

March 7, 2007
Immigrant Crime Victims Lawsuit Seeks U.S. Visas
Catholic Charities CYO v. Chertoff, Secretary of DHS
Statement of Plaintiff Sandra Bucio

My name is Sandra Bucio. I am a citizen of Mexico. I live in San Francisco, California. I do not currently possess immigration status in the United States.

My children and I have suffered severely from domestic violence at the hands of my former partner. He was an extremely violent person and terrorized me and my children on an almost daily basis. I was in constant fear for my life and for the lives of my children. Although my partner was a lawful permanent resident, he refused to marry me and apply for my legal status. He threatened that if I called the police they would have me deported back to Mexico. I suffered for several years before finally deciding it was worth the risk to call the police and try to escape my abusive situation to make a better life for me and my children.

When I finally did contact the police, they arrived to transport me to a local shelter and I provided them with a complete statement of what had happened to me. I showed them bruises on my body and explained to them in detail the abuse that I had suffered. When my partner returned to the scene he was interviewed and admitted to abusing me with a horsewhip, rope and cattle prod on several occasions. I agreed to supply the officers with a full written statement of all that I had experienced. Because of my assistance, my partner was brought to trial and charged with Aggravated Battery, False Imprisonment, and Child Abuse among other charges.

In February 2004, my children and I, with the help of my representative at Catholic Charities CYO's Refugee and Immigrant Services Program, applied for U visas. My representative informed me that I meet all the requirements for a U visa, but the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service has refused to grant our applications for U visas. She explained that the U.S. Government is not granting U visas for any crime victims who cooperate with the police, even though the United States Congress passed a law 6 years ago allowing the victims of serious crimes who cooperate with the police to obtain U visas.

I joined the lawsuit filed yesterday in the federal court in San Francisco on behalf of myself, my children who suffered along with me for several years, and all other immigrant crime victims in the United States who have cooperated with the police. I hope that this legal case will force the U.S. Government to follow a law that has been ignored for over six years. It is very difficult for women in my situation to seek assistance from the police, even more so if we feel our immigration status is in jeopardy. There have been an increasing number of immigration raids taking place in the Bay Area in recent months, terrorizing the immigration community, and increasing our fear of law enforcement. If immigrants are aware that this law is not being followed by the Government of the United States, they will be less likely to report violent crimes or cooperate with the police because they fear they will themselves be arrested and deported.

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