. The petition has been approved, and Yaa has received a permanent restraining order against Martin.

It is clear that if Yaa is forced to return to Nigeria in order to obtain lawful permanent residency under VAWA with her two U.S. citizen children, she will face retribution from

Martin's family. They know where she lives in Nigeria, and they have threatened to hurt her and kidnap the children. Yaa would have to bring the children with her to Nigeria because she has no family she can leave them with in the U.S. She is very afraid that if she sets foot in Nigeria, Martin's family will cause her great bodily harm and may even kill her.

This case originated in Illinois and is currently in Michigan.

BEATRIZ

Beatriz is originally from Mexico. She met Rafael, a lawful permanent resident of the United States, who was originally from Mexico. They began to live together in Illinois, then Rafael was transferred to Michigan by his employer. Beatriz discovered she was pregnant and Rafael invited her to join him in Michigan, where they were married.

Their relationship was not always a physically violent one, although Rafael would often insult or yell at Beatriz in front of other people. Only two days after they married, though, he told her he would not help her with her immigration papers. He said he preferred to use her unlawful immigration status as an insurance measure, so that Beatriz would not be tempted to leave him. He often threatened to call the INS and have her deported if she ever left him.

In the early months of their marriage, Rafael would slap Beatriz when he became angry with her. On one occasion, when Beatriz confronted Rafael about an affair she suspected he was having, he shoved her so hard, she fell out of bed. She was six months pregnant at the time. Other times, Rafael would get drunk and pull Beatriz's hair and punch her in the face.

About three weeks after their son was born, Rafael came home very late and began hitting and shouting at Beatriz. She ran out of the apartment building, and Rafael followed her, trying to force her back inside the building. Rafael pushed her down, and she fell, scraping her knees and elbows. Finally, a neighbor called the police, and Rafael was jailed for the night. Beatriz was taken to the hospital for treatment of her injuries. The next morning, when Rafael was released from jail, he violated the court's stay away order and returned home to Beatriz. Although she did not want him at home, she was so frightened of what he might do to her that she could not ask him to leave. Later, when Rafael had to appear in court to answer charges of domestic violence, he threatened to kill Beatriz and take their son away from her unless she told the judge that she wanted Rafael to return home. The judge did not speak Spanish and Beatriz did not speak English, and there was no translator, so the judge allowed Rafael to translate. Beatriz had no independent way to communicate with the judge and was terrified to do anything but agree that she wanted him back. Beatriz told the judge exactly that, and Rafael returned home to continue his abuse of Beatriz.

Soon after this incident, Beatriz made a trip to Mexico with their son to have him baptized. Rafael came with them. When Rafael had to return to his job in the U.S., he promised to send Beatriz money and come back for her and the baby in a month or two. After a while, he stopped sending money, and when Beatriz called him, he said that he did not want her to return to the U.S. Beatriz and the baby were left stranded, without money or food, in Mexico. A cousin in Illinois offered to take Beatriz and the baby in, and thus they re-entered the U.S.

If Beatriz is forced to return to Mexico to get her green card under VAWA, she will lose

access to the mental health counseling she is currently receiving. Beatriz desperately needs regular sessions of counseling in order to help her understand and cope with the severe physical and emotional abuse she endured in her marriage to Rafael. Mexico has no such mental health services for battered women. In addition, Beatriz is the sole caretaker of her U.S. citizen son. If she leaves for Mexico, she will lose her job, and she will not be able to support her child or make enough money for the trip back to the United States. Further, Beatriz fears that traveling again to Mexico for even a short time to get her green card will be harmful to her son. When they were in Mexico, her son had severe gastrointestinal problems due to the food and water that the doctors could never fully treat. Beatriz should be allowed to stay in the United States to adjust her residency status, so that she may continue to strengthen her mental health, protect her son's health, and build a new life of her own, free from Rafael's control and abuse.

This case originated California and is currently in Utah.

MILAGROS

Milagros, originally from Mexico, met Milton in California. Milton is an American citizen from Utah who was working at a religious mission in California when he met Milagros. The two became friends, began dating, and eventually became engaged. They were married in Utah in April of 1998.

On the way home from their honeymoon, the couple was in a terrible car accident. Milton was not seriously injured, but Milagros suffered severe injuries to her spine, knee, ankle, and face. She underwent an operation and was incapacitated for a time. She had a difficult time taking care of herself while Milton was at work all day, unable to perform such tasks as bathing and preparing food. When Milton arrived home at night, he ignored Milagros and would not even talk to her. He often came home drunk. Milagros soon discovered that Milton had a drug and alcohol problem.

Milton began to resent Milagros for her injuries, complaining that she used up too much electricity, water, food, and gas without making a financial contribution to the household. Milagros was physically unable to work, but Milton showed no signs of sympathy for her condition. One night, Milton came home drunk and began to argue with Milagros about finances. He became furious with Milagros and hit her. After this incident, Milagros informed Milton's parents that he was abusing drugs and alcohol and that he had hit her. His parents talked with him about his problems, but he became only more enraged at Milagros for telling them.

Milton began to hit Milagros more frequently. In July of 1998, Milagros's physical therapist noticed extensive bruising on Milagros's arm. The therapist urged her to call the police, but she was too afraid that Milton would have her deported. Milagros knew that if she were deported, she could not get the medical attention she needed.

One night in August, Milton began verbally abusing Milagros. Milagros left the apartment to give Milton the opportunity to calm down, but his temper was no better when she returned. She tried to use the phone, but Milton promptly disconnected the line. When she tried to leave again, Milton took her shoes from her and threw them away. Milagros began to cry, but this only further angered Milton. He threw her down on the bed and slapped her face repeatedly, and then threw water on her. Milagros again tried to leave, determined to get help. Milton then grabbed her by the hair and pulled her back, and grabbed her backpack and threw it to the floor. Eventually, she was able to call a friend for help, and she reported Milton's behavior to the police.

Milagros has since separated from Milton, and has filed a VAWA self-petition for residency. However, returning to Mexico for consular processing would be detrimental to her

health and safety. Milton could follow Milagros to Mexico, where he could abuse her without legal consequences. Also, in Mexico, Milagros would not have access to the advanced medical care she needs to recover from her severe injuries. Her family in Mexico is not able to support her, and she would not be able to get a job there because of her disabilities. For these reasons, Milagros must be permitted to remain in the United States to receive her green card.

This case originated in Florida.

FELICIA

Felicia, originally from Honduras, traveled to Florida six years ago to visit her aunt. Peter, an American citizen, was newly divorced and renting a room in her aunt's house. The two began spending time together and soon moved in together. They were married four years later.

The couple's problems began when Felicia first discovered she was pregnant. Peter did not want her to have the child, and ordered her to have an abortion. Felicia refused, and Peter hit her and then forced her to have sex with him. Felicia was three months pregnant at the time. The next month, Peter took her to an abortion clinic, but she protested. She said she wanted to have the child, and if Peter did not, he could leave.

Peter accepted this, but he did not leave. Instead, he began to resent Felicia, and frequently hit and insulted her for no reason, often in front of other people. He found fault in everything Felicia did, especially in her cooking. Peter also refused to let her leave the house, even though he routinely stayed out until 5:00 or 6:00 a.m. Even after the baby was born, Peter ignored his family and continued to go out every night.

Although Peter physically abused Felicia from the beginning of the relationship, she was afraid to say or do anything about it at first. However, she realized she could not continue to tolerate the abuse when she observed its effects on her son Justin. He cried a lot, often retreating to hide in the corner, trembling and sobbing. Felicia began to call the police when Peter abused her, and the neighbors also called the police when they heard fighting.

The police were called during one incident in December of 1993, when Peter became jealous of a male neighbor he thought was interested in Felicia. He punched Felicia in the chest and arms with his fists, and bit her right arm. A neighbor overheard the noise and called the police, but Felicia asked them not to arrest Peter. During another incident in 1995, Peter became enraged and pushed Felicia against a wall, breaking her nose in two places. Felicia ran out into the street covered in blood, and someone outside called for an ambulance. The next month Peter beat Felicia again, first grabbing her hair and banging her head against the wall. Then he hit her, kicked her, and punched her in the face, causing her nose to bleed. Incidents such as these were frequent throughout Peter and Felicia's relationship.

On one evening in September of 1997, Peter was drunk when Felicia got home from work. He insulted her and screamed at her, and told her to hand over the car keys because the car was in his name. While Felicia had paid for part of the car, Peter would not let her use it, even if she had to go to work or to Justin's school. Felicia slept in Justin's room that night and locked the door. Peter tried to force the door open with a knife but did not succeed. The next morning, Justin awoke before Felicia and opened the door to his room. At that moment, Peter ran and kicked the door open completely, and then began to struggle with Felicia. He grabbed her wallet

and removed the money from it, and then grabbed her hand and bent her long nails all the way back. Felicia's nails all broke and were bleeding profusely. Peter then grabbed her by the neck and said he was going to kill her. Felicia got loose and went into the other room to call the police, but Peter came after her and grabbed the telephone out of her hands, throwing it to the floor. He then took her beeper and threw it to the floor as well, where it broke into many pieces. Felicia quickly picked up Justin, who was yelling and crying, and called out to people on the street to call the police. She then got dressed and left, taking Justin, and went to stay at a friend's house.

Felicia decided she could not tolerate any more abuse and refused to move back to the house. When she returned briefly to retrieve her belongings, Peter insulted her and tried to hit her. He began to call her at her friend's house, insulting and threatening her over the phone. In October, he showed up at Justin's babysitter's house and cursed and threatened Felicia there. He said he was going to crash his car into Felicia's. A few weeks later he showed up there again and began to argue with Felicia. He again pulled her nails back, making them break and bleed. He also threatened to shoot Felicia. When she called the police, he fled. Felicia was frightened by his threats and obtained a restraining order against him. The restraining order made Peter even more livid. Shortly after it was filed, Felicia found that the passenger window of her car had been smashed while she was at work. Two days later, the rear window had been broken.

The next month, Felicia noticed that Peter was following her while she was shopping. She told him to leave her alone, but he kept following her. Finally, she left the store to get away from him. While she was opening the car door, Peter grabbed her hair and pulled on it. He began to punch her on the face and body, and he bit her on the left arm. A bystander called the police, and they arrived and arrested Peter. Felicia was taken to the hospital and treated for head trauma and face contusions.

Felicia has filed a self-petition but is afraid because returning to Honduras for consular processing would be extremely dangerous. Peter is enraged over her restraining order. Despite the order, Peter has kept stalking her. Only Peter's arrest has offered any relief. Felicia fears that Peter will continue stalking her and follow her to Honduras where the order would not be valid. The law in Honduras would not protect her from Peter's abuses. Felicia also faces the hardship of the trip's expense, especially if she took Justin along. However, if she left him behind, Peter could obtain full custody of him in her absence. Felicia must be permitted to remain in this country to obtain her green card, and must not be forced to return to Honduras for any reason.

This case originated in Florida.

EMILIA

Emilia is a 41-year-old Costa Rican national. She arrived with a visitor's visa to the United States in 1983. In 1984, she met Denis, a lawful permanent resident of the United States from Costa Rica, and later moved in with him. Emilia had two children from previous relationships, one of which was a United States citizen. She had two more children in America with Denis. After nine years of living with Denis, Emilia married him in 1993.

Eventually they separated, but in 1996 they decided to move in together again and give the relationship another try. Denis insisted that Emilia and the children move into his neighborhood, away from their schools and friends. He was very jealous, and wanted to isolate Emilia from her social circle. Denis did not permit Emilia to have any male friends or to smile at or greet any man, including the neighbors.

Denis was especially jealous of the boyfriend of Emilia's oldest daughter Janet. He frequently visited their home to see Janet, and Emilia would often entertain him if Janet had not arrived yet. One day, after he had called looking for Janet and had spoken with Emilia, Denis became furious with Emilia and accused her of having an affair with this young man. He called the young man and told him never to return to their house or call again. He told him he did not want his wife talking to other men. Then he came into the bedroom to find Emilia and began yelling at her. He grabbed her by the throat and poked her hard in the eye. Emilia called the police, and Denis waited for them because he didn't think he did anything warranting an arrest. However, the police saw evidence of Emilia's injuries and arrested him.

Another incident occurred on Halloween in 1997. Denis had lost his job, and Emilia did not have money to buy her son a Halloween costume. She was able to borrow some money from a neighbor, however. That morning at 7:00 a.m. Emilia's pager sounded, and Denis demanded to know who was calling her. Emilia did not recognize the number, and when she called it she discovered it was the neighbor from whom she borrowed the money. Denis was enraged, and grabbed the phone from Emilia, shouting at the neighbor that he better come and pick up Emilia because she would no longer have a place to stay. He then slammed the phone down and accused Emilia of having an affair with the neighbor. When she denied it, he became livid and grabbed her. Denis slapped Emilia and banged her head against the wall. Their three-year-old son Alex watched everything in terror. Emilia went to call the police, but Denis blocked her access to the phone. Determined, Emilia took Alex and walked to the police station. Denis was fearful of being arrested and followed her. He told the police he did not hit Emilia and there were no marks to prove it. An officer then asked Alex if he saw his dad hit his mom. Alex said yes, and Denis was arrested.

Emilia eventually obtained a protective order against her husband, and has separated from him. However, if Emilia is required to return to Costa Rica to legalize her status, she will again

face danger. The protective order she has against her husband will not be valid in Costa Rica, and Denis, who is also from Costa Rica, can easily travel there. If Denis follows Emilia there, she will not be protected by the law. Denis could try to harm her again, and this time perhaps kill her. She has no support system in Costa Rica to aid her financially, and could not afford the journey or the stay, especially with her children. Yet, it is not an option for Emilia to leave them behind, as Denis could kidnap them or try to obtain custody of them in her absence. Emilia must not be required to return to Costa Rica for any reason, and must be allowed to remain in this country under the protection of American law.

This case originated in Texas and is currently in Florida.

VERONICA

Veronica is a 23-year-old woman from Mexico. She entered the United States in December of 1992, and met Timothy, an American citizen, in 1994. The two were introduced by Veronica's employer in Texas, and began dating. Although they were busy working, Veronica and Timothy spent most of their free time together enjoying various activities. Veronica got to know Timothy's family well, and was quite comfortable around them. Timothy never showed signs of anger or violence at this stage, but he was always jealous and did not trust Veronica at all.

The couple moved in together in July of 1995, and Veronica soon realized she was pregnant. When she was seven months pregnant, Timothy began to argue with her. He became furious and kicked Veronica out of the house, literally throwing her out on the street. She had nowhere to go, and turned to her employer, who gave her a place to stay. Three days later, Timothy tracked Veronica down and asked her for \$100 to buy a refrigerator. After that, he apologized for kicking her out of the house. Veronica was pregnant and alone, and returned to Timothy out of desperation.

Timothy soon began threatening to report Veronica to immigration. His family joined in as well, constantly insulting and humiliating Veronica about her immigration status. They told her to get out of the country, and became especially hostile whenever they saw Veronica with something she bought. Timothy's father was adamant in his threats against Veronica, always shouting at her that she had better not hurt his son.

This behavior continued for the next two months, until Veronica gave birth to twins. She had medical complications in childbirth, and as a result will be unable to bear more children. No one accompanied her to the hospital to give birth, or came to visit her during her stay. Once she was discharged, she went to stay with a friend. A week later, Timothy learned she had given birth and came looking for her, demanding to see the children. When Veronica expressed outrage at his behavior, he promised to change and insisted they get back together. Again, Veronica felt she had no other options and returned to live with Timothy. Timothy began taking his little girl out frequently, showing her to all his family and friends. However, he ignored the male twin. He insisted the boy was not his, and would not believe Veronica when she explained the children were twins.

Timothy would not allow Veronica to work, nor would he give her any money. Veronica was forced to sell many of her belongings to have money for necessities. He began to prevent her from socializing and making friends, and she was quite lonely. She was only allowed to see Timothy and his family, all of whom were cold and rude to her.

In February of 1997, Timothy awoke in the morning enraged at Veronica. He had been

using drugs the night before and was still under their influence. Veronica was making breakfast when their little girl began to cry. Timothy shouted for Veronica to quiet the baby. Then out of nowhere, he grabbed Veronica and started hitting her in the head. He always hit her on the head because he said that if she tried to go to the police, her hair would cover the bruises. He said he would then tell the police she was a crazy illegal and try to get her deported.

Later that day, Timothy began to hit Veronica again, all over her body. He also bit her neck, which caused severe bruising, looking as if she had been hung with a rope. He then grabbed her by the hair. Veronica insisted that he let go of her, and he did. But he threatened to kill her and take away the children, and never allow her to see them again. He grabbed the children and took them to his mother's house, warning Veronica that if she called the police they would arrest her and deport her, and she would never see the children again. That evening, Timothy returned but left the children with his family. Veronica was in excruciating pain from the earlier beatings, and could barely talk or move. However, Timothy made a sexual advance on her, and then pried her legs apart and forced her to have sex with him. Veronica did not protest because she was terrified that he would start hitting her again.

In May of 1997, Timothy took Veronica to a movie, but got angry with her while they were there. He left her outside the theater, and although she was very far away, she had no choice but to walk home. When she finally got back to the apartment, Timothy refused to let her in. He gave her their son, saying he was only interested in keeping their daughter. Tired and defeated, Veronica sat on the doorstep and cried. Timothy yelled for her to take the boy and go away, but she had nowhere to go. Her son was crying and asking her for food, but she had nothing. Having been prevented from making any friends, Veronica had no one to turn to, and she and her son spent the night in a park. The next day Veronica went to Timothy's aunt for help, but she turned Veronica away.

Veronica went to live in a shelter, eventually with both of her children. However, in December Timothy took the children. Veronica was desperate, but could not find them. In January, Timothy contacted Veronica and told her that if she wanted to see the children, she had to get back together with him. Veronica pleaded with Timothy to bring the children back to her, and threatened to involve the police. Timothy said the police could do nothing, because he had taken the children out of the country. He made Veronica agree not to tell anyone he had brought the children to Mexico, and in exchange, he would allow her to see them again on condition that she got back together with him. Veronica had no choice but to agree.

Shortly after the family was reunited, they moved to Florida and stayed in a homeless shelter. Timothy worked at night, and began to arrive home drunk and under the influence of drugs. He always woke Veronica up when he got home, and one night he began to yell at her. He told her she was crazy, and grabbed her, pulling her over to the door. Veronica was holding one of the children, and so Timothy could not hurt her and left. Later he apologized and promised to change, and said he wanted to marry Veronica to formalize their commitment.

After they were married, the shelter enrolled Veronica in an English class, but Timothy said it was a crazy and unnecessary idea. He told her that if she wanted to continue being his wife, she should simply ask him everything because he had all the answers. One morning, Veronica told Timothy she planned to start English classes that day. He immediately went after her and grabbed her by the hair. He hit her on the top of the head, screaming at Veronica that she should not even think about taking the classes. The social workers at the shelter overheard the abuse and helped Veronica enter a battered women's shelter.

Veronica is now learning to survive on her own, she has filed a self-petition and wishes to create a safe and secure life for herself and the children in the United States. In order for her to become a lawful permanent resident, Veronica would have to face the danger of returning to Mexico for consular processing. Her primary fear is that Timothy would find her there. He had taken the children to Mexico to force her to return to him in the past and he has hunted her down and found her so many times before. He could physically abuse her there without legal consequences, and Veronica believes he may even try to kill her. Furthermore, he could easily take the children from her while they were in Mexico. He has taken them before, and is determined to do it again. If Veronica were able to remain in the United States to obtain her green card, she would have the consistent protection of American law enforcement against Timothy's violence and threats. For this reason, Veronica must not be required to return to Mexico for any reason.

This case originated in Massachusetts.

MONA

Mona is a native of Poland who entered the United States in 1993 on a visitor's visa with her first husband Darius, also a native of Poland. After visiting family members in Massachusetts, Darius and Mona decided to stay in the U.S. In late 1993, Mona had her first child, Nora, who is a U.S. citizen and now five years old.

Although Darius had exhibited an explosive temper prior to their marriage, it was nothing compared to the violence he unleashed upon Mona after they came to the U.S. During her pregnancy with Nora, Mona endured much abuse at the hands of Darius. He would push her out of bed and shove her to the floor. He also began slapping her when he would get angry, often pushing her to the floor and sitting on her chest or strangling her. His abuse ended with an incident in early 1995, when he fractured several of her fingers, leading her to get a restraining order and divorce him later that year.

After her divorce, Mona stayed with her family members in the U.S. Her family and friends provided her with strong emotional and financial support during this difficult time. Sometime in 1996, with her family's encouragement, Mona began to date Ronald. Ronald was a lawful permanent resident of the United States and also a native of Poland. Mona and Ronald fell in love and were married in 1997. In early 1998, they moved in together after Ronald found a job in the community where Mona was living.

Almost immediately after they moved in together, Mona's new husband began to insult, swear, and yell at Mona's daughter, Nora. He began to drink heavily, and when he did, he would behave extremely inappropriately in front of little Nora. He would watch pornographic videos and look at pornographic photographs from the Internet in the child's presence. Mona was very upset about Ronald's behavior, and when she confronted him about it, he would respond by screaming at Mona and frightening her with his verbal abuse.

Some months later, Mona became pregnant with Ronald's child. Ronald tried to force her to have an abortion, but Mona refused. This only made Ronald more uncontrollable and angry. Only a couple of months later, Ronald became violent during an argument and grabbed Mona by the throat. He tried to strangle her to death, and Mona struggled against his hands as they crushed her windpipe. She fought for her and her unborn baby's lives and finally managed to free herself from Ronald's grasp and call the police. Her husband was later arrested and convicted of assault and battery, and Mona obtained a restraining order against him.

Since then, Mona and her daughter have moved out of the house and are staying with close family and friends. Mona has been receiving counseling for the past seven months to help her recover from the horror of being abused by her husband. She has also filed a VAWA self-petition for permanent residence and has obtained a referral to a family law attorney who is

assisting her in obtaining custody of her two U.S. citizen children and a divorce from her abusive husband.

When Mona's priority date becomes current, she will be required to return to Poland as the only way of getting her green card under VAWA. If Mona is forced to return to Poland, she will face great danger and also the possibility of losing custody of her children. Mona is very afraid that her ex-husband Darius or her husband Ronald will follow her to Poland and abuse her there. She has restraining orders protecting her against both Darius and Ronald, but these restraining orders would not be valid outside the United States. Darius has already threatened to follow Mona to Poland and hurt or kill her when she arrives. Mona believes his threats and knows that he will have an easy time harming her in Poland because she has no family, friends, or restraining order to protect her from his violence in that country. Furthermore, Mona's current husband, Ronald is facing a domestic violence conviction which is a deportable offense. It is therefore highly likely that he will be deported to Poland in the near future. If this happens when Mona is in Poland getting her green card, she will face the threat of Ronald stalking her and taking his revenge on her for reporting the assault that led to his deportation. Mona knows that he is very angry at her and fears that he will kill her if she returns to Poland.

The other reason why Mona must not return to Poland to get her green card is because her children's custody is still at issue. Mona simply cannot leave the country while the matter of the children's custody is in dispute; otherwise, she will face losing custody of her two children. Considering all the emotional trauma Mona has suffered at the hands of her ex-husband and current husband, it is also clear that being separated from her young children for the time it takes to get her green card will cause Mona great emotional distress. She could be separated from them for a potentially long period of time while she is getting her green card. This will be detrimental to both Mona and the children, since the children rely upon Mona as their sole caretaker. Coupling this fact with the added threat of physical violence Mona faces at the hands of Darius and Ronald in Poland, Mona must be allowed to adjust her residency status in the United States.

This case originated in Massachusetts.

SONYA

Sonya is a 20-year-old native of Guyana. She entered the United States for the first time when she was thirteen years old to visit her aunt. She later began attending school in the U.S., where at the age of sixteen she met Felix. Felix was a native of Guatemala and lawful permanent resident of the United States. The two began dating and became girlfriend and boyfriend. Felix proposed to Sonya the following year, and they were married the next month.

Following their wedding, Sonya began to realize that there were many things she did not know about Felix. First of all, he began to bring his friends over to the house to drink and use drugs until the early morning hours. Seeing Felix and his friends drunk and high on drugs made Sonya upset and frightened, especially since Felix would become aggressive and verbally abusive toward her at these times. When Sonya became pregnant a few months later, Felix became irrationally jealous and began accusing her of having relationships with other men. He would become angry with her and push her across the room with great force. On one occasion, he pushed her backward when she was several months pregnant, and her pregnant belly crashed into the side of the bed frame. Although the baby was not hurt after that incident, Sonya became afraid of Felix and considered leaving him.

After the birth of their daughter, Katrina, Felix continued his abuse of Sonya, screaming and yelling at her whenever he would get drunk or angry. He began having an affair with another woman, whom he brought into the family home. It was not until May of 1997 that Sonya contacted a school teacher of hers for help. Felix had threatened her life during an argument, and Sonya feared that he would kill her. She called the police and received a restraining order against Felix. She then left him and went to live with her family.

Three months later, Felix begged her to take him back and give him another chance. She hoped that he had learned his lesson and had changed his behavior, so she moved in with him again. Unfortunately, he had not changed at all. He punched Sonya in the chest when he became angry and jealous one evening. Sonya moved out immediately and consulted an attorney who helped her file a VAWA self-petition for residency.

Despite her decision to separate from her husband, Sonya also felt it was important for her daughter to maintain a relationship with him. Sonya arranged for Felix and Katrina to have weekend visits. Sonya reconsidered this visitation in July 1998 after Felix pushed Sonya to the ground and threatened to kill her after dropping their daughter off at Sonya's house. In the fall of 1998, Sonya was forced to cut off these visits entirely after Felix attacked her when he came to pick up Katrina. Sonya had asked a male friend to escort her and protect her when she went to pick up her daughter after Felix's visitation session. When Sonya and her friend approached Felix, he lunged at both of them with a knife, slicing Sonya's neck and slashing her friend's face. Both Sonya and her friend had to be rushed to the hospital, and Sonya nearly died from the

severe wound and bleeding from her neck. Sonya is now cooperating with state prosecutors to convict Felix of attempted murder for that attack. He will be deported following this conviction.

As a result of her traumatic experiences during her marriage to Felix, Sonya has been receiving counseling services from a domestic violence service agency. She is trying her best to raise her daughter on her own and complete her own schooling. She has been receiving financial and emotional help from her family, all of whom live in the U.S. If she were forced to return to Guyana to get her green card pursuant to VAWA, she would have no one there to help and support her. She is very young and has not visited Guyana since she was a little girl. She is unfamiliar with the country, the language, and the laws of Guyana. After all the emotional turmoil she has experienced in her life, she cannot imagine how she would survive in Guyana without support from her family. Furthermore, she is extremely afraid that Felix will travel to Guyana and attempt to kill her once he is deported. He has sworn revenge on Sonya, and indeed he almost succeeded in killing her once before. In Guyana, Sonya would be alone and unprotected, out of the jurisdiction of her U.S. restraining order. She would be vulnerable to Felix's attacks there, and her life would constantly be in danger if she were forced to leave the U.S. to get her green card.

This case originated in Massachusetts.

CELIA

Celia is a 26-year-old citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. She entered the United States in 1989 on a visitor's visa. After her arrival, she met her husband, Ali, who was a friend of her cousin. Ali is a lawful permanent resident of the U.S. originally from Trinidad. Over the next year, Ali and Celia became romantically involved. Ali proposed to Celia in late 1990, and in the spring of 1991, they moved in together.

After they began living together, Ali began to manipulate and control Celia's movements. He had not acted this way before, and Celia was surprised at the change in him. He began to stay out until the early morning hours and would yell at her and insult her when she would inquire where he had been. He would also become angry whenever Celia would want to spend time with her family or friends. He preferred her to stay in the house and visit no one. Whenever she would disobey his orders or question his decisions, he would corner in a room and scream at her, insulting her and calling her a slut. He would also threaten to turn her in to the INS for her disobedience.

One evening, Celia confessed to Ali that she was so afraid of him that she considered calling the police to arrest him for abusing her. This made Ali so angry that he held a gun to Celia's head and threatened to shoot her. On another occasion, after a family party during which Celia refused to speak to Ali, he drove her home and began yelling at her and hitting her all over her body with his fists.

The following year, Celia became pregnant with their son, Caleb. She gave birth to Caleb in early 1993, hoping that the birth of their child would make Ali change his ways and stop abusing her. Unfortunately, Ali only became more violent. He continued in his physical and emotional abuse of Celia, yelling at her daily and calling her a whore. He also hit her in the face once with the telephone receiver. Celia would always forgive him when he would apologize after each incident of abuse. She married him the following year mainly because she wanted her son to have a father and a chance at having a family.

After the marriage, Ali began staying out all night. Celia thought she smelled marijuana on his clothes when he would come home, and she also suspected that he was having an affair. When she confronted him about this, he punched her in the eye in front of their son. After this incident, Celia left Ali and she and her son moved in with a family friend.

Since her separation from Ali, Celia has received support from her friends, family, and a domestic violence counselor, all of whom have helped her face and begin to recover from her abusive experiences. Her son is now attending kindergarten in the public school system. Celia has worked hard to build a life for herself apart from Ali. Her VAWA self-petition for residency was recently approved, and now she awaits her priority date.

Under the current laws, Celia will be forced to return to Trinidad as the only way of getting her green card. Leaving the U.S. will put Celia in great danger, since Ali has the ability to travel to Trinidad and abuse her there, away from the sanctions of U.S. laws and law enforcement. Ali has family in Trinidad and is familiar with the country. By contrast, Celia has no family or friends in Trinidad who can support her or protect her from Ali's violence. She has not been back to Trinidad since she was fifteen years old, and she is very afraid of returning to a country that is completely foreign to her. She would be physically and emotionally unable to make the trip without help and resources in Trinidad, none of which are available. Considering the fact that Ali has threatened to kill Celia on several occasions, Celia's return to Trinidad would put her at grave risk of injury or death at the hands of her abuser.

This case originated in Massachusetts.

DONNA

Donna is a nineteen-year-old citizen of Ethiopia who fled to the United States in 1992 after her father was murdered in her country. Donna's father was murdered because of his association with a prominent political party in Ethiopia. In 1994, while staying with her family in New York, Donna met Saul, who was a lawful permanent resident of the United States and also a native of Ethiopia. Donna and Saul began dating and seeing one another on weekends during the summer months of 1994. At the end of the summer, Saul proposed to Donna, and the two were married in December when Donna was sixteen years old.

After the wedding ceremony, Donna moved to Saul's home in Massachusetts and began attending high school. During the first year of their marriage, things were good between them. However, during the second year of their marriage, Saul began drinking and gradually began verbally abusing Donna. He would yell at her and insult her when he would get drunk and angry. He also began coming home later and later each night, often forcing Donna to have sexual relations with him against her will.

He began controlling Donna, making her completely dependent on him for money and telling her how to dress. He would also accuse her of being involved with other men, and he would push her against the wall and tell her to "shut up," if she tried to defend herself. The abuse escalated over time. Saul began pushing and shoving Donna whenever he would get angry. One evening in 1996, he struck her with the telephone, causing her severe injuries. She left him after that incident.

Since leaving her husband, Donna has been living with a close family member and has been receiving counseling as a victim of domestic abuse. She is still very young, a recent graduate of high school, and already she has suffered a great deal in her life at the hands of her abusive husband. She has filed a VAWA self-petition for residency, which was approved in December of 1998.

Unfortunately, Donna will be forced to return to Ethiopia to get her green card under VAWA. She will face severe emotional trauma and perhaps persecution and death if she returns. Because her whole family fled Ethiopia after Donna's father was murdered, Donna no longer has relatives or friends to rely on in Ethiopia for help or support. She left when she was only thirteen years old, and the painful memories of her father's murder would resurface in her mind if she were forced to return to Ethiopia. In addition, she is young and unable to find her way around Ethiopia on her own. She is unfamiliar with the language and customs of Ethiopia, since she has spent so many years growing up in America.

The assassins who killed Donna's father may still be looking for Donna and members of her family. Because of this, Donna is very frightened of returning to the place where she and her

family fled political persecution only a few years before. She firmly believes that her father's political enemies would relish the opportunity to harm or kill her if she returned unprotected to Ethiopia. Donna is physically and emotionally unable to endure the pain and fear of returning to a country that is foreign to her, especially after the abuse she has endured for the past three years at her husband's hands. She needs the support and protection of her family in the U.S., and she needs to continue the domestic violence counseling she is currently receiving in Massachusetts. For all of these reasons, Donna must be granted the opportunity to obtain her green card within the United States.

This case originated in Delaware, moved to Pennsylvania, and is currently in Delaware.

TERESA

Teresa is a 22-year-old citizen of Mexico. She was married to Leo, a lawful permanent resident of the United States, for seven years. Leo is also originally from Mexico. Teresa and Leo met and fell in love in the United States when they were both very young. Teresa was 15 years old at the time she gave birth to their first child, a little girl named Beth.

Leo held all the power in the relationship. He isolated Teresa from her own family by refusing to let her contact them. He did not allow her to leave the house on her own or make friends. He refused to install a telephone in their home. The situation gradually worsened as Leo stayed away from home for long periods of time, only coming to the house with food or money every once in a while.

Along with this emotional abuse, Leo also subjected Teresa to brutal physical abuse throughout their marriage. Leo was an alcoholic who would go into unpredictable rages. He would kick, punch, slap, and pummel Teresa without cause. Leo continued to beat Teresa severely, even when she was pregnant with their second child, Ana. Leo blamed Teresa when Ana was born with a cleft palate, and he subjected Teresa to abuse and humiliation as punishment for Ana's disability. To make matters worse, Leo refused to take Teresa and Ana to doctor's appointments to treat Ana's cleft palate. He also began physically abusing both Ana and her sister Beth, much to Teresa's horror.

Teresa attempted to leave Leo twice. Both times she fled with her girls to battered women's shelters. Both times Leo followed Teresa, found her, and forced her to return home with him. Leo even crossed state lines to follow Teresa to a shelter in Pennsylvania the second time she tried to escape his abuse. Teresa left Leo for the final time after she sought help and advice from a shelter and from legal counsel. She submitted her application for residency under VAWA and filed for divorce from Leo. Soon after he was served with divorce papers, Leo disappeared from Delaware and has not attempted to contact Teresa since that time.

Teresa is the sole custodian and caretaker of both of her U.S. citizen daughters. Both children are little girls under the age of seven. Teresa has no one else to rely on in the U.S. to help her support and raise her daughters.

If Teresa is required to return to Mexico as the only way to get her green card under VAWA, her daughter Ana will suffer extreme medical hardship and trauma. Ana must undergo a series of complicated operations to her teeth, jawbones, and mouth in order to correct her cleft palate. She must also undergo several plastic surgeries following these procedures. Although Ana is a citizen, these surgeries are not entirely paid for by Medicaid. Luckily, Teresa has secured several donations from charitable organizations to help cover the cost of Ana's operations. Ana has already had one operation on her teeth and jaws, and she requires extensive

follow-up examinations and care in between each subsequent operation.

If Teresa returns to Mexico to get her green card, she will be forced to interrupt Ana's medical treatment and take both of her daughters with her to Mexico. Interrupting Ana's medical treatment would be detrimental to Ana's health. The treatments are not available in Mexico. Also, if Ana abandons her current medical regime, even for a short time, she will probably lose the privately donated funds to cover the cost of her medical care. These funds were extremely difficult to obtain, and once lost, they will be irretrievable. Requiring Teresa to return to Mexico to get her green card is tantamount to discontinuing her daughter's medical treatment and subjecting the child to a life of pain and disfigurement.

This case originated in Indiana.

CONSUELO

Consuelo was born in Mexico. She has lived in the United States for the past eight years, and she has two children, both U.S. citizens. Three years ago, Consuelo met her U.S. citizen husband, Jake, and the two started dating and becoming friends. They soon fell in love and were married. Consuelo was excited about beginning her life with her new husband. She did not know that Jake had hidden from her the fact that he was addicted to marijuana and alcohol.

Jake's drug and alcohol addiction became evident after he and Consuelo were married. She witnessed him spending all of their money to buy drugs and alcohol, and he would not give Consuelo money to buy food and clothes. He kept her locked in the apartment all day and refused to apply for her immigration status so that she could get a job. Jake, on the other hand, was fired from job after job because of his drug addiction. After their first child, Nick, was born, there was never enough food in the house to feed the family. Jake completely ignored Consuelo and even refused to take her to the store to get food.

One day, when Nick was a year old and Consuelo was three months pregnant with their second child, Jake agreed to take Consuelo to the grocery store to buy food. He gave her \$40 and told her she was only allowed a few minutes to shop. Once they were in the car, Jake became angry because the baby was crying, and he told Consuelo that he would not take them to the store after all. Consuelo begged him to take her, since there was no food in the house. Jake refused and grabbed the \$40 back from Consuelo. He then began punching, kicking, and shoving her, trying to knock her out of the car through the open passenger-side door. Consuelo fell out of the car onto the sidewalk, bruised and fearing for the health of her unborn baby. Then Jake grabbed baby Nick from the back seat and sat him on the sidewalk a few feet away from Consuelo. Jake threw the baby's diaper bag out of the window, scattering baby clothes and diapers all over the street, and sped away in the car without looking back.

On another occasion, Jake kidnaped Nick to punish Consuelo for accepting money from her sister. He left with the child and did not bring him back for the entire day. Consuelo was frantic, wondering if she would ever see her baby again. Only a few months later, when Consuelo was eight months pregnant with her second child, Jake sold all the furniture and baby toys to buy drugs. The house was completely empty after Jake left with the last piece of furniture and the television set. There was also no food in the house. At that moment, Consuelo decided to leave Jake. She feared for her and her child's safety, since Jake was unpredictable and violent when on drugs and had been hitting and insulting her on a regular basis. She fled to her sister's house and found an attorney to help her file a VAWA self-petition for residency.

If Consuelo is forced to return to Mexico to get her green card under VAWA, she will risk losing her children. Jake has already filed for custody of the two little boys and has threatened to take them away from her permanently. There is a court date scheduled in the near

future, and Consuelo cannot remove the children from the country while custody is in dispute. Once custody has been decided, Consuelo can only take the children with her with the court's permission, and since there is no way to predict how long she will be required to remain in Mexico while her green card is processed, she cannot guarantee to the judge a date by which she will return. She refuses to leave the children behind, though, because she fears that Jake will kidnap them and mistreat them or tell the court that she has abandoned them to his care. He has already kidnaped Nick once before. He has never been responsible for caring for the children in the past, and his drug and alcohol use poses a grave danger to them. He has absolutely no patience with either of the children and frequently screams at them and punishes them for no reason. Even if Consuelo were able to afford the trip to Mexico, she could not risk leaving her children behind and losing them to her abuser forever.

This case originated in Pennsylvania.

UGNE

Ugne was born in Lithuania. Her husband Sam is a U.S. citizen. Sam and Ugne were “penpals”. They began writing each other in 1993. They seemed to have a lot of interests in common. Sam was in the Navy and lived in Nevada. Ugne had her own beauty salon. By 1994 Margie’s English had improved to the point where they could converse on the phone. They enjoyed their talks. Sam said he wanted to meet Ugne in person and visited Ugne in Lithuania in 1995. They had a wonderful time. Sam told Ugne he liked her independence and the fact she owned her own business. Sam asked Ugne to visit him in the United States for her birthday and she agreed to. In September, 1995 Ugne came to visit Sam. They had a good time and Sam asked Ugne to marry him. She wanted to wait to get to know him better and they agreed to wait. Six months later in May of 1996 they were married in Reno, Nevada.

The day after they were married, Sam lost his temper and began screaming at Ugne. Ugne went into the kitchen, and Sam followed her there. There he screamed at her and tore her pajamas. He then pushed her against the wall, crossed her wrists together, and held her so tightly she could not move. When she wouldn’t stop crying, he pressed his hand against her windpipe barely allowing her to breath. Ugne knew he had gone through Navy training and could kill her if he wanted to. Sam took his finger away after two full minutes, and Ugne cried for the rest of the night. The next day, Sam apologized and promised never to do it again.

Over time, Ugne and Sam began having more disagreements and arguments. Sam often ignored Ugne or was inconsiderate to her, and he allowed to his friends to disrespect her as well. He cared little for her needs, even refusing to take her to the doctor. Ugne sought to go to marriage counseling but Sam refused. Several times after an argument Sam would go into the living room and sit quietly holding a gun. At those times, Ugne was afraid to move or breathe because she feared that she would anger him further and he would feel justified in using the gun. Ugne felt isolated. Not knowing English well and not working, she was totally dependent on Sam. Once during an argument, while they were in the car traveling to Reno on the way home from a trip, Sam threatened to drive them both off a cliff. When they finally got to Reno, Ugne jumped out of the car and hid in the bathroom of a restaurant. She decided to look for the police to get help but ran into Sam as she came out of the restaurant. He was crying and apologized and once again Ugne forgave him. But the abuse continued.

During a later argument, Ugne tried to talk to Sam about the problems in their marriage. In response, Sam grew angry and accused Ugne of playing head games with him. Then he became violent again. Sam grabbed Ugne from the sofa and threw her through the door into the wall, and she landed on the ground. Ugne spent the night in a hotel. The next day Sam picked her up at work and apologized.

In 1997 Sam decided to leave the Navy, and they moved to Philadelphia so that Sam

could take a job there. As they approached Philadelphia, they started to argue in the car. Ugne felt trapped and vulnerable. She got out of the car, but Sam got out and followed her, screaming at her to get back in. Then Sam tried to physically force Ugne back into the car and she attempted to fight him off. He dragged her away from the car toward some trash cans behind a building. There was no one around, and Sam held her with enormous force, bruising her arms and wrists.

In March they had a fight in their new apartment. Sam decided to “punish” Ugne and would not let her sleep in the bed. Ugne then lay down on the floor, but he lifted her up and pushed her. He then grabbed her and threw her on the floor. Ugne pleaded for Sam not to touch her, but he shouted that she was his wife, that he could touch her, and that there was nobody around to hear her scream for help. Ugne was able to free herself, run into the bathroom, and lock the door. Afterward Ugne had bruises on her wrists and elbows because Sam had dragged her on the carpet.

Four months later, they had another argument in the car. Ugne started to cry, and Sam threatened to take Ugne home and blow her head off. He then grabbed her hair and smashed her head against the car door. Ugne tried to get out of the car, but Sam began to drive wildly. He sped through red lights and drove on the left side of road so that she Ugne could not get out.

Finally, in April 1998, during yet another incident, Ugne tried to call the police, but Sam took the phone from her and her call did not go through. Fortunately, however, a neighbor overheard Ugne’s screams and called the police. The officers noticed the bruises on Ugne’s body and referred her to a domestic violence shelter.

Ugne was able to stay at a battered women’s shelter for six weeks. She attended counseling sessions and learned that she did have to suffer at the hands of Sam. She was referred to an immigration attorney who helped her file a self-petition. The police intervention has helped her receive some protection from Sam’s ongoing abuse. But Sam is angry that he was turned into the police and threatens revenge. Ugne is afraid that Sam will follow her back to Lithuania if she is forced to return there for consular processing. Sam knows exactly how to find her there and knows that there she will be at his mercy.

This case originated in Pennsylvania.

MAGGIE

Maggie was born in Columbia. Her husband, Edmund, is a U.S. citizen from Puerto Rico. Maggie came to this country to live with Edmund. After moving here, Maggie gave birth to their daughter, Susan, who is now three. After they were married, Edmund began the process of applying for Maggie's U.S. residency.

Unfortunately, soon after they were married, Edmund developed a serious drinking problem. When he would come home from drinking he would become extremely violent and began beating Maggie. The more he would drink, the more frequent the beatings. This continued for two years. Finally, he beat Maggie so severely she was physically unable to leave the house. A friend called a domestic violence hotline and a counselor instructed her on safety planning and how to access further counseling services. The next day Maggie took their daughter and left. She petitioned for and was granted a temporary protective order. Later, she was granted a permanent protective order. She initiated custody proceedings for her daughter and she also cooperated with the police who filed criminal spousal abuse charges against Edmund.

In the course of several months Maggie has obtained a court order protecting herself and her daughter from their abuser, cooperated fully with the prosecution of Edmund, been granted full legal custody of her daughter, obtained an approved self-petition from INS, obtained a reliable job, and found a new apartment at a secret location for herself and her daughter. With the support of close friends, attorneys and counselors she has changed herself from a weakened victim of severe abuse to a self-reliant individual.

If Maggie were forced to return to Columbia to obtain her green card based on her VAWA self-petition, much of the transformation she has accomplished would be jeopardized. She has no other family in this country. She would risk forfeiting legal custody of her daughter to Edmund who still has criminal charges pending against him if she left Susan here. Maggie is understandably afraid to leave Susan in the care of her abusive father where she might be abused or neglected. Maggie's only alternative would be to take Susana with her to Columbia, a country facing growing political tensions and upheavals, where Maggie's relatives have discouraged her from returning. Maggie would lose her job, her apartment and the support of friends, counselors and attorneys that have enabled Maggie to create a safe home for her daughter and herself. None of the support services that Maggie has come to rely upon would be available to her in Columbia, where she would have to live without the protection from her protection order for as long as it took for her green card to be processed.

This case originated in Pennsylvania.

NAOMI

Naomi was born in Ghana, where she met Alan, an American citizen. Naomi and Alan were married and following their marriage, they lived together with Alan and Alan's mother in Philadelphia. Following their marriage things began to deteriorate. Alan tried to exercise complete control over Naomi.

Once they were married, Alan filed immigration papers that would have given Naomi lawful permanent residency. Alan, however, refused to tell her the date of the scheduled interview with INS. He would not even allow her to go to the supermarket with his mother with whom they lived. If she did have to go out, she had to beep him and wait for him to call her back at home for his approval and call him again when she returned home. He would not let her see or call any of her friends. Alan also maintained tight control over all economic resources. Alan, who was employed as a security guard and carried a gun, told her one day he would blow her brains out if she failed to do exactly what he said. Naomi lived in constant fear of him. Naomi was afraid to sleep for fear of what he might do to her. Alan also began to physically abuse her. Twice he battered her so severely that Naomi had to seek medical attention for the injuries he had inflicted on her.

Following the second attack, Naomi called the police for help and moved to a domestic violence shelter. With assistance from support groups Naomi obtained a protective order but Alan continues to violate the order by calling to harass her.

Naomi is afraid that she will be forced to return to Ghana to obtain her lawful permanent residency under VAWA. Alan has vowed to get her any way he can and has promised to travel to Ghana to harm her. Authorities in Ghana are not sympathetic to women in Linda's situation and would not provide any protection for her. Naomi cannot expect any assistance, protection, or support from her family in Ghana. Her mother is against Naomi leaving her husband. Because she disobeyed her husband and called the police she is labeled "trouble" and disgraced in the eyes of the community. She will be shunned under traditional custom. There are no support services for Naomi in Ghana where a women is supposed to stay with her husband no matter what.

Further, female genital mutilation is widely practiced in Ghana. Naomi was born in a home where according to custom she should be circumcised. Her father spared her when she was younger because she was a sick child. When she got older, she left and was able to avoid being circumcised. Because Naomi was not subject to female genital mutilation, she is considered "dirty." She is not allowed to have a job. Her sister, who has been circumcised, does not approve of the fact that Naomi has not and the fact that she turned in her husband because of the abuse.

Naomi needs to be able to obtain her lawful permanent residency while remaining in the United States where her protection order can protect her from Alan's ongoing violence and where our laws can protect her from forced circumcision.

This case originated in Virginia.

MARIANGELA

Mariangela is a 44-year-old woman from Mauritania. She met her husband Bruce, an American citizen, in America through the husband of a friend. The two began dating and moved in together in July of 1985. Mariangela became pregnant soon after, and she and Bruce were married in early 1986.

The first time Bruce hit Mariangela was during this pregnancy. He had been drinking, and he began hitting and shoving her. It soon became clear that Bruce was an alcoholic, and he drank beer and hard liquor excessively. He would become most abusive while intoxicated.

Mariangela had their first child later in 1986, and a second in December of 1987. Over the course of her eleven years with Bruce, Mariangela and her children have been subject to physical and emotional abuse. Bruce keeps two or three guns in the house, and he has pointed them at the children and himself. Once he struck Mariangela hard in the nose, telling her to get out of the house and leaving her to bleed. In the most recent incident, Bruce brutally grabbed Mariangela's arm, squeezing it so hard that it left bruises. He then threw her on the floor. Mariangela feared for her life, because she had never seen him so furious. She and her daughter knelt down and begged him not to hurt them and to give them a week to leave.

After this incident, Mariangela and the two children moved out, first staying in a shelter and then with friends. However, Bruce's lawyer was able to wrest custody of the children away from Mariangela. She did not have a job and could not support the children because she did not have permission to work in the United States. Bruce had always refused to file for her legal permanent residency.

Mariangela has filed a self-petition for residency, but would face hardship in being forced to return to Mauritania to receive her green card. She now has a visitation order which enables her to see her children, but if she leaves the country for an indefinite period of time, she may lose that right. Furthermore, Bruce could follow her to Mauritania where he could abuse her without legal consequences. Mariangela wants to remain in this country and fight to get her children away from their abusive father. However, forcing her to leave, even briefly, presents her with undue hardship and danger and may permanently jeopardize her ability to obtain legal custody of her children and protect them from Bruce's violence.

This case originated in Nevada.

VILMA

Vilma is a 34-year-old citizen of Mexico. She met her husband, Enrique, at his sister's wedding in Mexico in 1978. Vilma and Enrique began dating shortly after that, and Enrique asked her to marry him in 1979. Vilma thought perhaps she was not ready for marriage at that time, and she was bothered by the fact that Enrique had been divorced once before. She rejected his proposal, and Enrique did not take the rejection well. Vilma and Enrique continued to date one another, and Vilma gave birth to their first child, a daughter. About a year later, Enrique arrived at Vilma's home waving a gun in his hand, telling her that they were going to get married right away, and that he would not take "no" for an answer. Vilma calmed him down and persuaded him to postpone the marriage. Enrique's irrational behavior shocked and frightened her, but she excused it. She thought it was just an isolated incident.

Their relationship continued through the next five years. In that time, Vilma gave birth to three more of Enrique's daughters. She married Enrique in 1988 in Mexico. That same year, Enrique came to the Nevada and became a lawful permanent resident of the U.S. He sent for Vilma and their four daughters, and they joined him in the U.S. at that time.

Shortly after Vilma arrived in the U.S., Vilma's ten-year-old niece, Carla, came to live with Vilma, Enrique, and their daughters. One evening, when Carla was twelve years old, while the family was trying to sleep, Enrique attempted to sexually assault Carla. Vilma was horrified that Enrique would do such a thing, and she feared that he might also try to sexually abuse his own daughters, as well. She wanted to leave Enrique, but at that point, she was pregnant with another child, and she was entirely dependent on Enrique for food, clothing and shelter for her and her four daughters. Enrique did not give her enough money to support the family, and she was forced to sell tamales, clothes, and cleaning supplies just to make enough money to keep her children housed, fed, and clothed.

In 1995, Enrique took a vacation to Mexico and returned with a sixteen-year-old girl named Selma, who he claimed was his daughter. Vilma attempted to accept Selma into her family and treat her like a daughter. However, shortly after Selma arrived, Vilma discovered that Enrique was having an incestuous relationship with his daughter Selma. They were behaving more like lovers than like father and daughter. Vilma's daughters noticed Selma and their father hugging and kissing like lovers and getting into bed together. When Vilma confronted Enrique about his behavior, he threatened to kill her and her whole family. He became very violent toward Vilma after that, beating her with his fists and slapping her across the face. He also began beating his daughters with belts or slapping them across their faces. He was angry at his daughters for telling Vilma about his sexual relations with Selma.

Vilma did not go to the police because she was afraid of her husband. She sought help from a priest who put her in touch with a social worker. It was at that time that Vilma found a

receipt for a pregnancy test for Selma. After questioning Selma about the pregnancy test, Vilma discovered that Enrique had forced Selma to have an abortion of the pregnancy that resulted from his incest with her, and that he was now having an affair with a young man. Vilma's older daughter also confessed to her mother that Enrique had been sexually molesting her for some time. Reeling with the shock of all of these discoveries about her husband, Vilma gathered her children and left him, fleeing to her sister's house.

In 1997, police officers came to Vilma's home and informed her that Enrique was arrested for the murder of the young man with whom he had been having the affair. If he is convicted of this crime, he will be deported to Mexico.

Recently, Vilma obtained approval of her VAWA self-petition for residency. If she is forced to return to Mexico to get her green card, she is afraid that Enrique will be waiting for her there to abuse or kill her. Her six children, two of whom are U.S. citizens, have all had a very difficult time recovering from the emotional trauma of the violence and sexual abuse Enrique inflicted upon them. The daughter who was sexually abused by Enrique suffers from depression and is undergoing counseling. Several of Vilma's other children have emotional problems and see counselors at their schools. Because of her children's delicate emotional state, Vilma cannot be separated from them for the time it will take to get her green card. In addition, Vilma fears that if she returns to Mexico, she will suffer shame and humiliation because of the physical and sexual abuse she endured with her husband. Vilma's family would not support her if she were to return to Mexico. Vilma would be left without emotional and financial resources in a country where her murderous, abusive husband could find her. In order to keep herself safe and preserve the emotional well-being of her children, Vilma must be allowed to remain in the U.S. to get her green card.

This case originated in Rhode Island.

ALEJANDRA

Alejandra was born in Guatemala, where she met her future husband Cristian. Her grandfather was in business with his grandfather, and the two were acquaintances from childhood. As a young adult, Alejandra traveled to the United States to escape the Guatemalan guerrilla forces persecuting her family. Cristian had also come to the United States by this time and had become a lawful permanent resident. The two met up again by chance, and started dating. Before long they were married.

Alejandra had a daughter from a previous relationship who moved in with Cristian and Alejandra. Alejandra soon became pregnant with another child, from her marriage to Cristian. Around this time, Cristian began to verbally abuse Alejandra, calling her names and accusing her of looking at other men. The abuse seemed to intensify daily. Four months into her pregnancy, Cristian physically abused Alejandra for the first time. They had an argument, and he beat her all over her body, leaving her thoroughly bruised. He said that if she told anyone what he did, he would kill her or have her deported and take her daughter away. The abuse began again in the eighth and ninth months of her pregnancy. He made her stay in the house for weeks so that no one would see her extensive bruising.

After the birth of their son, the situation worsened. Cristian was constantly jealous and always accused Alejandra of lying to him. She was not allowed to speak with anyone, even her brothers and sister. When Cristian went out, he would lock Alejandra and the children in the house so they would not go anywhere. Alejandra had to wash the family's clothes in the sink, because he would not allow her to go to the Laundromat. He did all the food shopping because he did not want her to leave the house. On one occasion, Cristian threatened Alejandra with a pistol, telling her she was a bad mother and he would have her children taken away from her. When Cristian's family visited, Alejandra tried to explain to his mother that he was abusing her. She did not believe Alejandra, and Alejandra felt completely trapped and isolated.

On her birthday, Alejandra's co-workers honored her with flowers. That night, when she brought the flowers home, Cristian accused her of receiving them from boyfriends. He beat her, and demanded she tell him who her lovers are. When Alejandra protested she had none, he yelled that he would kill her if she were not telling the truth. After this incident, he did not allow her to leave the house for the next three days, even to go to work. Whenever they went somewhere together and someone greeted Alejandra, he would hit her in the face when they got home. She was terrified of Cristian, but did not know how to get herself out of the abusive situation. She wanted to call the police after his beatings, but he would disconnect the phones. He also forbade her to leave the house for several days after beatings to prevent her from making a police report in person.

Cristian began to use drugs, and this made the abuse even worse. He beat her almost

daily; Alejandra's body was continuously covered with bruises for three years. Cristian intimidated her into lying when anyone inquired about her bruises. He also began verbally abusing and beating the children when they were three and four years old. The abuse affected them profoundly, and they became nervous and timid. Even the neighbors were afraid of Cristian, they never called the police when they overheard the violence for fear of what he would do to them.

After one particularly frightening incident, Alejandra took the children and entered a shelter. Cristian had shoved her into a wall and threatened to kill her, which terrified her. However, after five days in the shelter, Alejandra returned home. She did not know how to survive on her own, and was frightened that if she did not return Cristian would find her and kill her.

The abuse continued after Alejandra's return. On one occasion, Cristian took the children to pick her up at work, and the car broke down. Frustrated, he tried to fix the problem while Alejandra and the children stood on the sidewalk. He looked up from what he was doing and accused her of looking at another man in the street. Walking over to her, he slapped her hard several times in the face. When they finally returned home, his anger escalated. He punched her four times hard in the face, causing it to bleed. Cristian then said he was going to kill her, and dragged her to the second story window and threatened to throw her out. The children screamed, and he let her go and left the room. Alejandra took the children and entered a shelter. She returned to Cristian a week later, but after receiving another severe beating, she decided to leave him for good.

Alejandra is now thriving on her own and is a good provider for her American citizen children. She has a restraining order against Cristian, and she and the children are recovering from the psychological effects of his abuse. Although Cristian has communicated to Alejandra's relatives his intent to violate the order, stalk her, and shoot her, so far the protection order seems to be working. Alejandra has self-petitioned for residency, but it would be dangerous for her to return to Guatemala for consular processing. She has no family there because of guerrilla death threats and attacks, and she and her children would be in great danger if they returned. She would have to take the children if she returned, because she has no one else to care for them. Cristian would also again become a threat if they stayed in Guatemala, because her protective order against him would not be valid there. Alejandra is convinced he would try to kill her if given the opportunity. For these reasons, it is imperative that Alejandra be permitted to remain in the United States to receive her green card.

This case originated in Nebraska.

JOSEFINA

Josefina is a 37-year-old woman originally from Mexico. In 1983, she met her husband Geraldo, now a lawful permanent resident of the United States. They met in Mexico when she was 18 and he was 27. After one year of courtship, Geraldo convinced Josefina to live with him in America. Soon after they arrived, she discovered she was pregnant, and the couple returned to Mexico to get married. After the wedding, Geraldo returned to America alone, and Josefina had her baby in Mexico in January 1985.

Geraldo sent Josefina and their daughter money regularly, and finally came to see them in February of 1986. He stayed for one month before returning to the United States, and during his stay they conceived another child. This time he did not send money from the United States. He returned to Mexico just in time for the birth of his second child in October of 1986. However, soon after he returned to the United States and this time remained in the U.S. for four years. Geraldo did not send much money to his family during this time period, but Josefina and the children were able to survive by living with Geraldo's mother.

In November of 1990, Geraldo returned to Mexico and brought his family to Nebraska to live with him. He had a good job and was able to provide a home for his family in Nebraska in 1991. Josefina became pregnant with their third child. However, Geraldo started drinking heavily. His drinking problems escalated over time to the point where he was almost always drunk. He lost his long term job, and a series of other jobs after that. Nevertheless, Josefina had their third child in late 1991, and a fourth in early 1993.

Shortly after the birth of their fourth child, Geraldo began to use physical violence against Josefina. On one occasion he got angry with her and choked her. When she threatened to call the police, he intimidated her into believing that they would deport her and take away the children. From that time on, Geraldo often threatened to have Josefina deported. He told her she was not capable of taking care of herself and the children because she has never worked and is illegal. He claimed she could never survive without his help, unless she became a prostitute. Geraldo would also scare the children by threatening to hit them if they ever told anyone that their father got drunk. Josefina continued to live with Geraldo, perceiving that she had no other options, and the couple had a fifth child in 1995.

Geraldo's alcoholism continued to worsen, and the abuse escalated as a result. One evening in 1997, Geraldo came home drunk, screaming that he was leaving Josefina and the children. He started throwing things around the house, taunting and threatening Josefina. He then grabbed her by the hair and pulled her around, brandishing a heavy vase. Josefina screamed, and their oldest daughter called the police. Geraldo's fear of the police resulted in somewhat of a lessening of his violence against Josefina.

Geraldo constantly demeans Josefina with obscene and hateful language, and prevents her from having a job or any independence. He is also extremely cruel to his two older children. He derides their status as Mexican citizens and tells them he does not consider them his children. He tells them he will have them deported because he only loves his younger children who were born in America. Geraldo also tells his oldest daughter he hates her for calling the police on him, and frequently calls her obscene names. He makes fun of his oldest son because he has to wear glasses, calling him a nerd and a stupid child. He also calls this son gay, saying his voice is like a woman's.

Josefina wants to free herself and her children from Geraldo's tyranny by becoming a lawful permanent resident and finding a job. She has filed a self-petition but is very afraid of having to return to Mexico for consular processing. She cannot afford passage to Mexico for herself and her five children, and is frightened to leave them with Geraldo. In addition, she does not want to remove them from school for an indeterminate amount of time and bring them to a foreign country where they are unfamiliar with the language and customs. Josefina also fears that Geraldo would follow her to Mexico and abuse or kill her there, where the law is less strict. It is therefore necessary that she remain in the United States to obtain her green card, enabling Josefina to give her children a fresh start.

This case originated in New Jersey.

RAMONA

Ramona is originally from Peru. In her hometown she met Manolo, a man who was related by marriage to Ramona's family. She and Manolo also had many friends in common, and Manolo would visit Ramona's house every time he came to Peru. Manolo was at that time a lawful permanent resident of the United States, but he still kept in close contact with his mother and friends in Peru. Over the next four years, Ramona and Manolo wrote letters to one another, and Manolo visited her in Peru whenever he had a vacation. After Manolo was seriously injured in an accident, he relied on Ramona's letters and phone calls to support and encourage him to recover. The two fell in love and were married in 1993 in Peru. Ramona was excited to move to the U.S. with Manolo and start a family here.

Manolo incorrectly informed Ramona that he could not immediately petition for her residency while he was disabled and unable to work full-time. Ramona believed him and resolved to learn English in preparation for the day when she could get work authorization. What she did not know was that her husband was insanely jealous and kept track of her movements from the very first day of their marriage. He started ordering her to dress a certain way and stop seeing her friends. He was paranoid that she was having affairs with other men, so he insisted on knowing where she was at all times. If she ever returned home a bit later than usual, he would yell at her and call her a prostitute.

Ramona soon discovered that Manolo's jealousy had become a sick obsession. He made friends with the security guards in their apartment building so that they would let him see the security camera videos of people entering and leaving the building. He would watch these videos every evening after work, noting the times that Ramona would enter and leave the building, what she was carrying, and who she was with. She began to feel like a prisoner in her own home.

Manolo began physically abusing Ramona in July of 1996. Ramona and Manolo made a trip to New York to buy her a dress. Once they returned home to New Jersey, Ramona realized that the dress did not fit, so she decided to sell it to a woman who took English classes with her. She left the house without telling her husband where she was going and when she would return. When she arrived home after selling the dress, Manolo was furious. He yelled insults at her and threw her onto the bed. She struggled to get away from him and ran through the apartment, trying to escape from him as he chased her. He finally caught her, ripped all her clothes off, and punched her in the face. Only two months later, a similar incident happened after Ramona came home a bit later than usual after attending her English teacher's birthday party. When she came home, Manolo jumped on her and threw her against a closet, shaking her body against the closet doors and beating her on the head with his fists. He kicked her out of the house into the pouring rain that night, warning her that "an illegal cannot file complaints with the police." Ramona called a friend to pick her up and take her to her friend's house where she would be safe.

A week later, Manolo asked her to come back to him. He told her that if she did not return, he would withdraw the immigration work he had started for her. Ramona was afraid that he would have her deported, so she returned to him. Unfortunately, he began to abuse her as soon as she came home. One evening, Ramona came home and Manolo started accusing her of being with other men. He tangled his fingers in her hair and shoved her backward onto the floor. Still holding her down by her hair, he hit her face with his fist. His face and hands were shaking with rage, and Ramona thought that he would kill her. Finally, he stopped hitting her and left her lying on the floor. The next morning, Ramona combed her hair, and a handful of her hair fell out of her head from where Manolo had been pulling it. Ramona decided to find an attorney to help her leave her husband and go into hiding. She filed a VAWA self-petition for residency, as well.

If Ramona is forced to return to Peru as the only way of getting her green card under VAWA, she will be in great danger. She is currently hiding from Manolo in confidential housing, and he has no idea where she is living in the U.S. He is obsessed with her, and he is angry because she dared to leave him. Ramona's family in Peru has warned her that if she returns, Manolo will try to kill her. They know this because Manolo himself has traveled to Peru and spoken with Ramona's mother, niece, and friends, telling them that Ramona can hide from him in New Jersey, but she cannot hide from him in Peru. He has asked his family to "keep an eye out" for Ramona and let him know when she returns to Peru. Now that he is a U.S. citizen, he can travel easily and carry out his threat to kill her in Peru.

Ramona knows that once she comes out of hiding and travels to Peru, Manolo will find her and punish her for leaving him. He will try to force her to return to him, and when she refuses, he will beat her and possibly kill her. Since all of Ramona's family live in the same small town as Manolo's family, Ramona's presence in Peru will certainly be discovered by Manolo. The only way that Ramona can remain safe is by staying in the U.S. under the protection of her restraining order and her confidential housing. She knows that if she returns to Peru, Manolo will hunt her down and kill her.

This case originated in New Jersey.

KAMARA

Kamara and Damoni met in 1990 in their native country of Kenya. They became friends, and in 1992 they traveled to the United States together to visit Damoni's brother. Damoni's brother petitioned for Damoni to become a lawful permanent resident. Kamara and Damoni soon began dating, and had a daughter together in 1993. The couple had a happy and healthy relationship until 1994, when Kamara became pregnant again.

Damoni began to abuse Kamara shortly before she gave birth to their second child, a son. He would insult and demean her, tear her clothes, leave her without food, and smash dishes around her. Kamara had no idea what caused such a change in Damoni. Before long, he began beating Kamara, frequently punching her with his fist. On one occasion, he hit her in the head so hard that he ruptured her eardrum. She had to have an operation to restore her eardrum later that year. Damoni also began writing letters to Kamara's parents in Kenya, threatening the safety of Kamara and her parents. These incidents led Kamara to call the police and obtain a restraining order, which succeeded in reducing the violence for a while.

After Kamara gave birth to their son, Damoni was less abusive, and Kamara was compelled to stay with him to ensure the financial security of the family. Damoni proposed marriage in 1996, and Kamara accepted, hoping that the marriage would make things better. The couple was married in 1997, and Damoni filed a petition for Kamara's residency. However, after the marriage, the abuse resumed and escalated. Damoni revoked his petition for Kamara and threatened to have her deported. Kamara became clinically depressed over her situation, and was hospitalized for a few months.

Kamara has filed a self-petition for residency so that she will no longer be dependent on Damoni and can cooperate in his prosecution for the beatings she has suffered. However, returning to Kenya would be dangerous for Kamara. She cannot afford to take her American citizen children out of the country for an indeterminate period, nor can she leave them behind. If she separated from the children, Damoni could try to obtain custody of them. Additionally, Damoni, who has maintained ongoing contact with friends and family members in Kenya, could follow through on his threats to harm Kamara and her family in Kenya. It is vital to Kamara's and her loved ones' safety that she not be required to leave the safety of the United States and return to Kenya for consular processing.

This case originated in New Jersey.

ROSALINDA

Rosalinda, originally from Peru, moved to the United States about five years ago. While in the United States she met Franco, a naturalized United States citizen who was originally from Chile. The two dated and were married in 1996, when Rosalinda was 31 years old.

When the couple was married, Rosalinda had a job as a waitress, and worked from 8:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m. daily. Franco grew possessive and jealous after their marriage, and went to work with Rosalinda every evening. He would watch her closely and bother her when she was serving customers. The owner felt this was bad for business and fired Rosalinda.

Problems soon began at home, and Franco started verbally abusing Rosalinda. He frequently called her a whore and accused her of sleeping with other men. He did not permit Rosalinda to socialize, and if she greeted anyone, he screamed at her. He often berated her loudly in public, and many times he abandoned her in stores or on the street after yelling at her. On one occasion, he threw her, her shopping bags, and her clean laundry into the street and drove home. Rosalinda had to gather her belongings and take a taxi home, where she found Franco relaxing on the sofa.

Franco began using drugs, and would frequently come home at night under the influence of cocaine. He would invent reasons to argue, and would violently beat Rosalinda. One evening he arrived home in a crazed state and began hitting Rosalinda and calling her a whore. Rosalinda fell onto the floor, crying and begging Franco to stop hurting her. Franco continued hitting her and proceeded to break her nose and injure her mouth, causing her to bleed profusely. She ran to her room in the basement and locked the door, but Franco followed her and kicked down her door and part of the wall. Rosalinda tried to cover her face so he would stop hitting her, but he proceeded to pull her hair, spit on her, and kick her repeatedly. Then he threw her down on the bed, tore her clothes off, and raped her. Afterwards, Franco got up and left. Rosalinda could not get up for two days. She was covered with bruises and her sheets were covered with blood. When she was finally able to get up, she walked with a limp for several days.

Franco continued to fight with Rosalinda, especially over money. Rosalinda supported Franco and paid all the bills, but Franco would always pester her for more money, presumably so that he could buy drugs. She did not know what she could do about her situation, and did not think she had any rights because she was an immigrant and he was a citizen. He used his power to petition for her residency as a way to maintain control over her.

After a while, Rosalinda learned that she could call 911 for emergencies. She called on three separate occasions when Franco beat her, but when the police arrived he begged her to recant. He told her he would change, and manipulated her into telling the police that nothing happened. On one occasion when Rosalinda called the police, Franco saw them first and told

them to arrest Rosalinda for stealing his papers. When Rosalinda explained that she was the one who called 911, the police told her to press charges. However, she was afraid Franco would kill her if she had him put in jail.

One evening, Rosalinda arrived home late from work, and Franco was furious with her. He demanded to know where she had been, but refused to believe her when she said she was with a friend. He began to hit her, and when she fell to the floor, he got on top of her and punched her in the face repeatedly. He punched her until she lost consciousness, and she has no memory of what happened next. She could not get up, remaining on the kitchen floor until late the next day in agony and unable to move. She did not have any family or friends to help her, and thought she had been left to die. When Franco got home, he saw that she was gravely injured and took her to the hospital on the condition that she not tell anyone he was the one who beat her. Rosalinda's doctors found several broken veins in her ears and severe contusions all over her body. When they asked who had beaten her, she said it was her boyfriend. They encouraged her to press charges, but she could not say anything because Franco was there with her the whole time. She knew that if she turned him in, he would beat her again and possibly kill her.

Rosalinda wishes to file a self-petition for residency so that she can leave Franco and live independently. Yet if she returns to Peru for consular processing, her life could be in danger again. Franco could follow her there, where he would not be inhibited by American law. He could beat or kill her in Peru, where laws to protect women against domestic violence do not exist. She has no friends or family left in Peru who could support and protect her during her stay, and is without resources to exist there on her own for an indeterminate period. For these reasons, Rosalinda must be able to receive her green card without leaving the United States.

This case originated in Idaho.

LOURDES

Lourdes was born in Mexico. She came to the United States on a visitor's visa. Here, she met Steven, a United States citizen. Lourdes and Steven courted and fell in love. They later married. Steven promised to petition for Lourdes's legal immigration status before her visitor's visa expired. Unfortunately, Steven not only neglected to petition for Lourdes, he also used her illegal immigration status as a means of controlling her and making her dependent upon him throughout their marriage.

Steven began sexually abusing Lourdes soon after their marriage. He would force her to have anal sex with him against her will. He would "discipline" Lourdes by grabbing her roughly, slapping her, pulling her hair, or slamming her into walls. He would abuse her physically in this way whenever he perceived that Lourdes was not behaving like a good wife or not following his "orders." He would become irrationally angry for no reason at all and indulge his anger by abusing Lourdes. Whenever she would ask him not to hit her anymore, Steven would threaten to have her deported. He also told her that if she called the police, not only would he not petition for her green card, but he would report her to the INS himself.

Lourdes and Steven have four children. The oldest one, a daughter, was born severely mentally retarded. Her condition is a degenerative one that requires constant medical care and monitoring. Lourdes was especially reluctant to leave Steven because she feared that if she were deported, her daughter would not receive the care she needed in Mexico. So Lourdes mainly kept quiet about Steven's abuse.

One evening, the police were called to the family home because Steven had kicked Lourdes and the children out of the house in one of his fits of rage. Steven was arrested and jailed for some time, and Lourdes spoke to an attorney and filed for a restraining order against Steven. She also moved out of the house and went with her children to a shelter.

Lourdes has applied for her residency through VAWA. She is very concerned about the prospect of returning to Mexico to get her green card pursuant to VAWA. Her children are U.S. citizens, and they have no one but their mother to look after them in the United States. Lourdes' protection order grants her legal custody of the children. Lourdes's older daughter also needs constant medical care. Her mother administers her care daily along with trained specialists and doctors. Lourdes could not possibly leave this daughter or any of her other children behind in the United States while she was getting her green card. Leaving them with Steven is not an option: Lourdes fears Steven and does not trust him to care for the children. It is highly unlikely that even for a short period of time Lourdes would be able to get adequate medical care for her daughter in Mexico. The standard of care in treating her daughter's complicated condition would be low in Mexico. For her children's sakes, and for the safety her protection order is providing her, Lourdes must be able to remain in the United States to get her green card.

This story originated in Idaho.

MARIA LUISA

Maria Luisa, a Mexican native, who married Victor, a Mexican-American U.S. citizen, in Mexico. Victor brought Maria Luisa and her three Mexican born children to the U.S. illegally, but later never wanted to get legal papers for them.

For years Victor submitted Maria Luisa to emotional and physical abuse. He would shove and beat her, and threaten to kill her. After he threatened her with a shotgun in October of 1997, Maria Luisa fled to a shelter in a nearby state. Because there was not enough room for her and her children in the shelter, they stayed in a motel for several months before being moved to another shelter. After the stress of being moved around, Maria Luisa eventually contacted Victor through a friend, despite the restraining order she had received to keep him away from her. Because of the difficulties of living in the shelter with her three children, and her hopes that her marriage can be saved, Maria Luisa has moved back home with Victor. Her protection order remains in effect ordering Victor not to molest, assault, threaten, or abuse her or her children.

Maria Luisa is afraid that after her self-petition is approved, she will have to return to Mexico to go through consular processing. If this happens, she will be faced the difficult question of whether to leave her children with a violent step father, or to take them with her to Mexico for an unknown period of time. Victor, who is also from Mexico, is likely to follow her there, where her protection order will not offer protection for her and her children from Victor's continuing violence.

This case originated in California, moved to Utah, and is currently in Idaho.

LAURA

Laura, originally from Mexico, traveled to Los Angeles in 1990. There she met Lucian, a United States citizen. The two dated, and had a daughter together in July of 1991. Then they both moved into Lucian's parents home in June of 1992.

The relationship was troubled, and Carols frequently fought with Laura. In August, during an argument, Lucian struck Laura. Shocked and frightened, she went to live with a friend. Yet, due to Lucian's profuse apologies, Laura moved back in with him in December.

Although Lucian professed he would change, he soon fell back into his old habits of degrading and verbally abusing Laura. He also began hitting her regularly. He resented the fact that their daughter took Laura's attention, and he was jealous of the time and care she gave the little girl. Lucian easily became angry and frustrated, and made a habit of taking these feelings out on Laura. He would punch her face and body with his fists and kick her. His family never did anything to stop the abuse.

In March of 1994, Lucian moved to Utah, while Laura remained with his family in California. Lucian persistently pleaded with Laura to join him in Utah, and in May she finally did. Lucian insisted that their past problems were caused by the stress of living with his family, and that in Utah things would be more peaceful.

In Utah, however, the abuse continued. Lucian was as verbally and physically violent as ever. When Laura was pregnant with her second child, she discovered that Lucian was using marijuana and cocaine. She found his drugs and threw them away, fearful of their consequences. When Lucian discovered his drugs missing, he became livid and grabbed Laura by the hair. He then proceeded to punch her in the face again and again. Laura was too afraid to call the police.

During Laura's pregnancy, Lucian would invite friends over, and the men would leave the apartment in a constant state of disarray. Lucian always ordered Laura to clean up after them. Laura did not have enough energy to continually clean the apartment, and asked Lucian to be more considerate. Lucian became enraged, and threatened her with a knife, telling her he was going to kill her. This time Laura did call the police. However, by the time they arrived, Lucian had run away. Later he returned home and begged for forgiveness. Laura was pregnant and alone, and felt she had no choice but to return to him.

In January of 1995, after giving birth to her second child, Laura left Lucian after a frightening incident. It was her job to wake Lucian in the middle of the night, when he had to leave for work. He would not share his bed with her, and she slept on the floor next to her children's beds. When the alarm went off one morning, Laura went to wake Lucian, but he would not stir. She prodded and shook him, but he refused to wake up. Exhausted, Laura fell

back asleep on the floor. When Lucian awoke naturally several hours later, he was furious to realize that he was late for work. He went to where Laura was sleeping and repeatedly kicked her on the back.

Injured, bruised, and terrified of Lucian, Laura went to Idaho to live with her mother. Things were calm for a few months, but in June, Lucian found Laura and begged for another chance. However, Lucian had not changed, and the verbal and physical abuse continued at Laura's mother's house. Realizing he would not win her over, Lucian decided to persuade Laura with threats. He said he would take the children away and have her deported if she did not return to him. He called her every afternoon with these threats until she relented in February of 1996. They moved into their own apartment, but nothing had changed, and Lucian continued the abuse. Finally, in March of 1997, Laura separated from Lucian for the last time.

Laura wishes to remain in the United States with her children. She filed a self-petition for residency since Lucian never followed through on the family-based I-130 petition he filed for her. She has also filed for divorce and legal custody of the children, and the state of Idaho is helping her secure a child support award from Lucian. Through her VAWA self-petition, Laura has legal authorization to work to support herself and her two daughters. Lucian has not paid child support since the separation, forcing Laura to be the sole provider for her children.

If Laura is forced to return to Mexico to obtain lawful permanent resident status, she will have to leave her job, thereby giving up her sole means of providing for her children. There is no indication of how long she would be detained in Mexico for consular processing, and it would be as impractical for her to take her children as it would to leave them behind. If she leaves them behind, they cannot be protected from Lucian's abuse. Traveling to Mexico may also interfere with court orders entered in the divorce and custody case currently pending. Further, she fears that Lucian will search for her and find her in Mexico just as he did in Idaho, even if she only leaves the United States for a short time. It must be possible for Laura to obtain her residency status here in the United States, so as not to disrupt her family's care and well-being.

This case originated in Kansas.

STELLA

Stella is a 33-year-old woman born in Mexico. She met her lawful permanent resident husband Vincento in Kansas soon after coming to the United States. She agreed to marry Vincento after a brief courtship, as she found herself lonely and isolated in the community due to lack of English proficiency and family support.

Upon moving in with her husband Stella realized that she was to share their home not only with him but also with four other men who lived there. Her husband refused to abide by his promise to ask them to move out when his new bride came to live with him. Vincento told Stella that it was her duty not only to serve him but also the boarders. She was treated as a servant and subject to constant mockery and humiliation by her husband and the other men in the house.

Vincento used emotional abuse, intimidation, and power and control strategies to isolate Stella further from family, church, and the few acquaintances she had in the United States. Vincento blamed Stella for his angry outbursts and insults. He forbade her use of the phone, made constant false accusations of infidelity, and made threats to report her to immigration to have her deported if she did not do what he said.

Stella soon lost control of her life. She never knew what day of the month it was, as she was restricted from contact with the outside world. Vincento said Stella was “crazy,” and so he controlled every aspect of her life. She was not allowed to have any money and had to rely on Vincento for even her most basic necessities. Stella endured sexual abuse by Vincento, who would degrade her by mocking her body and calling her a whore as he forced her to have sex with him.

The physical abuse started soon after she became pregnant. Stella endured many beatings which left her bruised and in constant fear for her safety and for the well-being of their unborn child she was carrying. Vincento would not allow her to see a doctor until very late in her pregnancy, and during those visits he controlled every interaction with the doctors and staff. Once, Stella passed a note in secret to a nurse stating in that she was being abused by her husband. This led to the referral of the couple to marital counseling by a nun, which failed.

The cycle of abuse continued, and Stella lived in a constant state of fear. Vincento threatened to take the baby, have Stella deported, or kill her if she left him. He kept a shotgun in their bedroom closet, and he would take it out and stroke it, saying, “once the dog is dead, the rabies is gone.” He would also tell her gory stories of women that were buried alive by their partners in their basements.

Eventually, Stella was able to break free from Vincento’s abuses after joining a support group for victims of domestic violence. With the help of this program she was able to file for

immigration benefits under VAWA and obtain a divorce from Vincenzo. Despite this fact, she will face extreme hardship if forced to return to Mexico to obtain lawful permanent resident status under VAWA. Her divorce decree forbids her or her husband from taking their child out of the state of Kansas, so Stella would have to leave her child behind when she returned to Mexico for an indeterminate amount of time. While she is gone, Vincenzo could claim that she has abandoned her child and receive full custody despite the fact that because of the domestic violence Stella was awarded legal custody of the children. Furthermore, Stella fears being tracked down in Mexico by her vindictive husband, where she would not be protected by the law. Finally, Stella is apprehensive about the reality of financial hardship posed by a trip to Mexico and the meager resources available to her once she arrived to her country of origin. For these reasons, Stella should not be forced to return to Mexico, which she severed contact with many years ago, and must be allowed to obtain legal residency status while remaining in this country.

This case originated in Minnesota.

MAGDALENA

Magdalena was born in Mexico. She met her husband, Tomas, when she was 15. Shortly afterward, he left to come to the U.S. to work in order to help support his family. Magdalena stayed in Mexico to continue her schooling. Several years later, in 1998, when Magdalena was one year away from completing her post high school studies, they began communicating again. Tomas returned to Mexico for several months, and they decided Magdalena would return with him to the U.S. In May of 1989, they both came to California. Their first child, Susana, was born in 1990, and their son Antonio was born in 1991.

They were married in a civil ceremony in California in 1992. When they were married, Tomas, who was a permanent resident, filed papers for Magdalena to obtain lawful immigration status in this country. After mailing the petition, they were notified that they needed proper copies of Magdalena's birth certificate and the marriage certificate. Tomas refused to complete the process, which meant that Magdalena could not work and was afraid to leave the house for fear of being deported. For the next three years, Tomas refused to file the immigration papers. When Magdalena sought to take English classes, he prevented her from doing so. Tomas also used money to control Magdalena. He kept all the money and never allowed her to spend any of it. Feeling depressed about her life in the U.S., Magdalena returned to Mexico to stay with her in-laws in 1995.

Tomas followed her to Mexico. They reunited, and Magdalena became pregnant again. Tomas believed that the child was not his, and after several months he returned to the U.S. Magdalena had the baby in Mexico in July 1996. The next month, Tomas again sought out and joined Magdalena in Mexico. Tomas was angry and distant. He returned to the U.S. to work, saying he would return in January of 1997. When he did not return, Magdalena took her three small children and went to Los Angeles to look for him. When she arrived in Los Angeles, California, she discovered that Tomas had been living with another woman and had recently gone to Mexico. Magdalena returned to Mexico, and again in May of 1997, Tomas sought her out and convinced her to rejoin him in L.A. Soon Tomas decided to move to Minnesota to find work. Magdalena and the three children joined him there ten months later.

One month after Magdalena joined Tomas in Minnesota, in June of 1998, Tomas struck Magdalena in the face so hard that her eye began to swell immediately. Later, seeing the black eye, Tomas apologized and swore it would not happen again. A few weeks later, three of Tomas's friends arrived unexpectedly. They stayed up late drinking. Magdalena went to sleep. She was awakened by her eight-year-old son who was upset and worried because he had heard his father tell the other men he was going to put Magdalena on a bus and "lose her," keeping the children with him in the U.S. Later, Tomas told her he wanted to talk to her. He then slapped her, grabbed her by her hair, and slammed her head against into the wall several times with such force that a window fell out of the wall. He used a hanger to bind her wrists. She thought he was

going to kill her. Her son came in and she told him to call 911. When her son went to the phone, Tomas told him not to call or he would hurt Magdalena even more. They were not sure if the call went through to the police. Tomas grabbed Magdalena by the hair again and told her she would have to tell the police to go away if they did arrive. Magdalena then put her son in bed, telling him that if Tomas beat her again, he should call 911. When she returned, Tomas forced her to have sex with him. She did not resist for fear of angering him further.

Again Tomas apologized afterward and promised it would never happen again. The next month, Tomas got upset with Magdalena because he felt she had taken too long running an errand. He yelled that she should not play when he gave her tasks to do. He took off his belt. Magdalena ran to another room and asked a woman who was staying with them to call the police. The woman refused, saying she was afraid of Tomas. Magdalena started back into the bedroom where Tomas was beating one of the children. Magdalena instructed her seven-year-old daughter to call the police and tell them that Tomas was beating her brother and mother. Magdalena went into the bedroom and Tomas began beating her with the buckle end of the belt. When she tried to leave, he dragged her back into the room by her hair. He continued to beat her in front of all three children. Finally, the police arrived and arrested Tomas. They referred Magdalena to a battered women's shelter and advocacy program. The program helped her find housing and assisted her in getting a protective order.

It would be extremely difficult for Magdalena and her children to return to Mexico. The only family she has in Mexico is a mother who is very poor and quite ill with five children ages eleven to twenty living in her house. She has no room or way to support Magdalena and her three children for the unknown period of time it might take to process Magdalena's green card which she qualifies for because of VAWA. Magdalena could expect no assistance from Tomas's family, who also lives in Mexico. They blame Magdalena for the problems with the court system that Tomas has experienced as a result of his violence toward Magdalena.

If Magdalena and the children return to Mexico, Tomas will be able to come after them with impunity. She would have neither the protection of her protection order nor the police. She would have no one to call for help. In the U.S., the protection order not only protects Magdalena from physical harm but also protects the children through orders for supervised visitation and child support. These are extra protections that Magdalena and the children simply would not have in Mexico.

Forcing Magdalena to return to Mexico with her children so that Magdalena and her Mexico-born children can obtain green cards would wrest the two older children, both U.S. citizens in second and third grade, from their school. Their English is good, and they have made new friends in Minnesota. Magdalena and the children are benefitting from the counseling and support services offered at the shelter. These types of resources do not exist for them in Mexico, and severing them from long term services that help them survive abuse will cause them severe harm.

This case originated in Minnesota.

BRIGITTA

Brigitta was born in Mexico. She met her lawful permanent resident husband, Herman, in 1993 when he was visiting from Los Angeles. After spending several months together, they moved to the United States to live with his parents in Santa Ana, California. Soon problems began. Brigitta became pregnant. Herman began using drugs. He also began to beat her. When he was under the influence of drugs, he would beat her, and when he couldn't get drugs, he would also beat her. He would slap her on the face, punch her, and kick her. His parents would tell him not to beat her, but they would never try to stop him. When his parents would try to get him to stop using drugs, he would get upset and beat Brigitta. She did not call the police out of fear that he would beat her even harder or kill her.

Their daughter was born in May 1994. They immediately decided to move to Mexico so that Herman could recuperate from drugs. For the first two months, things were better. But then, even though Herman stopped using drugs, he began to go out drinking with new friends and would return home and beat Brigitta. When Brigitta became pregnant again, Herman told her he would change, and they decided to get married. Soon they returned to live with Herman's parents in California. Herman began working and did not use drugs. He did drink, however, and continued to hit Brigitta even though he did not beat her like before.

Herman was very jealous. He would not file the immigration papers for Brigitta, telling her that he thought she might leave him if he completed the papers. Because she was undocumented, Brigitta was fearful of calling the police, not knowing what would happen to her and her child if she did.

When their second daughter was born, the situation got worse. Herman had wanted a boy. When the nurse had mistakenly told him that the baby was a boy, he was ecstatic. Upon learning that the baby was a girl, Herman told Brigitta that he did not love the baby and that they should give her away. He began to bother the baby constantly.

Herman began using drugs again and was arrested for buying drugs. Two weeks later, he got out of jail. Four months later, he began using drugs again and sold all their belongings to buy drugs. He began beating Brigitta again. He also began hitting the baby, throwing her and pulling her hair. Brigitta finally called the police because he was doing drugs in front of the children. His probation officer put Herman in jail for a month and then he was placed in a residential drug treatment program for five months. Brigitta was pregnant with their third child. A few weeks after their son was born, Herman was released from the treatment program. While in the program, Brigitta had visited Herman regularly and he had promised her a new life when he completed the program.

Soon after he returned, Herman began drinking every day and began beating Brigitta and

the children every day. Many times Herman beat Brigitta because she was trying to feed and take care of their second daughter. Herman's parents didn't try to stop the beatings, even though they lived in the same house. Finally, with the assistance of her brother-in law, Brigitta contacted the police. Brigitta had two black eyes, and her daughter had bruises on her cheeks and her bottom. When the police arrived, they took a report and transported them to a shelter. When Herman arrived, he was arrested. When Brigitta returned several days later to get her things, her father-in-law would not let her in the house. Her mother-in-law was angry that Brigitta was leaving even though she had witnessed the repeated beatings, because she wanted Brigitta to clean and work for her.

Herman spent six months in jail. Brigitta moved to Minnesota where her two sisters lived. With the assistance of a domestic violence program, Brigitta was able to get a protective order. She decided to divorce Herman. When Herman was released from jail, he tracked Brigitta down in Minnesota through her aunt, who is a good friend of Herman's mother. He came to her house at four in the morning, saying he wanted to get back together. Brigitta told him that was not going to happen, that she had a protective order against him, and that he would have to leave. When he refused to leave, she called the police. When they arrived, they told him to leave. Herman returned to California. He called her from California, telling her that she was going to regret what she had done. She told him that because of the protective order, he could not bother her anymore.

Brigitta is beginning a new life. She now lives without the fear of being beaten or having her children beaten. She needs the continued assistance of her brothers, sisters, cousins, and other family in Minnesota who have helped her. The only family she has left in Mexico is her father who drinks and beat Brigitta when she was a child. She does not want her children to suffer as she did. In Mexico she would not be able to protect herself from Herman and fears for the safety of herself and her three American born children. Herman has many friends and family in the same town that she would return to if she were forced to return to Mexico to obtain her green card. If he began harassing Brigitta or her children in Mexico, there would be no place for her to go for help. She would not have the protection of the court, the police, or the victims advocate groups that she has relied on in the U.S.

This case originated in New Mexico.

BLANCA

Blanca is originally from Mexico. She met her husband, Jaime, a naturalized United States citizen, while he was visiting his relatives in Mexico. Blanca and Jaime fell in love and were married. They moved to New Mexico to begin their lives as husband and wife.

Within a few weeks of their marriage, Jaime began to insult Blanca, telling her she was stupid and worthless. He called her names and would yell at her when he would get angry. Soon the abuse became physical. Jaime would push and slap Blanca whenever he would get frustrated or angry, and these attacks would leave bruises and welts on Blanca's face and body. He would also throw household objects at her, such as vases and furniture, and he would pull her hair and throw her across the room when he was in a rage. The abuse escalated to the point where Jaime was beating Blanca every week and screaming insults at her every day. Blanca began to fear that Jaime would kill her.

During Blanca's marriage to Jaime, they had two children. Jaime would often abandon Blanca and the children for weeks at a time, leaving them with no food or money to pay rent. Blanca begged Jaime to file for her legal immigration status so that she could get work authorization, but Jaime refused to let her work. As a result, Blanca felt helpless and dependent on Jaime for her and her babies' food, clothing, and shelter.

Jaime's pattern of abandoning her and the children continued throughout the marriage. At one point, Jaime insisted that Blanca and the children move with him to Mexico. Jaime had found work in Mexico, and he wanted the family to accompany him there. When Blanca protested that she did not want to return to Mexico because of the inadequate medical resources and schooling opportunities for the children, Jaime threatened that if she did not come with him to Mexico, he would kill her. For the next few days, Jaime beat Blanca and repeated his threat to kill her until Blanca became so frightened that she agreed to move with him to Mexico.

While in Mexico, Jaime's physical abuse of Blanca only increased. Blanca attempted to call the Mexican police on one occasion after Jaime pummeled her body with his fists and left her bruised and bleeding from the mouth, but the police never responded to her calls. Blanca felt very isolated while she was living in Mexico, since almost all of her family had long since moved to California. There were no shelters for battered women and no way to be protected from Jaime's violence. Unfortunately, she had no one but Jaime to rely on for support in Mexico, and Jaime would often leave Blanca and the children for weeks at a time without money and food.

Eventually, Blanca and the children moved back to the U.S. Jaime continued to live mainly in Mexico, although he would travel to the U.S. from time to time to visit Blanca unexpectedly. During these visits, he would beat her. It was also at this time that Blanca discovered the devastating fact that Jaime had sexually abused their two children. Blanca did not

know how long the sexual abuse had been going on, but her children and her children's school teachers had informed her of the abuse, and her children had been placed in psychological counseling. Charges were immediately filed against Jaime, and he was placed under police investigation for child sexual abuse committed against his own children.

Blanca has moved several times in an effort to hide herself and her children from Jaime. Despite this, Jaime has managed to track them down and harass and threaten them. Blanca was so afraid that Jaime would carry out his threat to kill her that she obtained a restraining order against him. She also consulted an attorney and filed a VAWA self-petition for residency.

If Blanca is forced to return to Mexico as the only way of getting her green card, she and her children will be in great danger. Blanca knows that Jaime currently lives in Mexico, just on the U.S./Mexican border. He knows exactly where Blanca's few relatives live in Mexico, and he would know exactly where to look for her if she returned to Mexico. Because he frequently crosses the border to the U.S. and stalks her and the children here, Blanca knows that he is somehow keeping track of her movements. This stalking behavior by Jaime has forced Blanca to move from place to place out of fear of him.

If Blanca were to return to Mexico with her children, her restraining order would not protect her in Mexico from Jaime's abuse. The protection that her restraining order provides is essential to keeping Blanca safe in the U.S. In fact, she has relied on her restraining order several times in the past when Jaime has stalked and threatened her in the U.S. As a result, Blanca believes that without the protection of the restraining order in Mexico, Jaime would not hesitate to abuse or kill her and possibly kidnap the children. She knows from experience that the Mexican police would offer her no assistance as a battered woman, and that her children would not be able to continue their psychological counseling in Mexico. Therefore, in order for Blanca and her children to remain safe from their abuser, Blanca must be allowed to obtain her green card in the U.S.

This case originated in New Mexico.

EVANGELINA

Evangelina is a 29-year-old native of Mexico. She met her husband, Bernardo, in Mexico at a town holiday celebration. Bernardo was visiting his family members in Evangelina's Mexican hometown. Evangelina was just 21 years old at the time. She fell in love with Bernardo, who was a lawful permanent resident of the United States living in New Mexico. When he asked her to move to New Mexico and become his wife, she happily accepted his proposal.

The couple lived together in the U.S. for almost five years before they were married. During that time, Evangelina became pregnant with their daughter, Matilda. Evangelina's life in New Mexico was a lonely one. She did not leave the house or make friends in her community because Bernardo isolated her and refused to let her leave the house alone or socialize with others. Bernardo was very secretive about his work and his life outside the home. Evangelina knew he was a construction worker, but she had no idea where he worked or how much income he made. She and baby Matilda were completely dependent upon him for food, clothing, and baby-care items. Bernardo often denied Evangelina money for her and the baby's needs, which made Evangelina extremely anxious and depressed.

Evangelina soon discovered that Bernardo was drinking large amounts of alcohol every night. He also began injecting himself with heroin. His drug and alcohol addiction made him abusive and violent toward Evangelina, both physically and emotionally. He began hitting her, slapping her, and shoving her when he would get drunk and lose his temper. He would also raise his voice and yell insults at her. Eventually, the abuse escalated to the point where Evangelina became afraid of her husband and insisted on leaving him. She asked him to drive her to her family's home in Mexico, and he agreed to do this on the condition that he would eventually come back for her.

While Evangelina was living with her family in Mexico from January to March of 1995, she did not tell her family about Bernardo's abuse of her. She knew that the fact that she was being abused would humiliate her family, and she feared that if she left Bernardo and became a single, divorced mother, she would bring her family both shame and dishonor. In part because of this concern for her family and her belief that her daughter should grow up with a father, Evangelina decided to return to Bernardo. When Bernardo journeyed to Mexico in April of 1995, he promised Evangelina he would not beat her or do drugs again, and he begged her to come back to him. Evangelina sincerely believed that he would change, so she agreed to marry him and return with him to the U.S.

Unfortunately, shortly after returning to the U.S., Bernardo broke his promise to Evangelina and started using heroin again. His addiction seemed to be even more severe than it was before. He stopped bringing home money for the family, and he stayed away from home for

two or three nights at a time. Evangelina was frantic at the thought of being evicted from their apartment for not paying rent, and she did not have enough money to buy food and supplies for her baby daughter. She asked Bernardo to file for her legal immigration status so that she could get a job and contribute to the family income, but Bernardo refused. He began beating her several times per week, leaving her bloodied and covered with bruises. He abused her sexually and raped her, as well. One of these rapes resulted in a second unplanned pregnancy for Evangelina. Sadly, Evangelina suffered a miscarriage after Bernardo subjected her to a fierce and merciless beating.

Evangelina was so frightened after the beating that caused her miscarriage that she began visiting a neighborhood church in secret, hoping to find help in escaping Bernardo's abuse. The church started assisting her in finding battered women's services, but then Bernardo found out about her visits to the church, and he threatened to kill her if she left him. He told her he would hunt her down and kill her wherever she was, whether in the U.S. or in Mexico. Then he began beating her on her face and body with his fists. Evangelina called the police, and Bernardo was arrested and charged with domestic violence. Evangelina fled to the church with her daughter and was assisted in obtaining housing, counseling services, and a restraining order against Bernardo.

Now, Evangelina has received approval of her VAWA self-petition for residency. If she is forced to return to Mexico to receive her green card under VAWA, she fears that Bernardo will carry out his threat to kill her wherever she is, whether in the U.S. or in Mexico. He is angry at Evangelina for having him arrested, and he wants Evangelina to return to him. It will be easy for Bernardo to find her in Mexico, since he knows where she would stay, and he has his own family nearby to help and support him. By contrast, both of Evangelina's parents are deceased, and she has very minimal resources and support in Mexico. She is very afraid that Bernardo will hurt or kill her in Mexico, since the police there will not enforce her U.S. restraining order and protect her from Bernardo's abuse. For these reasons, she must be allowed to get her green card in the United States.

This case originated in Texas and is currently in New Mexico.

BERTA

Berta was born in Mexico. She has been living in the United States with her entire family since she was five years old. When she was in high school in Texas, she met Tony, a United States citizen. The two dated and fell in love. Eventually, they got married.

Tony was physically and emotionally abusive to Berta from the beginning of their marriage. He would fly into angry, irrational rages, and he would hit Berta in the face with his fists, leaving her with black eyes and large bruises on her face. He would slap and kick her without warning so she had no opportunity to flee or protect herself. He would force her to have sex with him against her will. His sexual abuse of Berta was the most brutal part of their marriage. He raped her several times and would routinely force her to perform sexual acts against her will.

Berta and Tony had two children in their marriage. Tony would often hit Berta and threaten to kill her in front of their children. In time, Berta became so frightened of Tony's abuse of her that she fled with her children to a battered women's shelter. Soon after she fled, Tony sought her out and made her return home to him. Berta tried leaving Tony on several other occasions, but each time, he tracked her down in the shelter where she was hiding and coerced her into returning home. After all these incidents had taken place, Berta believed that she would never be able to escape Tony's abuse. She thought that she would never be safe because he would always find her and make her return to him.

Tony almost killed Berta during a severe beating that took place in their home. Berta managed to free herself from him and run from the house. Her life was in such danger that she had no time to take her children with her before she fled to a shelter. She eventually found refuge in New Mexico. When she tried to return home to get the children, Tony refused to let her see them. Berta petitioned the court for visitation, but she was unsuccessful because she was living in a different state than the children. For the following eight months, Berta waited for the court to decide whether she should have physical custody of the children. During that time, Tony only allowed her to see the children on very limited terms, and he would tell the children that their mother had left them and did not want them. Once when Berta came to visit the children, Tony grew angry at her and hit her across the face. Shortly afterward, Tony left notice at their older daughter's school that Berta was not allowed near her daughter, and that he was to be notified if Berta ever tried to visit the children at school.

Eventually, Berta won physical custody of her children, and they moved to New Mexico with her. Berta got a restraining order against Tony to protect her from his abuse, but she continued to fear that he would carry out his threat to kill her and take their children away from her. Since separating from Tony, Berta has consulted an attorney and filed a VAWA petition for residency, which has been approved.

Despite the approval of her VAWA self-petition, Berta will be forced to return to Mexico to obtain her green card under the law of VAWA. Returning to Mexico will be extremely difficult and dangerous for Berta for a variety of reasons. First of all, Berta has no relatives in Mexico, and she does not speak fluent Spanish. She has no familiarity with Mexico, since she has lived in the U.S. almost all her life. Consequently, if she were forced to return to Mexico, she would be alone without any financial or emotional support and will have no ability to communicate effectively in Spanish.

Secondly, Berta fears that Tony would cross the border to Mexico to abuse her, as he has promised to do in the past. Tony lives on the border between Texas and Mexico, and since he is a U.S. citizen, he would have no trouble crossing the border and finding Berta in Mexico. He is far more familiar with the Mexican legal system and geography than Berta, and he knows where Berta would stay in Mexico if she were to return to get her green card. In addition, Tony knows that Berta's restraining order would not protect her in Mexico and that he could freely abuse her or kill her there. Berta is also concerned that Tony may try to kidnap her two children while she is in Mexico. She can leave her children with her family in Texas while she gets her green card in Mexico. While Berta's protection order also protects her children from Tony, her family will have difficulty enforcing it against Tony once Berta leaves the country. Berta does not want to be separated from her children, and she believes that Tony may try to kidnap them while she is not there to protect them. Tony has demonstrated in the past that he will go to great lengths to find Berta and cause her pain and terror. Therefore, Berta should be allowed to stay in the U.S. so that she may keep herself and her children safe from Tony's abuse.

This case originated in North Carolina.

MIRANDA

Miranda is a citizen of Mexico. She met and married her husband, Federico, in Mexico, and had five children with him there. The 13-year relationship was an extremely abusive one for Miranda. In fact, the only reason why she moved to the United States in the first place was to protect her children from Federico, who threatened to take them with him to the U.S. and leave Miranda behind in Mexico. Federico had gotten a job as an agricultural worker in the United States and had later secured his status as a lawful permanent resident of the United States. Miranda thought if she came to the U.S., she would be able to protect her children from Federico.

Unfortunately, Miranda was unable to protect her children, especially her 13- and 15-year-old daughters, from Federico's sexual abuse and extreme cruelty. On an almost daily basis, Federico would bite the girls' breasts, kick them in the head, hit them with shoes, and throw household objects at them. He would also beat the other children and Miranda, as well. Miranda endured a severe beating by Federico that resulted in a miscarriage. She also suffered each day with pain, as Federico kicked her in the stomach and head and pushed her to the floor and into walls. He called Miranda and her daughters "whores" and "prostitutes," and one evening went so far as to hold the entire family at gunpoint so that no one would leave the house.

Miranda attempted to escape from Federico on more than one occasion. The first time, after he threatened to kill her children and hide their bodies where "no one would find them," Miranda hid with her children in a shelter for almost a week. She went back to Federico after he found her and the children and told her that because she was undocumented, the police would take the children away from her if she did not return to Federico.

She finally left Federico for good after an incident in which he publicly accused his older daughters of prostituting themselves and then beat Miranda and her eight-month-old baby with a large metal chain. Following this incident, the police arrested Federico, charging him with felony child abuse, assault, and domestic violence. While Federico was in jail, Miranda and her children fled the home. They have been in hiding ever since this event.

Miranda is in contact with friends who tell her that Federico, who has since been released, is looking for her and wants to kill her and her older daughters. Miranda has contacted an attorney and filed a VAWA self-petition for residency, which has been approved. If Miranda were to return to Mexico to get her green card under VAWA, her husband would certainly find her there. She knows that there would be no help for her in Mexico. When she was living in Mexico during the early years of her marriage, she tried to use the church and law enforcement in Mexico to help her escape Federico's abuse, but she was told that admitting that there was a problem would only "cheapen" her marriage. She knows she would be condemned by her family for "failing" in her marriage. Furthermore, she is aware from past experience that the police in Mexico only offer protection to those who can afford to buy it.

Miranda is also fearful of returning to Mexico to get her green card because the children's custody is in dispute. Federico has made it very clear that he wants custody of the children. If Miranda were to return to Mexico, she would have to bring her children with her in order to support them and watch over them. Miranda and the children are terrified that Federico will kidnap the children in Mexico and try to gain custody of them.

This case originated in North Carolina.

KIM

Kim is a citizen of Thailand. Kim and her daughter Li first came to the United States to visit Kim's sister, nieces, and nephews in North Carolina. During the visit, Kim met a United States citizen named Luke. Kim and Luke began dating, going to dinner and chatting. Luke took Kim to meet his boss, his mother, and his step-father, which made Kim very happy. After about nine months, Luke proposed, and he and Kim were married. Kim was excited about her new life with Luke.

Only three weeks after the marriage, Luke flew into an angry rage for no particular reason. He started screaming at Kim and took her clothes out of her dresser and threw them all over the house. Then he shoved her into his car and drove her to her friend's house, telling her he was "kicking her out." The very next day, he called her and apologized. Because Kim wanted to try to make the new marriage work, she decided to give him another chance.

About two months later, Kim had to call the police to stop Luke from punching, slapping, and pushing her. Kim was very frightened of the physical abuse Luke had unleashed on her, and she feared he might hurt or kill her. When the police arrived, she told them what Luke had done, but she did not have Luke arrested. She did this because Luke had threatened to call INS and have her deported if she called the police. She was afraid of what he would do to her if she had him arrested, so she allowed him to stay in the house.

Luke would abuse Kim's daughter, Li, as well. He would hide food from Li and get angry with her when she would eat, saying what food they had was for him. He also killed the dog that he had given Li for her birthday, simply to be cruel.

The conditions in the house were so bad that Kim and her daughter often went hungry, since Luke had been fired from several jobs and had large debts. When Luke had a job, Kim would try to talk to him about work responsibilities to help him keep the job, but Luke would get upset, punch her, and push her out of bed. He took all Kim's money from her account and kept asking her to give him more money. Kim had to borrow money to pay rent and was left with little money from her earnings to buy food. Luke refused to let Kim leave the house to go shopping for food. When Luke would get angry at Kim, he would often turn off the oven and tell her she could not cook because she was using his electricity. In the winter, he would turn off the heat and make Kim and Li sleep in the cold bedroom while he slept on the couch, warmed by a kerosene heater.

Several incidents occurred that gave Kim and Li the courage finally to obtain a restraining order against Luke. Luke flew out of control on multiple occasions. Sometimes he would get angry and throw dishes, which would hit the walls. Once he broke the front door. On another occasion, when Kim and Luke needed to file their taxes, Luke grew enraged and threw

all of Kim's papers all over the room. Later, Kim went to the post office to get their tax refund. Kim told Luke that she would give him the check if he would give her a little money to buy food. Luke pushed her and said that if she did not give him the check, he would kill her. He got very angry again and kicked things around the apartment. This terrified Kim. She desperately tried to call 911, but he took the phone from her hand and hid the telephone from her. She went upstairs and used another phone to call her friend. She reached her friend's husband, and told him to call the police. The police came, and told Luke that he could not kick Kim out.

Then one Sunday, Kim and Li returned home after a weekend spent cleaning houses to support the family. They found that Luke had turned off the heat and electricity, taken the pots and the microwave, and removed the bed and all of his clothes from the house. Kim called the police, and when they arrived, they showed her that the electric panel door to the meter box had been locked by Luke with a padlock. After this incident, Kim finally obtained a protection order and left Luke.

Since separating from Luke, Kim has received assistance in filing her VAWA self-petition for residency. Luke violated Kim's protection order and Luke appeared before a judge several times before he finally complied. If she is forced to return to Thailand as the only way of getting her green card under VAWA, she will suffer severe emotional trauma. She needs the protection of U.S. laws to make sure that Luke causes no further harm to her or her daughter. Further, ever since her separation from Luke, Kim has suffered from clinical depression. She is currently being treated for this disease by a psychiatrist and cannot discontinue the therapy to journey to Thailand. In addition, she would not be able to get this necessary treatment in Thailand, nor could she access support from family or friends in Thailand, since all her loved ones live in the U.S. Kim is trying to support herself and her child and rebuild her life after the difficult period of abuse she suffered living with Luke. For her mental health and security, she must be allowed to stay in the U.S. to get her green card.

This case originated in North Carolina.

MARGARITA

Margarita is originally from Mexico. She entered the United States with her daughter and son six years ago, and they settled in North Carolina with Margarita's parents, brothers, and sisters. She later met Nolan, a lawful permanent resident of the United States originally from Trinidad. Margarita and Nolan started dating over the next year-and-a-half. They married after Margarita gave birth to their first child, a son.

After Margarita and Nolan were married, Nolan told Margarita that he would help her get her immigration papers, but then he said the only way he could keep Margarita in the house was if she was illegal. Soon Nolan began to assert power over Margarita by abusing her constantly. He would strike her on her face and body with his fists. He would also beat Margarita and her seven-year-old son with belts. Each time Margarita would attempt to call the police after one of these beatings, Nolan would threaten to have her deported and take her children away from her. Margarita believed Nolan when he told her that the police themselves would alert the INS immigration officials and send them to the house to deport her and separate her from her children.

On several occasions, Nolan beat Margarita so brutally that she feared for her life and had to flee the house, taking only her children and the clothes on her back. Each time she did this, Nolan would seek her out and force her to return to him, again threatening to take her children away from her. The beatings became more severe and more violent each time Margarita returned home to Nolan. He told her one of these days he would kill her.

When Margarita and Nolan had a second daughter in 1997, the violence escalated. Nolan would beat her and kick her and the children out of the house, leaving them with no home and no place to go. In November of 1997, Margarita fled the house for the final time following a bloody beating by Nolan. She tried to stay at a shelter, but she could not be admitted because her daughter was sick with the chicken pox. She then went to her mother-in-law's house to seek refuge. Nolan followed her there and beat her face with his fists in front of his mother and aunt. Then he tried to choke her to death. Margarita barely managed to escape with her life and flee to a battered women's shelter that would accept her and her children. She started going to counseling at the shelter and filed a VAWA self-petition for residency, which was recently approved.

In order to obtain her lawful permanent residency, Margarita will be forced to return to Mexico to obtain her green card. Taking this trip will pose a severe hardship to Margarita, since she has no family in Mexico to support her and her four children while she gets her green card. Further, since the two children she had with Nolan are of mixed race, they will suffer discrimination and be taunted by the other children in Margarita's village in Mexico. She is still living in the shelter with her four children, and she is unable to discontinue the mental health

counseling she is receiving to help her cope with the abuse she suffered with Nolan. Without sufficient finances, family support in Mexico, or regular mental health counseling available, Margarita will be too emotionally debilitated to travel to Mexico to get her green card.

This case originated in the Virgin Islands.

URSULA

Úrsula is a citizen of Trinidad. Her life has been filled with betrayal, pain, and physical and mental abuse at the hands of both her first and second husbands. Her first husband was a citizen of Trinidad named Mario. He intimidated her and beat her throughout their marriage and threatened to kill her on several occasions. Even though Úrsula got a restraining order against him in Trinidad, this did not keep her safe from his abuse. Police never came to the house to investigate or arrest Mario when Úrsula reported Mario's violation of the restraining order. When Úrsula finally filed for divorce from Mario, the court awarded the family home to her; but Mario continued to live there and refused to leave. Despite her appeals to the police, no one helped Úrsula remove Mario from the home. She was helpless to change her situation. Mario later told her that if she came back to the house again, he would burn it down with her in it.

Just as Úrsula was trying to put her life back together after her marriage to Mario, she met Daniel, a native of Trinidad and lawful permanent resident of the United States. Daniel came to see Úrsula when she was hospitalized with the severe injuries that Mario inflicted upon her. He was Úrsula's knight in shining armor. He helped her and became her friend when she most needed support after her divorce from Mario. Soon, Úrsula and Daniel fell in love and got married. Úrsula never suspected that the kind man she had married would be just as abusive as her first husband.

Daniel brought Úrsula to the U.S. Virgin Islands shortly after they were married. He had told her that they were simply going on vacation, but in reality, he had planned for them to settle in the islands permanently. Not long after the move to the islands, Daniel started treating Úrsula abusively. He abused her sexually, making her perform sexual acts against her will and raping her when she refused. He would make her sleep on the cold, hard floor when she did not follow orders or complained about the abuse. He would also make her perform humiliating and painful tasks in order to assert his dominance over her. For example, he made her put tabasco sauce on her panties and wear them all day. Another time, he locked her out of their house and threw her belongings out in the yard just before a hurricane hit the island. He frequently beat Úrsula, leaving her with bruises and black eyes.

Úrsula and Daniel had been married for one year when Úrsula obtained a restraining order against him. The very day Úrsula received the restraining order, Daniel followed her from the courthouse to her attorney's office. Later that evening, he followed Úrsula's attorney home and continued to harass and stalk her during the next few months. He would also call Úrsula and threaten to hurt or kill her.

Úrsula knows that Daniel travels to Trinidad frequently. In fact, he called her once from Trinidad to harass and threaten her. Úrsula also knows from her past experience with her ex-husband Mario that the police and laws of Trinidad will not protect her from domestic violence.

She is extremely fearful of having to return to Trinidad to get her green card because her ex-husband Mario has threatened to kill her if she returns, and her current husband Daniel knows where she would stay in Trinidad and would take the opportunity to hurt or kill her there. Úrsula's restraining order against Daniel is only enforceable within the territories of the United States; it would not protect her against Daniel's violence against her in Trinidad.

This case originated in California and is currently in Washington, D.C.

CRISTINA

Cristina is a 49-year-old woman from a small town in Mexico. There she met her husband Hector, who is now a lawful permanent resident of the United States. She met Hector when she was 14, through his cousin, who was a friend of her's. The two began dating, and Hector treated Cristina well throughout their courtship. Later that year, he invited her to live with him and his mother. Cristina agreed, but once she moved in, her problems with Hector began.

During the first week of living together, Hector grew extremely jealous and demanded to know the names of all Cristina's previous sexual partners. Cristina truthfully insisted that she had never been with any other man, but Hector refused to believe her. A few days later, he brought her to an isolated spot by a river and again demanded that she reveal who else she had been with. Then Hector took a tree branch and beat Cristina repeatedly on the torso.

A few months later, Cristina discovered she was pregnant. Hector's violence and jealousy was worsening, and in the fifth month of her pregnancy, Cristina decided to leave him. Hector was seeing another woman at the time, and constantly telling Cristina that this other woman was better than her. On one such occasion, he proceeded to punch Cristina in the face and beat her with his belt.

Cristina traveled to stay with her mother and lived peacefully until six months after the baby was born. Then, in the spring of 1968, Hector came looking for Cristina. He told her he did not want her to marry anyone else, and he did not want anyone else to be the father of his child. He was very persuasive, and convinced Cristina that if they got married, everything would be different.

The couple was married that summer and then returned to Hector's home to live with his family. Despite his promises, the situation did not improve. Hector began to drink more and more often, and would beat Cristina approximately once a week. He mostly used his fists and feet to batter Cristina, often striking her in the face and leaving her with a bleeding nose. On one occasion, he left her entire hip bruised after kicking her while she was trapped sitting in a chair.

Over the years, Cristina gave birth to six more children, but the abuse did not end. Once in 1975, Hector came home in the middle of the night drunk. He knocked on the door, but Cristina did not answer because she was afraid of him and what he might do while intoxicated. She stayed in bed and hoped he would stay outside until he grew sober. Later, after the pounding on the door subsided, Cristina went to the door and found Hector enraged. He was livid that she had not opened the door and accused her of being with another man that night. He started tearing the room apart, looking for the man he imagined to be hiding there. He overturned everything in the bed, including four of the children. He then grabbed Cristina by the hair and started hitting

her in the face, back and forth, from side to side. Hector's mother came into the room to see what was happening, and while she distracted Hector, Cristina climbed up on the roof of the nearby house of Hector's brother. Hector went out of the house with a machete and started attacking the grasses and weeds around the house looking for Cristina. She hid on the roof for two hours, only coming down after Hector left.

The children were extremely affected by this incident, especially their eldest daughter, who still remembers it clearly. Cristina wanted desperately to leave Hector after this, but she felt she had no choice but to stay. She had many young children and no job or skills to support them. There was no one in her family who was able to give shelter or financial support to her and her young children.

Hector had been traveling to the United States to work since 1970, and had received permanent resident status. He brought the older children to live with him there, and then Cristina and the younger children. However, the abuse continued. Once in 1990, Hector became angry and began insulting and verbally abusing Cristina. Their oldest son, Mateo, asked Hector to stop and to calm down, but this only made Hector angrier. He began throwing things at Mateo, which terrified Cristina and the children. They all fled the house and spent the night in a public park, only returning after they were sure he was sober the next day.

Several more episodes of domestic violence occurred through the years. During one incident in 1992, Hector repeatedly hit Cristina in the face, and one of the children called the police. Cristina was afraid to press charges, but Hector was prosecuted and jailed anyway. When he got out of jail, he threatened to deport Cristina and the children. In 1993, while Hector was drinking, he thrust a knife toward her as if to cut her. Cristina ran out and stayed away until she was sure he was asleep. In 1994, Hector became enraged because Cristina had come home late from work. He started to hit her and she called the police. When the police came and detained him, he again threatened to have Cristina and the children deported.

In 1995, their son Miguel moved to Washington, D.C. and invited Hector to join him, to get him away from Cristina. However, once Hector was in Washington, he complained about his situation, saying that Miguel could not cook for him or socialize with him. He convinced Cristina to join him, and told her it would be a new beginning for them. For the first few months, everything was peaceful, but Hector soon began drinking excessively again. He would stay up all night, drinking and blasting music, keeping the household awake. Any complaints about this behavior were met with verbal abuse. By summer of 1998, Hector was in the routine of getting drunk every Friday night and drinking continuously all through the weekend, day and night.

One Saturday at 2:00 a.m., he ran out of alcohol and awoke Cristina, believing she had stolen it. Cristina, who had to work at 5:00 that morning, asked Hector to leave her alone, but he was obsessed. He demanded that she give him back his alcohol or give him money to buy more. When Cristina told him the stores were closed, he began to throw things and tear the apartment apart looking for alcohol. Their daughter Marcia woke up and begged Hector to stop, telling him

no one had taken his alcohol. Hector became enraged, and started punching Cristina in the face, head, and neck. When Marcia tried to stop him, he grabbed her hair and started to attack her as well. Marcia got away and called the police, and this time Cristina pressed charges. She finally realized Hector would never change.

Cristina filed a self-petition for residency under VAWA, but is terrified to return to Mexico for consular processing. She now has a protective order against Hector, but in Mexico her protective order is not valid. Hector is currently living in Mexico where he fled after criminal charges were brought against him and after Cristina obtained her civil protection order. He would surely be able to find her there. In Mexico, he would not be prosecuted there for his violence. Cristina's children and American citizen grandchildren live, work, and go to school in this country, and she has a job and support system here. There is nothing left for her in Mexico, and having to return, even for a few weeks, would pose a severe financial hardship. Cristina must be permitted to obtain her green card within the United States, where her rights and safety will continue to be protected.

This case originated in Washington, D.C.

LITA

Lita, originally from El Salvador, came to the United States with her daughter in 1984. While visiting her family in Washington, D.C., Lita's brother introduced her to his friend Alfonso, a lawful permanent resident. She thought Alfonso seemed like a good person, and they began dating.

Before long, Lita realized she was pregnant, and she and her daughter moved in with Alfonso. Their son was born later that year. Lita and Alfonso were content for the first two years of their relationship, but problems began in 1989, when Lita was expecting another child.

When Lita was three months pregnant, Alfonso came home drunk one night at about 11:00 p.m. At 1:00 a.m., he wanted to go out again, but Lita asked him not to. Alfonso got angry and attacked her, pushing her hard on the shoulders, throwing her against the wall. After this incident, Lita started having stomach pains, and ultimately suffered a miscarriage.

Later that year, Lita went to visit Alfonso at the garage where he worked. She saw him with another woman, and asked him what was going on. Alfonso hit her multiple times in the face with his fist. Lita had bruises all over her face as a result of this incident. The physical abuse became more and more commonplace, and it resulted in Lita suffering another miscarriage in 1991.

After her second miscarriage, Alfonso backed down, and things were peaceful for a few years. Lita had twin girls in 1992, and another son in 1994. However, when the family moved into a new apartment, the abuse started again. A neighbor often complained to Alfonso about the noise the children made, and these complaints agitated Alfonso. He would take out his anger on Lita, and began hitting her again. Lita wanted to move, but Alfonso refused and became abusive whenever she brought up the subject.

Alfonso also began to abuse the children. One night when the neighbor complained about the children's noise, Alfonso hit his small daughter, who was playing in the apartment. The hard blow to her face with his open hand resulted a great deal of swelling. On another night, Alfonso was drinking and began to beat Lita in front of the children. He hit her and kicked her three times, and the children all began to cry. Lita was upset that her children were witness to this violence and worried about them because they were so afraid.

The abuse continues into the present. One morning last month, when Lita was getting the children ready for school, Alfonso hit her and shoved her in the back of the head, throwing her against the wall. A few weeks ago, Alfonso began insulting and verbally abusing Lita because the children were not getting ready for school fast enough. He called her obscene names and then threatened to kill her.

Lita is now self-petitioning for residency under VAWA so that she will be able to leave Alfonso and exist in this country independently. It is important that she become a lawful permanent resident so that she can work to support her children, who are American citizens, and raise them in the country of their birth. However, if she is forced to return to El Salvador to receive her green card, she and her family face danger. Lita does not have the financial means to take all the children on such a trip for an indeterminate period of time, nor does she wish to leave them with Alfonso. He is abusive toward them, and could also try to achieve sole custody of them while Lita is out of the country. Furthermore, Alfonso could follow Lita to El Salvador and abuse her there, where the law would not protect her. It is necessary for the safety of Lita and her children that she be permitted to remain in this country to obtain legal immigration status.

This case originated in Alaska.

MIGUEL

Miguel is originally from El Salvador. He entered the United States seven years ago, fleeing intense persecution by the military group then in power in El Salvador, the FMLN "Guerria." In El Salvador, Miguel and his family were pursued by the FMLN when the group rose to power. Miguel witnessed his father murdered execution-style in front of the family home. Members of the military beat up his mother before Miguel's eyes. Then the soldiers raped his sisters. Miguel was so fearful that the FMLN would continue to punish him by torturing his family that he went into hiding. He stopped visiting his family and eventually cut off all contact with them. In fact, he has not been in contact with his family for nearly a decade. He continues to fear for their safety in El Salvador.

After Miguel arrived in the U.S., he immediately filed an asylum petition. He also entered a program of psychotherapy to help him cope with the horror of what he had witnessed in El Salvador. Miguel was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the political persecution he had experienced. Miguel was nervous, unable to sleep, prone to having frightening nightmares and feelings of fear and stress.

While Miguel was undergoing therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder, he met a supportive friend named Sandra. Sandra was a U.S. citizen with two children of her own. Sandra and Miguel fell in love and soon married. It was just after the marriage that Miguel began to realize that Sandra had psychological problems of her own. Sandra was demanding, possessive, and controlling. She was also an alcoholic who drank heavily. Miguel soon found himself taking care of Sandra's two children without any help from Sandra. The situation only grew worse.

One morning, as Miguel was getting ready to go to work, Sandra became angry and belligerent for no reason at all and refused to give Miguel the car keys. Miguel knew that Sandra had been drinking heavily all morning. He asked her patiently for the keys, but she refused to hand them to him. After much coaxing, Sandra finally gave Miguel the keys, and Miguel started the car and began to back slowly out of the driveway. Just then, Sandra opened the passenger side door, got in, and lunged toward Miguel's chest with a kitchen knife. Miguel instinctively put his hand up to protect himself, and the knife sank into the flesh of his hand. He wrested the knife away from Sandra after a struggle, and he then rushed to the hospital.

After the stabbing, Miguel became nonfunctional. The violence that Sandra had inflicted upon him aggravated his post-traumatic stress disorder and caused him to experience flashbacks of his persecution in El Salvador. Miguel entered a program of counseling, sought a Restraining Order against Sandra, and separated from her. Sandra continued to harass Miguel and threaten him throughout this time. She would also call Miguel's attorney's office and threaten his attorney and another staff member. The threats and harassment grew so intense and frightening

that the staff member resigned.

Miguel's attorney helped him file a VAWA self-petition for residency on the basis of his status as an abused spouse. His petition was approved almost immediately. Now Miguel is awaiting his turn to get his green card. If he is forced to return to El Salvador as the only way of getting his green card under VAWA, he and his family may face torture and persecution by those who forced Miguel's exile from the country. Miguel has not contacted his family for almost ten years because he fears that such contact would put the family in grave danger. Miguel knows that going back to El Salvador would result in his own death and the possible torture or murder of his family members. In addition, Miguel's therapist has stated that Miguel would likely become nonfunctional with terror were he forced to return to El Salvador. The post-traumatic stress disorder he now experiences has increased in severity ever since Sandra stabbed him. His therapist does not believe that Miguel would be able to cope with a return to his native country.

This case originated in Colorado.

LUCINDA

Lucinda was born in Argentina. She came to the United States to make a better life for herself. In Colorado, she met and married a lawful permanent resident of the United States named Ubaldo. Lucinda and Ubaldo were very much in love when they married, and the future seemed bright. Ten months after their wedding, Lucinda gave birth to their daughter, Jane.

It was soon after Jane's birth that Ubaldo began to behave irrationally and violently. He hit Lucinda for the first time after they had an argument in March of 1996. Ubaldo became consumed with rage, shouting obscenities at Lucinda and faking punches at her. He grabbed her around the neck and shook her so violently that her neck and arms became mottled with bruises. Then he threw her against the wall with such force that Lucinda's body smashed a hole in the wall. Ubaldo then called a cousin to take Lucinda away before he killed her.

After this incident, Lucinda wanted to call the police, but she was afraid. Ubaldo had told her many times that she was an "illegal" and had no rights. He said that if she reported anything to the police, she would be deported and he would get custody of their daughter. Since Lucinda did not have legal status, and she was very afraid of losing her daughter, she kept quiet about the abuse and did not call the police.

The abuse continued through the next year of their marriage. One day, while Ubaldo was driving Lucinda to her job as a Spanish interpreter, he lashed out at her with violence. He was angry because a check he had written for car insurance had bounced. He stopped the car and reached across the passenger seat to grab Lucinda and shake her with great force. He slammed her head repeatedly into the passenger's side window, and ripped her sweatshirt sleeves at the seams with the shaking. Ubaldo eventually got out of the car and began kicking the tires and opening and shutting the driver's side door. Lucinda seized the opportunity to slide into the driver's seat and flee, leaving Ubaldo by the side of the road.

Lucinda left Ubaldo soon after this incident. She consulted an attorney who helped her file her VAWA self-petition for residency. Now, she is facing the prospect of returning to Argentina as the only way of getting her green card under VAWA. Such a return to Argentina would create a serious hardship for Lucinda and her daughter.

First, she may be unable to take her daughter with her if Ubaldo has joint custody. Lucinda has been and remains Jane's primary care giver, so a long-term separation between mother and daughter for an undetermined period of weeks or months could result in permanent psychological damage to their daughter. Even if she could take her daughter with her, she would be forced to separate the girl from her father in violation of court orders leading to her potentially being charged with parental kidnapping. Such a separation would also emotionally devastate Lucinda, who has been trying to regain stability and peace in her life after the physical and

emotional ordeal of her married life.

This case originated in Colorado.

LUISA

Luisa is originally from Mexico. She entered the United States 14 years ago with her family. While living in Colorado, she met a man named Guillermo. Guillermo is a lawful permanent resident of the United States originally from Mexico. Luisa and Guillermo dated for a year before they married in a church in Colorado. Luisa was very much in love with Guillermo, and she hoped that their lives together would be filled with joy.

It was not long after the birth of their first child that Guillermo started abusing Luisa. He would come home drunk almost every night. Luisa came to fear the sound of his footsteps coming through the doorway, since he was often in a terrible mood, filled with anger and completely out of control. He would destroy furniture, yell and insult Luisa, and tell her that she was worthless and a bad wife. Luisa would try to calm him down so his screaming would not wake the baby, but this only made Guillermo angrier. He would usually slap Luisa across the face, but other times he would kick her or punch her with his fists all over her face and body. The severity of the beatings depended on Guillermo's mood, but the unpredictability of his violence always terrified Luisa. She began to fear that he would kill her or hurt their child in one of his rages.

Over the next few years of their marriage, Guillermo and Luisa had three more children. The abuse only escalated over time. Luisa tolerated Guillermo's abuse because she feared that Guillermo would have her deported and take her children away from her. He would often threaten to call the INS when he was angry, telling her "you'll never see the children again."

Luisa endured one final beating from Guillermo in April of 1998. Guillermo began shouting at Luisa for spending money on food and clothing for herself and the children. He screamed insults at Luisa, and then he began shouting insults at the children, who were cowering in the back of the room. Luisa quietly told the children to go into the bedroom as she feared that Guillermo would harm them. As soon as the children left the room, Guillermo grabbed Luisa and dragged her across the room. He hurled her across the room and watched as her body crashed against the wall and sank to the floor. Guillermo then picked her up and shook her violently, slapping her repeatedly across the face. The children in the other room were so afraid that they called the police. Guillermo fled before the police arrived, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

After this incident, Luisa received a permanent restraining order against Guillermo. She continues to live in fear that Guillermo will come back to the house and kill her. She knows that the restraining order is the only thing keeping her and her children safe from his violence.

Luisa has also applied for legal immigration status under VAWA. When it comes time for her to get her green card, she will be required to return to Mexico to obtain her green card.

This will pose a very serious hardship to Luisa and her children, since Luisa is the sole supporter of her four children and has no one to leave them with in the United States while she returns to Mexico. She cannot finance a trip to Mexico for herself and her four U.S. citizen children, and she is unwilling to remove the children from school for the period of weeks or months that it will take to get her green card. In addition, Luisa is afraid to leave the United States, since it is the only place where her restraining order against Guillermo is valid. She faces the possibility of Guillermo following her to Mexico, the country of his birth, and hurting her and kidnaping the children.

This case originated in Colorado.

DALIA

Dalia was born in El Salvador. She was only 16 years old when she gave birth to her daughter, Iliana. Dalia watched her mother die in El Salvador from lack of medicine and feared that baby Iliana might become ill from poor nutrition. Since the rest of her family had already fled to the United States during the war, Dalia decided to come to the U.S., as well. She wanted to make a better life for herself and her child. At the age of 18, she crossed the border and settled in Colorado.

Four years later, Dalia started dating a man named Alejandro. He was a Lawful Permanent Resident of the United States originally from El Salvador. Dalia and Alejandro soon fell in love and got married. Dalia was happy and excited to begin a new life with the man she loved, and she thought her daughter would be better off having a strong father figure in the house.

Just three years after Dalia and Alejandro's marriage, Dalia discovered a secret that would shatter her family's life. Iliana, now ten years old, revealed to her mother that Alejandro had been sexually molesting her. Dalia was horrified to hear this, and she began closely observing Alejandro's attentions towards her daughter. What she saw made her even more suspicious of him. When she confronted Alejandro, he denied molesting Iliana and became very angry at Dalia. He told her that she had better not make any accusations or he would have her sent back to El Salvador.

Fearing more for her daughter than herself, Dalia went to the police. The police conducted a thorough investigation and determined that, based on the testimony of Iliana and the confession of Alejandro, Alejandro was guilty of child sexual abuse. Alejandro fled back to El Salvador before the trial took place..

Since then, Dalia has petitioned for and obtained her visa approval under VAWA. However, she will be forced to return to El Salvador in order to get her green card, under current law. Making Dalia return to El Salvador for this purpose is a terrible hardship because she has no family left in El Salvador and no viable means of supporting herself and Iliana there. In addition, she is afraid that Alejandro, who lost his possibility of living in the U.S. because she pressed charges against him, is in El Salvador and plotting revenge on Dalia for having him arrested. Since the authorities in El Salvador cannot protect her from Alejandro, Dalia fears returning to her home country, no matter the length of the visit.

Dalia has started taking English lessons and has secured a job. She and Iliana are attending counseling sessions which are necessary to help them recover from the horrors that Alejandro committed against them. They do not have the emotional strength to endure a long journey to El Salvador, especially without friends or relatives in El Salvador to help, support, and

protect them from Alejandro.

This case originated in Colorado.

ALICIA

Alicia is a 25-year old citizen of Mexico. She entered the United States without inspection at age 14. She met her husband, Moisés, the same year she entered the United States. A year later, when Alicia was 15, she moved in with Moisés and married him in January, 1986. Moisés is a lawful permanent resident of the United States.

Moisés began abusing Alicia when their first child, Donald, was four months old. Alicia asked Moisés for money to pay for Donald's vaccinations, since Moisés controlled all the money in the household. Moisés refused to give her any money, and he grew angry and shouted obscenities at her. Not knowing what else to do, Alicia took the money from his jacket. Moisés responded by repeatedly slapping Alicia across the face.

As time passed and Alicia began to talk of leaving Moisés, he intensified his control over her and his violent attacks. He left Alicia alone in the house for long periods of time without money or food. When she made plans to move in with her brother, Moisés found out and severely beat her. He held a pistol to her head and told her that she would never leave him and that she would always belong to him.

Alicia grew tired of being unable to pay for her two-year-old son's needs, so she returned to work. At that point, Moisés stopped contributing to the household expenses and demanded that Alicia fulfill both the financial and domestic needs of the house. Alicia worked for two years until the birth of her twin girls, Kelly and Lesley. Moisés refused to return to his regular work hours, despite Alicia's pleas. As a result, Alicia returned to work full-time only six months after the birth of the twins.

One evening, Alicia was forced to work late cleaning offices. When she returned home a half-hour later than usual, Moisés began throwing objects at her face and body. He then lunged at her and knocked her into the television. Alicia fell onto the floor, and Moisés began kicking and hitting her. Alicia's niece grabbed the children and rushed them into another room so that they would not see their father beating their mother so horribly.

Moisés beat Alicia for the final time in early February of 1998. He began smacking her across the face and pummeling her body with his fists. Fearing for her life and the children's, Alicia attempted to call the police, but Moisés had disconnected and hidden the phone. The following morning, she fled to a domestic violence shelter and obtained a restraining order against Moisés. Later, she consulted an attorney and filed her VAWA self-petition.

Under VAWA, Alicia must return to Mexico in order to obtain her green card. If she does this, she will be in great danger. Alicia's husband has threatened to kill her, and in Mexico he would have an opportunity to do so. Moisés is from the same town as Alicia in Mexico, and

he travels there frequently to visit his family. He would have no trouble finding her when she returns with the children to get her green card. Because of this, Alicia is unable to return to Mexico. She knows that law enforcement officials in Mexico will not protect her from Moisés and that her U.S. restraining order will be useless in Mexico.

This case originated in Kentucky.

EVA

Eva is a 20-year-old woman originally from El Salvador. She arrived in Kentucky in January of 1993 to visit her sister because things were difficult at home. Her family was very poor and lived crowded in a small house with many extended family members. Eva decided to stay in Kentucky and soon met Alberto, a lawful permanent resident also from El Salvador. After living with her sister for six months, Eva moved in with Alberto in September of 1993, when she was 15 and he was 36.

From the beginning, the relationship was very troubled. Alberto regularly used alcohol and marijuana, and a pattern of degradation and overt abuse quickly emerged. He repeatedly beat Eva with his fists, called her obscene names, and threatened deportation. Once he threw a plate of food not cooked to his satisfaction into her face. He always threatened Eva into keeping quiet about the violence. She was not even allowed to have contact with her sister, who lived a short distance away.

On one occasion the abuse was so severe that Eva called the police, and Alberto was jailed for one night. When he got out, he forced Eva to recant her story, and in court she testified she had lied about the abuse. Alberto had told her he would have her deported or kill her if she told the truth on the stand, or if she ever called the police again.

In 1995, Eva had her first child, and in 1997 another was born. Eva and Alberto got married a few months before the second child was born. Alberto often used the children to threaten Eva, saying that if she did not obey him, he would keep the children and have her deported. The beatings eventually became more severe, and he began to force Eva to have sex with him immediately after he beat her. She would run away from him until he caught her and raped her, claiming that sex was her duty because she was his wife. He would accuse her of infidelity if she was reluctant and non-compliant.

When Alberto was at work, Eva stayed in the house, frightened of doing something to displease him. When he got home from work, Eva had to have dinner ready and keep the children quiet. If the babies made any noise, he would hit them and Eva. Eva wanted to call the police, but if she did Alberto would beat her and threatened to kill her or have her deported. He frequently beats the children with belts, leaving marks. He said that if Eva took the children to the pediatrician, he would explain away the evidence of their abuse by saying that Eva was the abuser, and this would get her deported.

For the past few months, Alberto has been trying to force Eva to sign divorce papers. He told her he would not allow her to leave the relationship after they were divorced, and would not explain to her the purpose of the divorce. Eva believes Alberto wants a divorce to void the I-130 petition he filed for her earlier. He knows that once she receives her green card, she will ask the

police for protection, no longer fearing deportation. Alberto wants to keep Eva illegal so he can continue to abuse her, knowing she will not call the police. Once divorced, Eva would be a captive in their house at Alberto's mercy, with no way to legalize her status.

In June of 1998, Alberto came home after drinking and again tried to force Eva to sign the divorce papers. When she refused, Alberto became extremely violent in front of their two sons. He grabbed Eva's hair and forced her to a table to sign the paper. When Eva again refused, he forced her to the floor. Eva got up and ran to the bathroom, but Alberto followed her. He grabbed her neck and said, "if you do not sign the divorce papers right now, I will kill you now." He then forced her head into the toilet, sinking her face under water five times, and closed the lid on her head. Alberto then ran to the phone and disconnected it from the wall. Eva ran to her room, and Alberto followed and tried to choke her. He then said to her, "I will not kill you today, because I need you to sign the divorce papers first. The second time you try to call the police they will come to get your dead body."

The next day, Eva called her sister and had her come get her and the children. They went directly to the police to report the abuse, and Eva received an order of protection. Eva fears for her life after having been subject to years of violence and death threats.

Alberto was involved in a guerilla group in El Salvador that has done a lot of killing. He visits the country in disguise, as he is wanted by the police. He has an American woman friend who makes frequent trips to El Salvador for him, and who once held Eva hostage to hide evidence of a severe beating. She then offered Eva money to return to El Salvador in exchange for not alerting the police to her beatings. He has threatened to have her and her family killed in El Salvador upon deportation. He claims, "I can have anyone killed for fifty cents with one phone call," and Eva has no doubt this is true. In addition, Eva has found evidence of Alberto's involvement in Satanic practices, and was brutally beaten upon the discovery.

Eva needs the protection of the United States Courts to enforce her protective order and she needs the continued support of mental health counselors and battered women's advocates who have been assisting her and her sons in overcoming the devastating effects of the abuse. If she returns to El Salvador, even briefly, she has no doubt Alberto will follow her and kill her, or remain in America and arrange to have her and her family killed. She cannot take her children with her to El Salvador into such danger, nor can she leave them behind alone with their abuser. Eva must be permitted to remain in the United States to become a lawful permanent resident; this is the only way to ensure the safety and protect the lives of Eva and her children.

This case originated in California and is currently in Oregon.

NURIA

Nuria was born in Guatemala. She fled her war-torn country in 1987 with her infant son in her arms. The guerrillas had surrounded her rancho in Guatemala, and she and her family ran from the hills in a desperate attempt to survive. Nuria entered the United States and applied for political asylum and eventually found a waitressing job in California. A few years later, she met Walter, a United States citizen, and in 1991 they moved in together.

From the beginning of their relationship, Walter insulted Nuria and swore at her when she did something to displease him. He began drinking alcohol on a regular basis, and when he would get drunk, he would destroy household furniture and frighten Nuria with his screaming and yelling. Nuria considered leaving Walter, but she loved him and hoped that he would change his ways. When they had their first child in 1993, Nuria felt that she should stay with Walter because the baby needed to grow up with both a father and a mother. Although Walter continued drinking and verbally abusing Nuria, she married him in 1995, just after the birth of their second child.

On Christmas Eve of that year, Walter came home drunk, angry, and out of control. He destroyed the Christmas tree and crushed all the Christmas presents, then he knocked the television set to the floor. Nuria was pregnant at the time, but he still grabbed her by the shoulders and began shaking her violently. Then he punched her in the face with his fists so many times that her mouth and nose were bloody. Nuria crawled to the kitchen and called the police, who arrived immediately and took Walter to jail.

Nuria decided after the Christmas Eve attack that she could no longer risk her and her children's lives by living with her husband. She received a restraining order against her husband and began filing her VAWA self-petition for residency. Because she felt that it was important for her children to be in contact with their father, she arranged for them to have supervised visitation with Walter at her sister's home. Although Walter wanted to get back together with Nuria, she refused to put herself in danger again.

Nuria gave birth to their third child several months later. She was separated from Walter at that time, and he refused to pay child support for his three children. Consequently, Nuria was forced to return to work full-time only six weeks after the baby's birth. She spent the next year working and supporting herself and her children. In April of 1998, Walter came by her house unannounced and began pushing Nuria across the room, threatening to give her a "good beating." He told her that he had asked some of his male friends to come over so that they could have sex with her. Nuria ran outside and got in the car. Walter followed her and smashed the windshield of the car and punctured all four tires. A neighbor called the police, and Walter was arrested.

After that incident, Nuria realized that she would have to move far away from Walter if

she hoped to escape his abuse. She took her children to a battered women's shelter 700 miles away in California, located near another sister's house. Nuria is now enrolled in a nurse's aid training course, and her children are enrolled in school. She still fears that Walter will find her and abuse her again.

If Nuria is forced to return to Guatemala to get her green card, she will risk losing custody of her children to Walter. She will have to leave her children behind in the U.S. while she gets her green card, since she cannot afford a trip to Guatemala for herself, let alone for her four children. She is concerned that Walter will petition for custody of the children while she is out of the country, or that he might try to kidnap the children while she is not there to protect them. Nuria cannot be certain that her family members will be able to protect themselves and her four children from Walter's violence should he come for them while she is in Guatemala. She is also very afraid to leave the U.S. to get her green card because she has no family in Guatemala to support her, and she would suffer emotional trauma if she returned to the place where she last endured war and political persecution.

This case originated in Washington.

SARA

Sara was born in El Salvador. She fled the war there in early 1990 and entered the United States. Shortly after her arrival, she met Armando, a lawful permanent resident of the United States who was from Sara's hometown in El Salvador. Coincidentally, both Sara and Armando's families knew one another in El Salvador. Armando had originally come to the United States in the early 1980s, obtaining his residency status through the Salvadoran Legalization Program.

After several months of dating, Sara and Armando were married. Almost immediately after the wedding, Sara began to realize that Armando had a terrible temper and was prone to violent outbursts. Whenever he would become angry, he would hit Sara or throw things at her. He would often punch or slap her in the face. When Sara would attempt to leave him, he would threaten to have her deported. Armando also used Sara's undocumented status as a weapon against her. After assaulting her, he would try to get her to stay with him by offering to fill in her paperwork for her green card. Despite his promises, he never made any attempt to petition for Sara's legal immigration status.

After Armando subjected Sara to a particularly severe beating in 1995, Sara's screams were so loud that neighbors called the police. Armando was arrested and sent to jail for a couple of weeks. Once he was released, he violated the no contact order issued by the court and moved back into the house with Sara. Sara did not want him back in the house, but she was afraid of being deported and knew that she could not support their three young children without his income. She had no idea that services might be available to help her out of her abusive marriage.

Sara found out about shelters for battered women through a friend at church. Sara had been wanting to leave Armando for quite a while. She had been growing increasingly more fearful of him, and his violent attacks had not subsided over time. Despite her many fears, Sara fled the family home one day with her three children and went to a shelter. She has been living in confidential housing since that time.

With the support of the shelter, Sara and her children have gotten counseling to help them cope with Armando's violence and abuse. Sara has received a restraining order against Armando, and her visa petition under VAWA has been approved. Now Sara is trying to build a new life for herself as a single mother, supporting her children entirely on her own. She is attending English classes and has also found a part-time job.

Sara has had no contact with Armando since she fled their home and obtained a restraining order against him. She fears that if he finds her, he will try to make her come back to him. She knows that going back to Armando would mean suffering more physical and emotional abuse at his hands.

If Sara is forced to return to El Salvador to get her green card under VAWA, Armando will quickly learn that she has returned and will likely follow her there. Her return to El Salvador will surely be discovered by Armando's family, since Sara and Armando are from the same town. Once the word spreads to Armando, Sara and the children will not be safe from him. He will likely hurt Sara or try to take the children away from her. Her protection order will be useless to protect her in El Salvador. For these reasons, Sara cannot go back to El Salvador to get her green card.

This case originated in Washington.

JUANA

Juana was born in Mexico. In 1993, when she was thirteen, she came to the United States along with her mother, sister, and two brothers. Juana's step-father, Mateo, was already living in the United States when Juana and the rest of the family came to live with him. Mateo is a lawful permanent resident of the United States. Juana's two brothers are Mateo's natural children, and Juana and her sister are Mateo's step-children.

When the family arrived in the U.S., Mateo did not petition for their residency status. In fact, he repeatedly threatened to have Juana, her mother, and her sister deported whenever he would become angry at them. Mateo's violent, abusive nature began to rear its ugly head. He would beat Juana's mother severely in front of all of the children. Juana, being the oldest child, took the brunt of the beatings for the children. Mateo beat Juana with belts whenever he displeased her. Once, he beat her after church for getting her clothes dirty.

Mateo would also monitor Juana's movements very closely. One evening, when Juana came home 20 minutes late, Mateo dragged her to the car by her hair, forced her into the back seat, and drove her to a remote place near the woods. There, he pulled her from the car and attempted to strangle and kill her. After a long struggle, Juana miraculously managed to free herself and escape into the woods. When police arrived on the scene, Juana was immediately placed in Child Protective Services, along with her younger sister.

Juana is now 20 years old. She has not had contact with her step-father or with her mother since Juana and her sister were removed from the home for their own protection. The state went forward with the prosecution of Mateo on charges of child abuse. Quite obviously, Juana is extremely afraid of Mateo ever finding her or her sister and seeking revenge on them with acts of violence. If Juana had to return to Mexico to get her green card under VAWA, she is afraid that Mateo would follow them and abuse them.

Juana is also afraid of going to Mexico because she knows no one there, and she has not been back since she was a child. All her family now live in the U.S. Juana is not familiar with Mexico, and she does not know how she would make the trip without contacts in Mexico or experience with the Mexican legal system. Furthermore, Juana is afraid of being separated from her younger sister, with whom she now lives. Juana's sister is developmentally delayed and only marginally functional. She requires Juana's constant help and care, and the girls have lived with and relied on one another ever since they came to America. They have endured the horrifying ordeal of abuse and violence at the hands of their step-father, and now they cannot face the prospect of separating. Both girls have approved VAWA self-petitions, and both will have to return to Mexico under the law of VAWA to get their green cards. Even if the girls could make the trip together, they would be vulnerable to attacks by their step-father, and they would not have legal advocates to help them at the consulate. They would be helpless and alone in a

country completely foreign to them. Juana cannot risk her and her sister's safety and emotional well-being by returning to Mexico for any period of time.

This case originated in Washington.

FELIPE

Felipe is a 26-year-old Mexican man with cerebral palsy. After his mother died, he came to the United States to be cared for by his cousins. A couple of years later, he met Caroline, a U.S. citizen. Felipe and Caroline quickly became friends and started dating. After about six months of dating, Caroline suggested that Felipe move in with her. Felipe was concerned that he would be a drain on her resources, since he was undocumented and also had a disability. Caroline spent the next few months reassuring Felipe that their lives together would be wonderful. Finally, after much convincing, Felipe finally moved in with her.

They were married a year later. Felipe was very happy and thought that Caroline loved him as he loved her. Unfortunately, shortly after their marriage, Felipe's happiness faded away. Caroline began subjecting him to on-going insults and emotional abuse. She would order him around and threaten to call the INS to have him deported if he did not do what she wanted. She would say such things as: "I only married you because I felt sorry for you. I deserve better than you. If you don't do as I say, I won't fix your papers."

Caroline's two teenage sons also lived with them. The teenagers would repeatedly assault Felipe, hitting him with their fists, kicking him, and taunting him with insults and threats. They would do this in Caroline's presence, and she would do nothing to help Felipe. Caroline would also routinely withhold Felipe's medication from him and refuse to assist him with the money to buy medication.

After a particularly brutal beating by Caroline's sons, Felipe was rushed to the emergency room by his cousin. Following that incident, Felipe was too afraid to return to Caroline's home. He moved back in with his cousins and contacted an attorney. Since that day, he has petitioned for his residency under VAWA, and his petition has been approved.

Felipe has a significant, degenerative disability which renders him only marginally functional. He requires constant care and supervision, as well as an ongoing medical regime of treatment. Because of his disability and his need for care in the U.S., Felipe would face severe hardship if he were forced to return to Mexico to get his green card under VAWA. Felipe has no family in Mexico to care for him if he returns. His only family is here in the United States. In addition, his ability to make the trip to Mexico and successfully find his way to the consular offices to get his green card is extremely limited. He would need help and support to make the journey, and he cannot get that support in Mexico.

This case originated in Oklahoma.

CLARA

Clara is originally from Mexico. Ten years ago, she met and fell in love with her husband Joe, a United States citizen, and married him in Mexico. Throughout the following years of their marriage, Clara was forced to move back and forth across the U.S./Mexican border with Joe, depending on whether Joe was working in the U.S. or in Mexico at the time. As a result of the constant moving, some of Clara and Joe's five children were born in the U.S., and some were born in Mexico.

Clara and Joe's marriage was marked by violence and abuse from the very beginning. Joe would grow angry and beat Clara on a regular basis. He also abandoned his family on more than one occasion. For example, when Joe was working in Mexico and Clara and the children were living in Texas, he was imprisoned for running guns across the border. While Joe was in prison, Clara and the children had no means of support. Clara was also pregnant at the time. When she gave birth to their fifth child, she had no money to pay rent and no food to feed the children. Joe had controlled her movements so completely that she was completely dependent on him and had no idea how to seek help for herself and her children. Finally, Clara's family came from Mexico to bring Clara and the children back to Clara's hometown.

Once Joe was released from prison, he found out where Clara was living in Mexico. Then he came to her house armed with an ice pick. He lunged at her stomach with the ice pick, and Clara jumped out of the way and wrested the pick away from him. Joe began beating Clara's face with his fists. He grabbed her by the neck and strangled her until she lost consciousness. Clara came to in the passenger seat of his car. Joe was brandishing a gun. He told her that they were driving to her parents' house to get the children, and then they were leaving for the United States. He threatened to kill their four-year-old son Billy with the gun if Clara did not reassure her parents that she was all right and wished to go with Joe.

Clara was nearly paralyzed with fear, but she did what Joe asked. She walked into her parents' house and told them that she and Joe were taking the children to America. When they asked about the cuts and bruises on her face and neck, Clara lied and said she had been in a car accident earlier that day. Clara was thinking the whole time about how Joe was sitting in the car with his loaded gun. She knew that if she did not come out to the car with the children, he would carry out his threat and start shooting. Eventually, Clara managed to get all the children into the car, and she and Joe drove across the border into the United States. The family settled in Oklahoma, where Joe's mother lived.

Only about a month after moving to Oklahoma, Joe attacked Clara again. He beat her face and body with his fists until she was covered with blood. Clara grabbed her two youngest children and rushed out of the house, screaming for help as she ran down the street. A neighbor called the police, and Clara and the children were brought to a battered women's shelter. Clara

received a restraining order against Joe and began filing her VAWA self-petition for residency.

There are several reasons why Clara cannot go back to Mexico to get her green card based on VAWA. First, her youngest child recently suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed on one side of his body. He requires ongoing rehabilitative care which cannot be interrupted in order to go to Mexico with his mother. In addition, Clara knows no one in America that she trusts to care for her children who can keep them safe from Joe if she must return to Mexico for an unknown period of time to get her green card. Second, Clara is also very afraid that Joe will follow her again to Mexico and hurt or kill her there. He knows where her family lives, and he knows that her restraining order will not protect her in Mexico. He has vowed to kill Clara, and she believes that since he is a U.S. citizen and can cross the border easily, he will carry out his threat if she returns to Mexico. For this reason, Clara must be able to get her green card while she remains in the safety and protection of the United States.

This case originated in Arkansas.

SOLEDAD

Soledad was born in Mexico. In her small town, she met a man named Eugenio, who was a lawful permanent resident of the United States and also a native of Mexico. The couple fell in love and got married. Eugenio brought Soledad to the U.S., and together they settled in Arkansas.

Soledad soon learned that the man she married was violent and abusive. He beat her severely every week, giving her cuts, bruises, and black eyes. The beatings were both frequent and unpredictable. Soledad never knew what would provoke Eugenio into his rages. She grew to fear him. She believed he might kill her someday.

Eugenio wanted Soledad to be completely dependent upon him. He isolated her in the family home and did not permit her to leave or try to make friends. Consequently, Soledad never learned English, and she made no contacts with other Americans. She was very fearful of reporting Eugenio's abuse to the police, since she believed that this would result in her immediate deportation. Eugenio constantly used Soledad's undocumented status to control her, and he threatened to report her to INS if she ever tried to leave him or seek help.

Soledad and Eugenio had three children. All three are now under the age of nine. Soledad grew very concerned that Eugenio would begin abusing the children just as he was abusing Soledad. She feared for her children's safety and wanted to leave Eugenio. Unfortunately, the circumstances under which she finally left Eugenio are grim. The last beating she ever endured from Eugenio left her hospitalized. Eugenio had punched and kicked her all over her body, then he had taken a knife and slit open both of her arms from her wrists to her armpits. Soledad might have died of the wounds and severe bleeding if she had not sought help in time.

After Soledad was released from the hospital, she and her children were taken by the police to a battered women's shelter. Before living at the shelter, Soledad had no idea that such resources were available to her. Soledad only knew that in Mexico, neither law enforcement nor free shelter services were available to assist battered women in escaping from the abuse of their batterers. Soledad was thankful to have found help for herself and her children in the United States.

Soledad is now in the process of applying for her green card under VAWA. However, current law will force her to return to Mexico to get her green card. If she returns to Mexico, she could be exposed to more abuse and danger. Eugenio makes frequent trips to Soledad's hometown in Mexico, and he has even threatened to hurt her and the children in Mexico if she ever returns. Soledad fears that he will find her and the children easily if she returns to Mexico to get her green card. She needs the protection of U.S. laws and law enforcement to keep her

safe from Eugenio's attacks.

This case originated in Louisiana.

JUANITA

Juanita met her husband Alvaro in Mexico in 1994. They dated and had a son in early 1995. They both worked, and Alvaro's mother provided child care for the baby. Alvaro then went to Mississippi to work for six months, and became a lawful permanent resident. During that time, he never called or sent money for Juanita and the baby. However, by March of 1998 he returned to Juanita and pledged his love for her. They were married the next month and moved to Louisiana in June, to live with Alvaro's aunt and uncle.

The abuse began as soon as they arrived in the United States. Alvaro began isolating Juanita from her family and friends, and he forbade her from learning English in order to keep her dependent on him. Alvaro also began beating Juanita and he frequently hit her in the face and head. Alvaro's aunt and uncle did nothing to stop the abuse.

In November of 1998, Juanita told Alvaro that she was suffering from severe headaches for the past few months and asked to be taken to the hospital. Her head had been hurting so badly that she had lost feeling in her face for one month. Her face and jaw were swollen on the right side, and she had lost her voice for a couple of days. Even when she got her voice back, the numbness continued. However, Alvaro refused to acknowledge her pain or take her to the hospital. He grew angry and beat her, and she ran to the neighbors for help, asking them to call the police. Alvaro drove his car over to the neighbors and tried to force Juanita into the car. He threw her to the ground, hit her in the face and pulled her hair. Then the police arrived, and Alvaro was arrested and taken to jail.

Juanita was finally taken to the hospital, where doctors determined that her ailments were caused by the severe trauma to the head she sustained over months of beatings. She then entered a shelter for safety. Juanita soon began to receive threats from Alvaro's family in Mexico, stating that if she did not drop the charges against him, they would see to it that she was deported and that her child was permanently taken away from her. This made Juanita afraid to file a protective order against Alvaro. Eventually, however, she was granted sole custody of her child, child support, and alimony. Alvaro was granted visitation of the child on every other Saturday.

If Juanita is forced to return to Mexico to receive status as a lawful permanent resident, she knows that Alvaro can follow her there. Further, she will have to take her child with her. She fears that Alvaro's family will harm her there and try to take the child from her if she brings him with her. She also has no one with whom she can leave him behind, and if she did, she believes that Alvaro would try to claim custody while she was away. Yet if she does bring the child with her to Mexico, she will violate the terms of the court order allowing Alvaro to see the child every other Saturday, giving Alvaro cause to bring legal action against her. Juanita must be able to receive her green card without leaving the country in order to protect her rights and the safety of her child.

This case originated in Louisiana.

SHARIFA

Sharifa was born in Israel, and she lived with her parents in Jerusalem until she was 22. One day while she was working in the family garden, a man named Abdul noticed her from the street. He immediately decided he wanted her for his wife, and went to her mother to request permission to marry her. Sharifa met Abdul, and she and her mother agreed to the marriage. The couple was engaged for one year, during which Sharifa remained in Jerusalem and Abdul returned to America where he was a lawful permanent resident and owned a business. Abdul often wrote letters to Sharifa, declaring his love for her and describing all he wanted to do for her. When the marriage became final, Sharifa came to America with her husband. For a short time, things were as he had promised they would be.

Abdul began coming home very late at night, each night later and later. Sharifa would always wait for him, because he was all she had in America. She spent hours in solitude; Abdul forbade her to befriend American women because they were too "loose" and Arabic women because they were too "gossipy." When Abdul would finally arrive home at night and Sharifa would ask him where he had been, he would remind her of her subordinate position and tell her she had no right to ask questions of him. Sharifa believed she had a right to know, and when she would insist, Abdul would beat her. The beatings soon became so commonplace that Abdul no longer awaited provocation, he simply beat her whenever he pleased. Frightened and isolated, Sharifa waited for her husband to change and to give her the life he promised. He never did.

In June of 1997, Abdul shot Sharifa with his gun, causing a serious wound to her arm. She begged him to bring her to the hospital, but he refused until she promised to tell the doctor that she had shot herself. After this incident, Abdul tried to force Sharifa back to Jerusalem, but she did not want to go. She would be ostracized there for causing her marriage to fail, because her culture would never place the responsibility for a failed marriage on the husband, however abusive. In hopes of avoiding this shame, she remained in America with Abdul and waited for him to change.

Abdul eventually stopped providing Sharifa with food, electricity, and money for rent. Out of desperation, she reached out to the Arabic women in her town, and found several good friends who helped her find legal assistance and a battered women's shelter. Her primary concern was the status of her residence in America, because she refused to allow Abdul to force her back to Jerusalem. Sharifa was able to file a self-petition for legal residence, and is now anticipating receiving her green card and obtaining a divorce. However, it is necessary that Sharifa is able to receive her green card in the United States. If she is forced to return to Jerusalem, she fears Abdul will follow. There, his abuses will be culturally accepted and legally difficult to obtain protection against without suffering more harm from her community. In Jerusalem, Sharifa's community will regard her as the one who acted shamefully, and it is doubtful that even her family will shelter her. Therefore, Sharifa must not be forced to return to Israel, where she will

be subject to undue hardship and danger.

This case originated in Louisiana.

WABEI

Wabei is an East African woman who came to the United States in 1996 with her husband Raul. Raul is a lawful permanent resident of the United States who is originally from the same country as Wabei. The marriage was arranged by the couple's parents, and Wabei and Raul barely knew each other when they married. While in this country, Wabei endured extreme ongoing emotional and physical abuse from Raul for one year.

Raul kept Wabei hostage in their home, refusing to let her work or lead a normal life. He severely battered and tortured her, beating her frequently. Raul even restricted her from eating, allocating for her only one small meal per day.

Finally, Wabei sought refuge at a hospital, where she met another person from her home country. With the confidence she gained by having this new friend, Wabei left her husband for good. She filed for and received a restraining order against Raul based on the history of the domestic violence she has experienced, and recently filed for a divorce.

Wabei has submitted a self-petition under VAWA and hopes to move past the trauma of her abuse. However, she fears the possibility of having to return to her home country in East Africa for an indefinite period of time to obtain her green card. In her home country, she would be branded as a social outcast for having left her husband. Raul, who has maintained contact with Wabei's family and friends in their home country, has told them lies about Wabei and his relationship with her. Her family and friends side with Raul and feel Wabei has disgraced them; they want nothing more to do with her.

Wabei fears that if she were to return home, Raul would follow her there. She would have no protection against him, because the laws of her country do not protect women against domestic violence. Since she would be a social outcast, she would have no one to aid or protect her during her stay. Wabei should not have to face the danger of returning to a country in which her husband can reassert absolute legal control over her life and cause her further harm, unfettered by legal restraints. Thus it is necessary that Wabei be permitted to remain in safety in the United States, and not be required to return to her home country for any reason.

This case originated in Tennessee.

CATALINA

Catalina is originally from Mexico. In Mexico, she met and married Ramón, a lawful permanent resident of the United States who was also originally from Mexico. The couple settled in Mexico and had a son, Paco. They were married and living in Mexico for close to eight years before Ramón decided to move Catalina and Paco to Tennessee.

Ramón both physically and mentally abused Catalina throughout their marriage. He subjected her to regular beatings, during which he would slap and punch her with his fists, throw objects at her, and kick her. Ramón would fly into uncontrollable fits of rage without any understandable reason. Catalina feared him and obeyed his every instruction. She believed him when he said that she was “worthless” and that he really wanted to “get rid of her.” He was obsessive and jealous of her, and he vowed to follow her if she ever decided to leave him.

While living in the United States, Catalina and Ramón had four more children, all U.S. citizens. Catalina constantly feared for her and her children’s safety around Ramón. His acts of violence were never predictable, and Catalina often feared that Ramón might kill her. One day, Ramón beat Catalina severely about her face and body, shoved her and the five children into the car, and drove to the next county. There, he left the children and their bleeding and bruised mother by the roadside. The police eventually found Catalina and the children wandering along the highway, and they picked them up and drove them to a shelter for battered women and children. Ramón had abandoned his family and left them for dead by the side of the road.

Catalina was so afraid that Ramón might find her and the children again that she refused to get a restraining order against him. She did not want him to have any idea of where she was, and she feared that serving him with a restraining order would fuel his anger and provoke him to look for her. She has no doubt that one day he will find her and renew his abuse of her.

With the help of an attorney, Catalina is now in the process of filing her VAWA self-petition. If she is made to return to Mexico as the only way of getting her green card, she and her children will face serious hardships. First, Catalina fears that Ramón will find her easily in Mexico. He has family in Mexico and travels there frequently. He would find out if she ever came back to Mexico, and he would seek her out at her parents’ home, a place he knows well. Second, Catalina lacks the resources to make the trip to Mexico with her five children. She has recently moved out of the shelter and is struggling to support the children entirely on her own. Third, Catalina’s five-year-old child, David, has a serious heart condition which requires constant monitoring here in the U.S. Since David is a U.S. citizen, he is eligible for Medicare. He has already had an angioplasty performed on his heart, and he will require valve surgery in a few months. David cannot interrupt his treatment to travel with his mother to Mexico to get her green card, and Catalina has no friends or family in the U.S. with whom she can leave David. Requiring Catalina to return to Mexico would effectively jeopardize her child’s health and put

him at risk of death. Further, Catalina, Paco, and the other children cannot safely travel to Mexico for any period of time as their safety from Ramon cannot be assured there.

This case originated in New Hampshire.

MARIE

Marie is originally from Haiti. In her hometown in Haiti, she met and fell in love with a U.S. citizen named Adam. Adam had a great deal of money and influence in Haiti, especially in Marie's town, and he had close ties to the police department, as well. Not long after Marie and Adam were married in Haiti, Adam started to treat Marie abusively.

He was physically abusive to Marie on several occasions. He would burn her with cigarettes, hit her, and throw objects at her. Adam also had girlfriends with whom he had open affairs. Once, when Adam discovered that Marie had been asking questions about his girlfriends, Adam bribed the Haitian police to arrest Marie in order to "teach her a lesson" so that she would not ask any more questions. Marie learned never to question Adam's authority.

Adam brought Marie to the United States a little while after they were married, promising that they would start over and build a new life in a new country. Instead, things only got worse for Marie. Adam isolated her completely, confining her to their remote trailer park home. Because their home was too far from the main town for Marie to access on foot, she became completely dependent on Adam for food and money.

When Marie tried to learn English by studying with a tutor, Adam forbade her from continuing the lessons. Adam told her that she should only speak Creole, and that she had no need for learning English. Marie wanted to leave Adam, but she felt trapped because of her lack of English skills. Also, she had no idea that services were available for battered women. Marie thought that she was destined to live confined in the home, without friends or family, and be a slave to her husband.

Marie and Adam had two children after moving to the United States. Both children are under the age of five and are U.S. citizens. Marie cared for the children on her own, but she was still dependent on Adam for food and clothing for the children. Often, Adam would not give Marie enough money to buy winter clothes for herself and the children, and Marie would be forced to steal money from Adam. He continued to physically abuse her in the United States, as well. He would kick and hit Marie if she displeased him, and he would also encourage the children to hit their mother and tell her to "go back to Haiti."

Marie eventually received help and information from a battered women's service provider. She left Adam and received legal assistance in obtaining a restraining order against Adam. This made Adam very angry. Marie attempted to pursue criminal charges against Adam for domestic assault and battery, but Adam fled the country before the hearing. Since then, Marie's family members in Haiti have informed her that Adam has resettled in Marie's hometown. He has spread lies to Marie's family, telling them that she is a terrible wife and mother and that she has committed crimes in the U.S.

Adam is anxiously awaiting the day that Marie will come back to Haiti with the children. He may have his wish if Marie is forced to return to Haiti as the only avenue to obtain her green card under VAWA. If she does return to Haiti, Adam will probably kill her. He has said in the past that he “can’t wait” for Marie to be deported so that he can kill her for pressing criminal charges against him. Not only does he currently reside in her small hometown in Haiti, but also he is able to bribe and influence the police in town so that they will not interfere if he abuses Marie. Marie’s restraining order will not protect her in Haiti.

Marie is also afraid that returning to Haiti to get her green card could cause her to lose her two children. Adam has threatened to kidnap the children as soon as Marie brings them to Haiti. Since Adam and the children are U.S. citizens, Marie believes Adam will have no trouble reentering the United States after kidnaping both of the children. If this happens, Marie fears she will never see her children again. Her and her children’s lives will be in constant jeopardy if she is forced to return to Haiti for any period of time.

This case originated in Wyoming.

ESPERANZA

Esperanza is a citizen of Honduras. She came to the United States on a visitor's visa to stay with her friend Nancy. While living with Nancy, she met Nancy's brother, a United States citizen named Roger. Roger would drop by his sister's house from time to time, and during his visits, he and Esperanza would chat and get to know one another. Soon Roger and Esperanza began dating. They eventually fell in love and got married.

It was not until after they married that Esperanza discovered many disturbing things about Roger. She found out that he was unemployed and a habitual drug user. The drug use upset Esperanza and made her very fearful and uncomfortable. She had never been exposed to drug abuse before, and she was horrified to find drug paraphernalia all over the house.

Roger began hitting Esperanza every day. He always found some excuse or other to get angry at her and hit her or say insulting, demeaning things to her. He also threatened to have her deported if she ever sought help or tried to call the police. She became so afraid of him that she could not sleep at night. She would lie awake listening to him and his friends partying and doing drugs until the early morning hours.

He refused to let her learn English, and he did not permit her to make friends. He locked her inside the house all day long, and he would not provide her with a telephone inside the home. One evening, he arrived home drunk and began hitting her. He then threw out her birth control pills and raped her. Soon after that incident, Esperanza became pregnant with Roger's child.

Roger nearly killed Esperanza while she was pregnant. One day, he left the house early to go to his sister's home. When he returned, he was high on drugs and in a violent rage. He pulled Esperanza to the couch by her hair and began punching her in the face, bloodying her nose. Then he pushed her to the ground and began strangling her, saying he was going to kill her. Esperanza lost consciousness. When she woke up, she found Roger brandishing a knife, saying he was going to cut her "so no man would want her." He hit her repeatedly in the back, causing her severe pain and bruising. Then he passed out on the couch. Esperanza grabbed her jacket and fled to a neighbor's house. She did not call the police because she believed that Roger would find her and kill her for doing so. Eventually, she returned home to him.

A few days later, Esperanza became very ill. She was two months pregnant. She sensed that something was wrong with the baby, so she went to the hospital. There, the doctors questioned her about the bruises around her neck and all the cuts and scratches on her face and body. She did not tell the doctors she had been abused because she feared what Roger would do to her in retaliation. After a thorough examination, the doctors informed her that her baby was dead inside of her, and that they would have to induce labor to take the baby out. Esperanza was devastated. She knew that the beatings and near strangulation that Roger had inflicted upon her

had caused the death of their baby.

The very day that doctors induced labor and removed Esperanza's dead fetus, Esperanza returned home to Roger. She told him that he would have to change his ways, or she would leave him. He told her "wherever you go, I will find you and kill you."

Esperanza finally found the opportunity to leave Roger when Roger was placed in jail for violating his probation. He had committed several drug offenses, and now he had been caught with drugs again. Esperanza went to a shelter and got a restraining order against Roger. She also found an attorney to help her petition for her green card through VAWA. Esperanza is trying to build a life of her own away from Roger's abuse. With the help of friends from her church, she has enrolled herself in English classes and is now taking classes to earn her GED

If Esperanza is forced to return to Honduras as the only way of getting her green card under VAWA, she will face several hardships. To begin with, the recent hurricane that devastated Honduras has left the entire country in disarray. Esperanza lacks the money to make the trip to Honduras, and she is afraid that she could be trapped there for a very long period of time, waiting to get her green card. Several services agencies, administrative and government offices, and the police force have all been crippled by the hurricane. Since Roger has vowed to hunt her down and kill her when he gets out of jail, she believes it is likely he will follow her to Honduras, where he knows she will be unprotected. Esperanza believes that the laws of Honduras will not protect her from Roger, and the police force will not enforce her U.S. restraining order against him. In addition, Esperanza cannot discontinue the psychological counseling she is receiving in the U.S. to help her cope with the abuse she endured. She needs ongoing treatment for depression and insomnia--treatment only available to her in the U.S.

This case originated in Illinois and is now in Connecticut.

ANGELA

Angela is 34 years old and is originally from Mexico. She met her husband Aldo, a lawful permanent resident of the U.S., in Mexico in February 1992. Aldo was living in Chicago and made several trips to Mexico to see Angela. In December 1994, Angela and Aldo were married in Mexico. After the wedding, Aldo asked Angela to move to Chicago, and she soon followed him there.

Their relationship progressed smoothly for about a year, but then Angela began to experience changes in Aldo's behavior. Aldo would not allow her to talk to anyone, including neighbors and his own sisters. He would not give Angela money for expenses, and over time, he began to ignore all other responsibilities. He even refused to continue providing food.

In January 1995, Angela found out that Aldo had a child by another relationship. Based on a court order, Aldo had to pay child support for this child. Angela was shocked at Aldo's secrecy, and the relationship suffered under financial strain. In September 1995, Angela and Aldo had a daughter of their own.

Aldo resented Angela because she was not able to work. They had bought a house and were deep in debt. Aldo would frequently become drunk and verbally abuse Angela, accusing her of being the reason for their debt. Following these episodes, Aldo would often leave home, not returning for days. Angela was left without money, food, or any means of support.

Angela's family in Mexico sent her a check for one hundred dollars. Angela had no means by which to cash the check, not having any identification papers. She gave the check to Aldo to cash, but Angela never saw any of the money; Aldo took everything.

Aldo began spending most of his days and evenings drinking with a friend and a neighbor in the neighbor's garage. Any questions by Angela were met with fury and verbal abuse. Aldo told her he would do absolutely nothing to support her and would not help her get a green card. Angela was frightened of Aldo and the power he had over her immigration status. Aldo soon disappeared again, leaving Angela to fend for herself and their little girl.

In August 1997, during another argument that took place in their home, Aldo grabbed Angela and began to squeeze her throat. He would have strangled her, had she not managed to somehow break away from him. She called the police, who came and arrested Aldo. The next day Angela was given a restraining order. In order to protect herself and her daughter, Angela decided to move to Connecticut, where her brother lives.

If Angela is forced to return to Mexico to obtain status as a lawful permanent resident, she faces a dangerous situation. Aldo is himself Mexican. He is very familiar with the

community Angela would have to return to as he has traveled there many times in the past. Angela fears that Aldo could follow her there and harm her, because her restraining order would not be valid there. Mexican law will not protect Angela against abuses by her husband. In order to protect her safety, Angela must be allowed to remain in the United States to achieve lawful permanent resident status.

This case originated in Wisconsin.

GENOVEVA

Genoveva is a 32-year-old woman from Mexico. In 1990, she came to the United States and married Maurice, a lawful permanent resident. The couple had two daughters, now seven years and seven months old. In the eight years of their marriage, Genoveva has been subject to physical abuse and violence from her alcoholic husband.

Although Maurice is employed, most of his money goes to drinking and gambling. There have been times when he has left on Thursday night and not come home until Sunday night, leaving Genoveva without money or food in the house for her and the children. When she was pregnant with her second child, Maurice disappeared, later calling her from Mexico saying he was visiting his family. While he was gone, Genoveva was hospitalized with a kidney infection, and had to leave her daughter with a neighbor. Maurice's family who lived nearby refused to take care of the child, for fear that Maurice would become angry with them for meddling in his affairs.

Maurice has filed papers asking that INS grant Genoveva lawful permanent residency. However, he threatens that he will withdraw the papers if she does not obey him. Genoveva is constantly subjected to Maurice's beatings and physically violent behavior. She has never called the police, for fear of retaliation by Maurice, for fear that he will withdraw her papers, and because she does not want her daughter to see her father being arrested. The beatings have been so severe throughout their marriage that she has gone to the hospital on several occasions with serious injuries. However, Maurice always forces her to state that she fell, and has avoided suspicion. Maurice also threatens Genoveva with deportation, and dehumanizes and demeans her. As a result of Maurice's abuses, Genoveva lives in a constant state of terror. She has tried to leave, but has no money to sustain herself since she cannot work. Lately, Genoveva has become severely depressed over her situation, and has lost all her hair as a result of her depression. She is now seeing a therapist, but Maurice refuses to seek any help; he claims Genoveva is the crazy one.

Lately, Maurice's drinking is worsening, and last year he was prosecuted for driving drunk. He is most violent when he drinks, and usually throws Genoveva and the children out of the house. Genoveva is now trying to save enough money to leave Maurice. She is self-petitioning for residency under VAWA. Genoveva's family members in Milwaukee are afraid to offer Genoveva their support because Maurice has threatened to harm them. Returning to Mexico to obtain her green card would be extremely dangerous for Genoveva. She could not stay with her family members in Mexico who would not have space or finances to support her and her children if she were to travel to Mexico. She would therefore have to stay at the house Maurice owns in Mexico. Maurice would surely find her there and abuse her further, since the law will not protect her in Mexico. Genoveva could not afford the expense or the risk of taking her children into Mexico where Maurice could kidnap them, nor is she able to leave them behind. There is no one who could care for them and protect them. It is therefore necessary that

Genoveva is able to obtain lawful immigration status while remaining in this country.

This case originated in Texas and is currently in Wisconsin.

ROSITA

Rosita, originally from Mexico, moved to Texas as a young girl. Her mother died when she was four years old, leaving her and her two brothers with an aunt in Texas. They never knew their father. Rosita met and married Max, a lawful permanent resident, in Texas when she was fifteen years old. Shortly after Rosita and Max were married, they had a baby girl and moved to Wisconsin to be with Max's family.

The problems began as soon as the couple was married. Rosita learned that Max was using and dealing drugs, along with his brothers and uncles. He had many affairs during the marriage, from which he contracted sexually transmitted infections. He infected Rosita many times, and then blamed her for it. Realizing the relationship was troubled, Rosita did not want to have any more children after her first. However, Max would not use protection and insisted on having more children. He told her if she did not have them, he would have them with other women. The couple eventually had two more children.

Max continued to go out with other women, and these women would often call Rosita at home and harass her with stories of their love affairs with her husband. When Rosita would complain, Max would beat her. One day, a young girl called Rosita and told her to divorce Max, because she was having his baby. When Rosita questioned Max about this, he was drunk. He became very angry and threw bleach in Rosita's eyes. She had to go to the hospital, and the police were called there. However, Max told the police that Rosita was the one who threw the bleach, showing them his bleach-spattered shirt. Rosita did not say anything, and the police did not arrest Max.

Max bought a house and a bar, but put them in his sister's name so that Rosita would have no right to them if she ever dared to divorce him. Max also makes all the family purchases to prevent Rosita from having access any of the money. She is not permitted to go anywhere without his permission, and if she does, he beats her. On one occasion when he beat her, her face was so disfigured that she took the children and left in fear for their lives. However, she could not survive on her own for long, and returned a few days later.

Recently, Max was arrested for drunken driving and was jailed for three months. When he got out, he came home at 1:00 a.m., while Rosita was still at work. Because she did not know when he was supposed to come home, she went out to eat with a girlfriend from work and did not return home until 1:30 a.m. The young children were in the care of their uncle and their older sister Regina. Max was enraged that Rosita was not home for his return, and called the police, charging Rosita with child neglect. She was not arrested, which only further enraged Max.

Rosita lives in constant fear of Max's temper, and is very concerned for the impact his violence is having on their children. Rosita's oldest daughter Regina has suffered from the

effects of the abuse. Regina is very angry at her father and has a lot of confused emotions about family. She was just expelled from Catholic school for fighting, cursing, and lying. She does not want to go back to school, but wants to work instead so that she can afford to take her mother and siblings away from Max's abuse. Rosita is devastated that her children have been so adversely affected, and that they feel responsible for protecting the family against Max. She wants to change that, and is ready to leave Max and provide for her children on her own.

However, in order to become a lawful permanent resident, Rosita will be required to return to Mexico for consular processing. This would pose severe hardship for her and her children. Since Rosita first came to this country at the age of four, she has no family or friends in Mexico. She cannot afford the trip on her own and has no one to rely upon for assistance once she reaches Mexico. Having to take the children would be an additional expense, but she would not dream of leaving them behind. Max could claim that she has abandoned them and have her parental rights revoked. Furthermore, Max could follow Rosita to Mexico, where he could take his revenge upon her for leaving him without facing legal consequences. For these reasons, it is important that Rosita be permitted to remain in the United States to obtain her green card, and not be forced to risk her safety and rights by returning to Mexico.

This case originated in Wisconsin.

ATALANTA

Atalanta came to the United States from Venezuela to visit friends and family. While at a baseball game, she met James, an American citizen. Even though there was a language barrier, the two became friends and fell in love. Atalanta thought James was a very nice person, and the couple enjoyed going out with friends together. However, before long Atalanta's visa expired and she had to return to Venezuela to her 5-year-old son and her parents who were caring for him. James said he loved her and did not want her to leave, and said he would marry her so she would stay. Atalanta agreed, and sent for her son after the marriage. She was happy to get him out of Venezuela, where her son's father was using and dealing drugs.

James made Atalanta sign a prenuptial agreement so that she would not be entitled to any of his belongings or assets. A few months after the wedding, she noticed James began to become even more possessive. He would make Atalanta buy her own groceries for her and her son, not allowing her to touch any of the food he bought himself. James started to drink more and more, and soon became violent. He beat Atalanta on several different occasions. He also abused Atalanta sexually and routinely forced sex upon her. Atalanta did not call the police because she was afraid James would have her and her son deported back to Venezuela.

While all this abuse was going on, James's ex-wife decided to sign custody of their two daughters over to James. For a while, James was nicer to Atalanta so that she would care for his older daughters. By this time, Atalanta had become depressed and was seeking mental health therapy. She thought about divorcing James, but he convinced her not to, bullying her about her immigration status.

Recently, Atalanta found marijuana in James's dresser and questioned him about it. He had been drinking, and verbally attacked her for questioning him. His anger made Atalanta nervous, and she retreated to the basement to smoke a cigarette. James followed her, and accused her of trying to burn the house down. He then pulled her by the hair and threw her outside in the cold without shoes or a coat. As he was pushing her out, she hit him in self defense. James then called the police and claimed Atalanta abused him, but the police could see that James was drunk and did not arrest her.

After this incident, Atalanta filed for and received a protection order against James, feeling her life was in danger. Atalanta is self-petitioning for residency under VAWA and will be pursuing a divorce. However, if she is forced to return to Venezuela for consular processing, she could again be in danger. Her restraining order against James would not be valid in Venezuela. This would give him incentive to follow her and take his revenge upon her there, where he could escape legal consequences. Atalanta has no support system in Venezuela as her family sides with him. Further, her ex-husband, who has been involved in criminal activity and drug dealing in Venezuela is angry about her bringing their son to the United States. She fears

that returning to Venezuela with her oldest son would be dangerous. However, he must be able to travel with her to be able to obtain her green card based on Atalanta's VAWA petition. For these reasons, it is important that Atalanta and her son be allowed to remain within this country to obtain lawful immigration status.

This case originated in Wisconsin.

BONITA

Bonita is a 26-year-old woman from Mexico. She moved to Wisconsin with her family when she was seventeen and began attending college. At college, she dated Julio, a Nicaraguan student, and became pregnant at age 19. However, Julio broke up with her when he found out she was pregnant, and took no interest in seeing the baby.

Bonita later met another man at work, an American citizen named Matthew. Matthew seemed kind and treated Bonita nicely, and she married him when she was 23. When they were first married, they lived with Bonita's parents, but soon they moved to a dairy farm in Nebraska. There, Matthew became a different man. He often came home angry, hitting furniture and slamming doors, yelling at Bonita that it was her fault things were not working out for him. The physical abuse soon started, and Matthew would frequently pull Bonita's hair, hit her in the face with the palm of his hand, shake her, hit her arms with his fists, and push her into walls.

Matthew also abused Bonita in other ways. He kept her isolated from family, friends, and community, and refused to give her any money for expenses. He also forced her to have sex with him against her will. After about two months, Matthew went to Texas to live with his mother. There, he was arrested on an old warrant for abusing his first wife and was sent to jail for two weeks. During this time, Bonita was deported to Mexico. When Matthew got out of jail, he found Bonita in Mexico and convinced her to return to Texas with him.

When the couple moved into Matthew's mother's house, the abuse continued. Matthew was unemployed and sat around the house all day drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. He was angry all the time, and took his anger out on Bonita. He used to wake her in the middle of the night just so he could beat her. He waited until no one was around to hear the abuse. Bonita became pregnant, but suffered a miscarriage because of the beatings. Eventually, her mother brought her back to Wisconsin, away from Matthew.

Bonita wishes to remain in the United States, where her family and friends live and are available as a support system. If she is forced to return to Mexico to obtain her green card, she will face danger and will not be protected by the law. Matthew could easily again follow her to Mexico, where he could abuse her without fear of being prosecuted. Bonita does not have any family or friends in Mexico, and will have no means of financial or emotional support while she is there waiting for her green card to be processed based on her VAWA self-petition. There is no indication of how long she would be forced to remain in Mexico for consular processing. For these reasons, Bonita must be allowed to adjust her immigration status in the United States, where she will be protected by the law and supported by her community.

This case originated in Ohio.

ELSA

Elsa is a 52-year-old woman from Hungary. Three years ago, she traveled to the United States to work as a nanny for an Hungarian family in Ohio. She taught the children Hungarian, and took them on outings to the park. One day in the park, Elsa met Patrick, an American citizen. The two began to see each other often, and before long they decided to marry and Elsa left her job.

After their marriage, Patrick's behavior completely changed, and he began to abuse Elsa emotionally, verbally, and physically. He frequently threatened to kill her and constantly called her obscene names. Knowing Elsa was especially fearful of fire, Patrick would threaten to set the apartment on fire after he left. He would often scream, "I'll spend the rest of my life in jail to see you dead."

Elsa was terrified of Patrick, but did not know how to seek help. She was not familiar with the English language or her surroundings and felt completely isolated. The only place Elsa was allowed to go was the grocery store, and even then she had to be accompanied by Patrick. On these occasions, he would accuse her of looking at other people and planning to leave him. He would then hit her in the car on the way home.

On several occasions, Patrick beat Elsa so severely that she called the police, but this only made Patrick more angry. Elsa knew if she stayed with Patrick any longer, he would eventually maim or kill her. She sought refuge in shelters, frequently changing her location so Patrick could not find her.

Elsa has now become an independent, self-sufficient member of the community, having learned English and found employment, housing, and a supportive network of friends. She is proud of her accomplishments here, and knows such success would not be possible for her in Hungary. Her VAWA self-petition was approved and she would like to file for her lawful permanent residency as soon as possible. But returning to Hungary to do so would present an extreme hardship. Elsa would lose her job, as she would have to be out of the country for an indeterminate period of time. She would not be able to afford the trip even with the salary she makes now; without it, she would lose everything. Elsa has two grown children in Hungary, but the economic conditions there are so unfavorable that they cannot find work or support themselves. They are not in a position to help Elsa if she were forced to return to Hungary, and Elsa has no other family there to provide lodging or financial support. Finally, Patrick would be free to follow Elsa to Hungary, where the law would not protect her against his abuses. Forcing Elsa to return to Hungary to obtain her green card poses an increased risk to her safety and robs her of our legal system's ability to protect her. For these reasons, it is necessary for Elsa to obtain her green card without being forced to leave the United States and face the hardship of returning to Hungary.

This case originated in Ohio.

LEE

Lee is originally from Thailand. She married Eddie, a United States citizen, after he dated and courted her. She believed Eddie loved her, and she placed a high value on having a family. She never imagined that Eddie would abuse her.

Shortly after their marriage, Eddie began controlling Lee's behavior. He refused to let her leave the house, and he would not cooperate in petitioning for her legal residency. He began to insult her and treat her like a servant, forcing her to follow his orders at all times. Eddie would get extremely angry and fly into destructive rages in which he would throw objects, break Lee's personal possessions, and ruin furniture. His violence escalated soon after their son, Brian, was born. He would slap Lee when he would get angry, and he would also slap little Brian, as well.

Lee's marriage to Eddie was marked with significant sexual abuse. Eddie forced sexual intercourse on Lee while she was asleep. He also raped her many times while he was an angry rage. On one occasion, when Lee fled to her father-in-law's house after Eddie beat her in the face, Eddie's own father tried to force her to have sex with him. When she refused him, he ordered her and Brian to get in his car, and he drove them to Eddie's house and charged Lee \$40 for the ride. When Lee told Eddie that his father had tried to force himself on her, Eddie shrugged and told her that she must have done something to provoke his father.

Eddie began telling Lee that she was crazy and that she needed to go to a mental hospital because she was making him abuse her. Lee's self-esteem plummeted, and she began blaming herself for the abuse she was suffering. She was afraid to tell anyone about the abuse because whenever she called the police or tried to get help, Eddie would punish her by turning off the electricity in their home for days, cutting off Lee's ability to cook or obtain heat or air conditioning.

The most severe incident of abuse occurred just before Lee separated from Eddie. Eddie had just come home from work, and he appeared to be angry about something. When Lee asked what was the matter, Eddie grabbed her by the neck and choked her, telling her he wanted her to die. After she collapsed to the ground from lack of oxygen, he stomped on her stomach and watched her writhe in agony. When Eddie left the house later that night, Lee and her son fled to a battered women's shelter. Lee has since received psychological counseling services and has been assisted in applying for a visa through VAWA.

Forcing Lee to return to Thailand to obtain her green card would be emotionally and financially devastating to her. She lacks financial resources to make the trip to Thailand, since she is currently living in a shelter with her son and is looking for work. She has no family in the United States with whom to leave her U.S. citizen son, who is now two years old, so she would have to take him with her to Thailand. Doing this would be both financially impossible and

emotionally painful for Lee. She has not kept her family in Thailand informed as to the abuse she suffered with Eddie, and she knows that her family would view her separation from her husband as a humiliating disgrace and fears their treatment and rejection of her. Lee strongly believes that once her family finds out she has left her husband, they will refuse to shelter and support her and her son in Thailand.

A second factor preventing Lee's departure to Thailand is her need to continue psychotherapy in the U.S. Lee's therapist has informed her attorney that she is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Lee has recurrent nightmares about the abuse she suffered at Eddie's hands. She also becomes paralyzed during the day with frightening "flashback" memories of her husband beating her. Lee requires psychotherapy to treat this disorder, as well as her feelings of worthlessness and lack of self-esteem. If she were to leave the country and discontinue her therapy, her condition would worsen, and all the progress she has made would be reversed. Lee needs to obtain her green card in the U.S. so that she may continue her therapy and seek permanent housing and employment to support her son.

This case originated in Alabama.

CARMEN

Carmen is a citizen of Panama. She met and married her United States citizen husband, Andrew, when he was stationed in Panama with the U.S. military. After the couple married, they moved to the United States. Andrew always promised Carmen that he would apply for her residency, but he never did.

Carmen and Andrew settled in Alabama. Andrew kept Carmen completely isolated from others. She was not allowed to socialize with anyone, make friends, speak to anyone on the telephone, or leave the house on her own. She was completely dependent upon Andrew for money, food, and clothes. She felt helpless, like a prisoner in her own home.

As time went on, Andrew's behavior grew more abusive and controlling. He would get very jealous and possessive of Carmen. He would even instruct her on how to do her makeup and would select her clothes in the morning so that her appearance would be to his liking. When Carmen gave birth to their child shortly after their marriage, Carmen became even more dependent on Andrew for support. She had absolutely no family or friends to rely on in the United States, but she attempted to leave Andrew more than once and seek refuge in a shelter.

Each time that Carmen would leave Andrew, he would threaten to report her to INS and have her deported. He also threatened that if she were deported, she would not be able to take their child back to Panama with her. He told her he would petition for custody of the child and have his family raise him here in the U.S. These threats frightened Carmen enough to return to Andrew and leave the shelter. Andrew refused to provide money or clothing for the baby unless Carmen returned to live with him as his wife. Carmen only recently separated from Andrew and sought the counsel of an attorney.

If Carmen is forced to return to Panama to get her green card under VAWA, she will face losing her only child in a custody battle. Andrew has petitioned for sole custody, and Carmen has temporary custody of the child until the matter is adjudicated. Andrew would like nothing more than to see Carmen deported. Failing that, he would certainly take advantage of her situation if she had to go to Panama for a potentially long period of time to get her green card. She cannot travel to Panama with her child while the child's custody is in dispute. She is afraid to leave the child with her abuser, Andrew, or with any of his family. Furthermore, she is convinced that if she leaves the U.S. for any period of time, no matter how brief, Andrew will petition the court for custody of their child on the grounds that Carmen abandoned the child. For these reasons, Carmen cannot go back to Panama for even the shortest amount of time to get her green card.

This story originated in Georgia.

ANOU

Anou and Omar met and married in Egypt, their native country. Their marriage was arranged by their parents. Omar is a lawful permanent resident of the United States, and returned to live there after the marriage. Anou followed him soon after, and Omar promised her parents he would apply for her legal residency.

Once they began living together, Omar treated Anou poorly. He started to delay the immigration paperwork process, and shouted at Anou if she brought it up. He ordered her around and demeaned and insulted her. Anou quietly obeyed Omar out of fear, but she was dissatisfied. She asked him why he treated her this way, and wondered what made him change. This only enraged Omar, and his verbal abuse escalated. He told Anou that he was sorry he had to marry her, because she was a bad wife. He then began going out more often, staying out late and locking Anou in the house, leaving her without any way to exit the house for full days at a time.

Anou was terrified to be alone in a strange country where she knew no one, and devastated that her new husband had rejected her. Omar's cruelty was unbearable for her, especially since she was not allowed to leave the house and had nothing else in her life. His treatment of Anou worsened, and before long he began to threaten her with the ultimate punishment. Omar knew that if he sent Anou back to Egypt, her uncle would kill her for dishonoring her family. Traditional Egyptian cultural practices dictate that when a husband is dissatisfied with his wife, she shames her family and has failed her purpose in life. Egyptian women are usually killed for this.

Anou begged Omar not to send her to her death, but he said he did not care about her or what happened to her. He told her she deserved to die, and arranged for her to travel to Egypt the following day. He then locked her in the house and left. Anou was so frightened that she fainted. When she regained consciousness, she realized she had to escape. The only open exit was the second floor balcony, and she decided to leave behind her belongings and climb down. Reaching the ground, she began to fear that Omar would come after her in his car, and she started to run. She ran for two hours, until she reached a police officer in the street. Although she did not speak English well, she communicated her danger, and he brought her to a shelter.

Anou then contacted her mother in Egypt, who warned her never to return to Egypt. Her mother told her that her uncle was sure to kill her and that she could not protect Anou if she returned. Anou resolved to remain in the United States and succeed on her own, away from Omar's abuse. She has self-petitioned for residency, but cannot return to Egypt to obtain her green card. Her uncle and father are still determined to end her life for the dishonor she has brought them, and would surely find her as soon as she entered the country. It is therefore imperative that Anou be allowed to obtain lawful immigration status within the United States,

where she is independent and safe.

This case originated in Hawaii.

LEA

Lea came originally from Micronesia to Hawaii. There she met Mark, an American citizen, and the two began dating. Before long, Lea realized she was pregnant, and she and Mark got married.

The relationship was strong until their daughter Haley was born. Around this time, Mark began drinking excessively and frequently became angry when intoxicated. He took his anger out on Lea, first mentally abusing her with harsh language and frightening threats. He often told her he would have her deported if she did not obey him. This led to physical abuse, which took the form of severe beatings. After these beatings, Lea fled with Haley to friends' houses, but always returned to Mark out of fear and desperation.

After one particularly brutal beating, Lea began to fear for her life and for Haley's safety and well-being, and entered a shelter. She obtained a restraining order against Mark, and she and Haley hid from him in the shelter. After that she moved in with friends, but had neither money nor a valid work permit. Mark continued to threaten her, saying he would take Haley and never let Lea see her again.

Lea is working to become an independent provider for herself and her American citizen child here in the United States. She is filing a self-petition so that she can become a lawful permanent resident and can work to support herself and her child. But she fears having to return to Micronesia to obtain her green card. Currently, Lea has gone into hiding and Mark is being kept at bay by the restraining order filed against him. Friends, however, have informed her that Mark is trying to find her. If Lea leaves the country, he will be able to find out she has left and he will soon follow. Lea's protective order would not be valid in Micronesia, and Mark has told friends that if she went there he would find her. Additionally, because she is not working, Lea cannot afford a trip to Micronesia. Because of Mark's threats, it would not be safe to take Haley with her or to leave her behind. Therefore, it is necessary for Lea to obtain her green card in the United States where she can remain protected by the law.

This case originated in Hawaii.

VANESSA

Vanessa, a Mexican native, traveled to Hawaii where she met Frank, a United States citizen. They fell in love and got married, and were together for three years. During that time, Vanessa endured many forms of abuse from Frank, and lived in constant terror.

After they were married, Frank kept postponing filing an immigration petition for Vanessa. If she would mention it, he would become angry and hostile, threatening her with deportation. Vanessa worked part time for cash, but Frank took away all the money she earned. She had no money of her own, and relied on Frank to purchase everything they needed. He even picked out and purchased her clothes, although he only rarely bought anything for her. After a while, Frank's controlling behavior escalated into mental and physical abuse. He demeaned and threatened Vanessa, and frequently beat her.

Eventually, Vanessa reached a point where she could stand no more abuse, and sought refuge in a shelter. She obtained a protective order against Frank and was safe for a time. However, she felt helpless without Frank and returned to him on two occasions. Shortly after both reunions, she returned to the shelter because of Frank's continued severe beatings.

Vanessa has filed a self-petition and wishes to remain in the United States where she can be protected from Frank's continued abuse. However, she is terrified of being forced to return to Mexico to obtain lawful immigration status. Vanessa currently feels safe because her protective order is succeeding in keeping Frank away from her. Yet her protective order will not be enforced in Mexico, and Frank could follow her there where he can abuse her without legal consequences. It is therefore necessary for Vanessa to receive her green card while safely remaining within the boundaries of the United States.



EQUALITY NOW

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FAX

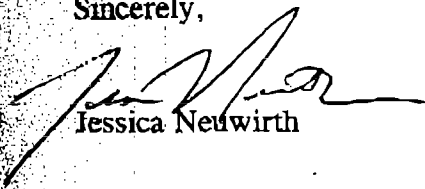
TO: Mary Smith
ORGANIZATION: White House Domestic Policy Office
TELEPHONE: 202-456-5571
FAX: 202-456-7431
FROM: Jessica Neuwirth
TELEPHONE: (212) 586-0906
FAX: (212) 586-1611
DATE: March 18, 1999
PAGES ATTACHED: 3

Dear Ms. Smith:

Attached is a copy of the letter I mentioned, which we sent to The President's Interagency Council on Women regarding their definition of trafficking. It mentions the Wellstone bill, together with our comments on a definition which was contained in an earlier draft of his bill.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments, or would like further information. I would be grateful for an opportunity to discuss the issue of trafficking, and legislation relating to it, with you.

Sincerely,



Jessica Neuwirth



EQUALITY NOW

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Ms. Theresa Loar, Director
The President's Interagency Council on Women
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW Room 6946
Washington, DC 20520

March 10, 1999

Dear Theresa:

Following my attendance at several briefings of the President's Interagency Council on Women and a review of documents distributed by the Council regarding the issue of human trafficking, I am writing on behalf of Equality Now to convey some comments and concerns regarding the definition of trafficking which is apparently being used by the Council. I am not familiar with the process which has determined the Council's approach to the issue, and I do not know whether a formal definition has been adopted. The elements that concern us are 1) the language which restricts the definition of trafficking to situations of "coercion, force or kidnapping, deception or fraud," excluding circumstances in which traffickers prey on and profit from the economic desperation of women and girls; and 2) the language which describes the objective of trafficking as the placement of persons "in situations of forced labor or services," a phrase which is intended to include prostitution and thereby characterizes prostitution as a form of labor or a service, merged together with other forms of labor and service which we would wish merely to regulate rather than eliminate.

The 1949 United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others explicitly obligates state parties to punish any person who exploits the prostitution of another person "even with the consent of that person." The Convention recognizes that prostitution and "the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community." Similarly, Article 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women provides that "State Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women." These treaties reflect a consensus of the United Nations, reflected in international law, that human trafficking includes the recruitment and transport of persons for the purpose of exploitation, and it is the traffickers - those responsible for this exploitation - who are the focus of attention for definitional purposes, rather than those trafficked and whether or not they have "consented" to their trafficking. The term "forced prostitution" does not appear in any of these treaties. As recently as February of this year, the General Assembly adopted a resolution reaffirming that "sexual violence and trafficking in women and girls for the purpose of economic exploitation, sexual exploitation through prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation and contemporary forms of slavery are serious violations of human rights."

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We welcome the expansion of concern over sex trafficking to include the exploitation of and abuses relating to migrant labor, such as debt bondage and other forms of servitude which often particularly affect women and girls in industries such as domestic service. Persons recruited and transported for these purposes under circumstances of coercion, force or kidnaping, deception or fraud are clearly victims of another form of trafficking, and in this context the application of terms relating to coercion and deception is entirely appropriate. Without these elements, a person recruited and transported for labor or services would be a migrant worker. For this reason, we believe it is critical to distinguish in any definition of human trafficking between sexual exploitation, which is unacceptable in all forms, and the abuse of migrant labor, the "abuse" of which is the subject of concern rather than the practice itself.

As you know, Senator Paul Wellstone (D-Minn) and Representative Chris Smith (R-New Jersey) have been drafting legislation on trafficking. In the context of reviewing drafts of their proposed legislation and considering the issues outlined above, we have put forward a definition of human trafficking which we hope will be considered in the legislative process, as well as in other processes underway to define trafficking. The definition is as follows:

The term "human trafficking" means:

- (a) sex trafficking: the recruitment, transportation within or across borders, purchase, sale, transfer, receipt or harboring of a person for the purpose of prostitution or exploiting the marriage of such person; or***
- (b) labor trafficking: the recruitment, transportation within or across borders, purchase, sale, transfer, receipt or harboring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion (including the use or threat of force or the abuse of authority) or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding such person, whether for pay or not, in servitude, in forced, bonded or coerced labor, in a community other than the one in which such person lived at the time of the original deception, coercion or bondage.***

For the purpose of this definition, the exploitation of marriage shall be defined as the commercial facilitation, by an individual, partnership, association or corporation, of marriage through introduction between men who are citizens or permanent residents of the United States and women who are not citizens or permanent residents of the United States when such women are offered by mail or any electronic method of communication among 25 or more other such women for selection by men, for a fee. Unlike dating services, which offer introductions to both men and women for a fee, the exploitation of marriage involves a differential treatment on the basis of sex which positions husbands as consumers and wives as products.

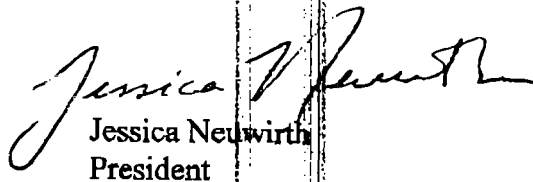
Last but not least, I want to take this opportunity to explain that Equality Now, for strategic purposes given our limited resources, has chosen to focus on the practice of sex tourism, targeting sex tour agencies operating in the United States and specifically Big Apple Oriental

Tours, which operates in New York. In raising our concerns regarding sex tourism with the President's Interagency Council on Women, we do not mean to suggest that the Council should be focusing on sex tourism rather than the hard-core trafficking with which you are concerned. We welcome your attention to the core of these multi-billion dollar organized criminal industries, as the United States Government is perhaps best situated in the world to have a real impact on stopping them if sufficient resources and political will are mobilized. We are glad to support you in these initiatives. Our urgent concern is that definitions which may have a lasting impact should be carefully formulated so as not to exclude, as a matter of principle, certain components of trafficking (such as the mail order bride industry), regardless of whether they are central to the current strategic objectives of the Council on trafficking. We would, of course, also welcome any support or advice you can give us with regard to our campaign calling for the prosecution of Big Apple Oriental Tours, as we have been greatly frustrated by the unwillingness of the Queens District Attorney to indict the owner of Big Apple Oriental Tours, and the apparent reluctance of the Justice Department to take action against the growing interstate collaboration of sex tourism operators, all of which we have documented extensively. Copies of the relevant correspondence are enclosed, for your information.

We hope that in your deliberations you will take into consideration the concerns outlined above and the definition of trafficking we have put forward. We are deeply grateful to the President's Interagency Council on Women for providing us with an effective and responsive forum for interaction with government agencies. Your recent intervention with regard to the Pentagon's retrogressive definition of rape for the International Criminal Court gave us and many of our colleagues working at the United Nations a tremendous boost of renewed hope that the United States will play a more progressive role in this process, at least with regard to issues of violence against women.

We look forward to continued dialogue on trafficking, as well as these other important issues.

Sincerely,


Jessica Neuwirth
President

cc: Ms. Anita Botti, Chair
Working Group on Trafficking in Women and Girls