



Casa Cornelia Law Center

Justice with Compassion

Attorneys Who Care Campaign Client Stories and Testimonials

"Thank you so much for changing my life. I will forever be grateful to Casa Cornelia." –Former Client

Auguste always yearned to live out his dream of getting his education in his native country of Democratic Republic of Congo. Unfortunately that was not to be given he belonged to a targeted ethnic group. He fled to find safety and freedom from torture. Through the assistance of Casa Cornelia he found a safe haven and has now fulfilled his dream. Today, he is a contributing member of our society, has a family, became a U.S. Citizen and obtained his B.A. graduating magna cum laude in Public Accounting. Auguste is currently pursuing a Master's degree. He wrote to us recently to say, "I don't even have the words to thank you for all the hard work put into my case. You and all the Casa Cornelia staff are so amazing...you are my angels. I love you all."



Marcos grew up in rural Central America. There, he suffered traumatic abuse. A relative who resides in the United States would occasionally visit and became the only person who ever stood up for him. As a young teen, Marcos fled to the United States and upon arrival was detained by immigration authorities. He was sent to a shelter in Chicago and eventually released to his relative here in San Diego County. Casa Cornelia became aware of him through our community outreach and worked quickly to help him acquire protection from harm. He's now a lawful permanent resident and is working hard to finish high school.



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Manuel* was abandoned by his father at birth. His mother came to the United States to escape abuse from her parents and to provide for her children. He remained with his grandparents who subjected him to abuse and forced him to quit school to work. At the age of 14 he could no longer stand the abuse and fled Guatemala for the United States. Last June, he picked up his green card from Casa Cornelia.

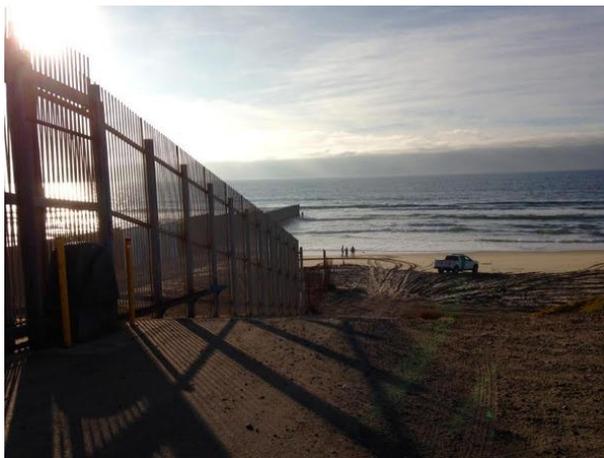
The story of four young Mexican female cousins (two sets of sisters) began with the tragic and violent loss of their fathers. Their names are Maria, Juana, Alejandra, and Gabriela. Seeking safety, the four cousins fled to the United States with Maria and Juana's mother. After about two years of living in the U.S., Maria and Juana's mother told the four girls she was going on vacation and never came back. Since this disappearance, the girls have been living with their grandmother in the U.S.

Jennifer Best-Martin, an associate and intellectual property attorney at Foley & Lardner LLP, worked with Casa Cornelia and secured Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (a form of protection for abused, abandoned, or neglected children) for all four girls. It was a special day, and Jennifer even brought the girls mini cupcakes as a treat! Because of Jennifer, these young children are now able to live in the U.S. permanently with their grandmother. We are so grateful to Jennifer and her hard work, which has served to provide a path to hope for these four brave young girls who have been through so much.





Stella, a hair stylist from Western Africa, was trafficked to a Latin American country by a woman named Dorothy. Stella came to trust Dorothy as a mother figure, a close friend and confidant. Dorothy promised Stella that she could make more money and help her family out of poverty if she moved to Latin America and worked as a hair stylist there. Because of all that Stella had gone through with her family, she felt Dorothy was God sent, and trusted her. Once Stella arrived in Latin America, she was forced into sex trafficking. When she refused, she was brutally assaulted by her trafficker, and physically and sexually assaulted by men Dorothy had hired to abuse her. Stella was finally able to escape almost a year later with the help of a woman she met at a club where Stella worked. After coming to the U.S., Stella was detained at the Otay Mesa Detention Center in San Diego. There, she came into contact with Casa Cornelia and was able to get legal representation. Katherine Nichols, one of Casa Cornelia's Volunteer Attorneys at Duane Morris LLP, took her case and she was granted asylum, and by extension, safety and justice, in the U.S.



Flora, a transgendered woman from Mexico, faced lifelong physical, emotional, and psychological harm based on her sexual orientation in Mexico. Flora's abuse began as a child when her father would punish her for acting like a girl. In addition to his routine beatings with a belt, he once tied Flora up and beat her like a piñata. Even when she left her family's abusive environment and moved elsewhere in Mexico, Flora encountered similar treatment at the hands of the Mexican police, gangs, and employers who discriminated against her because she was a transgendered woman. Although Flora endured this persecution since she was child, she

fled Mexico and sought asylum in the U.S. at the age of thirty after realizing her situation would not improve there because of who she was. After coming to the U.S., Flora was detained at the Otay Mesa Detention Center in San Diego. There, she came into contact with Casa Cornelia and was able to get legal representation. Flora was granted asylum, and by extension, safety and freedom, in the U.S.