

HUNDREDS FIND IMMIGRATION HELP A CALL AWAY

Daily News (New York)

November 16, 2004 Tuesday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2004 Daily News, L.P.



Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 295 words

Byline: BY CRISTINA SILVA DAILY NEWS WRITER

Series: DAILY NEWS CUNY CITIZENSHIP NOW

Body

IMMIGRANTS FROM Yemen to the Congo to the Dominican Republic flooded the Citizenship Now hotline yesterday, seeking advice on how to become U.S. citizens.

Sponsored by the Daily News and the City University of New York, the five-day call-in service offers free counsel from a rotating team of more than 100 immigration experts.

The experts fielded calls from all over New York, other East Coast states and even Liverpool, England, on the hotline's first day.

Many of the callers said they did not know where else to turn.

"I really don't understand the way it all works and I don't have the money to pay for those big-time corporate lawyers," said caller Miriam, 24, a waitress and single mom from Brooklyn who was brought illegally to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic when she was 3.

Leading the panel of experts is News columnist Allan Wernick, an attorney and director of CUNY's Citizenship and Immigration Project.

"People are desperate for immigration information," Wernick said. "There just aren't enough services to meet the needs of the population."

By the afternoon 1,400 people had spoken to a counselor. About 18,000 calls had been placed to the hotline.

Citizenship Now was first offered in April, when more than 6,000 News readers got free legal advice in five days. More than 120,000 calls were logged.

The phone lines, which are answered in English, Spanish and other languages, will remain open through Friday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-Brooklyn) visited the call-in center at The News yesterday morning and answered some calls. She said her office sees about 4,000 people a year who have immigration concerns.

"This is a tremendous effort that gives hope to immigrants who are here and sometimes get lost through the system," Velazquez said.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: SERIES

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: **IMMIGRATION** (90%); CITIZENSHIP (90%); LAWYERS (70%); SINGLE PARENTS (54%)

Industry: LAWYERS (70%)

Person: NYDIA VELAZQUEZ (57%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (90%); LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND (57%); NEW YORK, USA (92%); UNITED STATES (92%); DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (90%); ENGLAND (57%)

Load-Date: November 16, 2004

End of Document