

# GRANT TO JERSEY CITY INSTITUTE TO AID 'UNDOCUMENTED' ALIENS

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## **Body**

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### JERSEY CITY

THE International Institute of Jersey City has received a one-year, \$12,000 grant to provide low-cost, legal-aid services for "undocumented" aliens, and to compile information for a study on nonprofit, public-interest law firms and clinics that deal specifically with immigration issues.

For indigent clients, the legal aid would be free.

Undocumented aliens are those who entered the United States without having gone through standardized immigration procedures.

The grant, from the Fund for New Jersey, a foundation in East Orange, will allow the institute to hire a paralegal aide to assist undocumented aliens in the following areas of immigration law:

- Political asylum claims.

International Institute of Jersey City receives one-year, \$12,000 grant to provide low-cost, legal aid services for undocumented aliens and to compile information for study on non-profit public interest law firms and clinics that deal specifically with immigration issues (M)

- Labor certification documentation.

- Relative petitions (for people with families already in the United States).

- The right to public education for children of undocumented aliens (a right recently reiterated by a United States Supreme Court ruling).

- The preparation of all necessary documents (affidavits, supportive documentation and briefs, etc.) for the adjudication of cases now pending before the Immigration and Naturalization Service and for cases to be presented to it.

The small fees charged for legal services would be directly funneled into the legal-defense project.

"The undocumented have certain constitutional rights," said Phyllis Bianca, the institute's attorney. "They are entitled to administrative hearings and to legal representation."

Robert Corman, executive director of the fund, said:

"This is a unique grant, I believe, in the State of New Jersey, and we're really excited about it.

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"This is a new area for us. In the past, we've supported groups dealing with environmental issues, the homeless and the support of farmworkers in South Jersey, but we've never gotten into the area of legal defense for the undocumented.

"I do believe that it's also a first for the state because I called many of the public-interest agencies, including the American Civil Liberties Union, and none of them were doing anything to protect the legal rights of the undocumented.

"We're hoping that the institute will be able to set up a kind of information base with this money. We do understand that this is a controversial area."

The institute is part of a network of 33 ethnic service organizations affiliated with the American Council for Nationalities Service. It is the only International Institute in New Jersey, a state that, according to 1980 Census figures, has more than 700,000 foreign-born people.

The nonprofit institute serves such disparate groups as Vietnamese and other Indochinese, Russians, Afghans, Chinese, Poles, Haitians, Egyptians, Iranians and Hispanic people. It has an annual budget of about \$300,000 and receives funds from the United Way, the Federal Government and charitable contributions. It has 11 full-time staff members.

In its 65 years in Jersey City, the institute has provided resettlement services, classes in English, social and translation services and career counseling. It continues to provide these services.

It also functions as an information bureau on immigration patterns in the state and on the characteristics, history and institutions of ethnic groups in New Jersey. In addition, it makes referrals for people seeking to link up with other organizations that work with ethnic groups.

"We were delighted to receive the grant because this enables us to expand our service capacity," said Dr. Nicholas V. Montalto, the institute's executive director. "Although this is a rather controversial area, we are pleased to be able to provide services for this population."

Dr. Montalto explained that the grant would not mean that the institute would focus exclusively on undocumented aliens.

This grant, he said, finances only one activity of the institute, which will continue to provide a full range of services to all immigrants and refugees.

The International Institutes began at the turn of the century as immigrant service agencies set up by the Y.W.C.A. The first institute was organized in 1910 in New York City.

For the legal-aid project, undocumented aliens will be reached through advertisements in the ethnic press and word of mouth. "Our institute has an excellent word-of-mouth reputation among the ethnic community," Dr. Montalto said. "We don't anticipate problems in reaching out to the undocumented."

According to Dr. Montalto, it is difficult to correctly assess the number of undocumented aliens in New Jersey.

"But," he said, "I heard estimates that, for example, there are as many as a million Salvadorans in the United States now, and there may be as many as 20,000 in New Jersey."

On March 10, the institute will be the sponsor of a "career fair" in Jersey City for refugee professionals. "Mentors" - American and foreign-born professionals in the fields of engineering, teaching, medical services and other areas - will conduct workshops to familiarize the refugees with the vicissitudes of the labor market.

Anyone interested in further information about either the career fair or other activities at the institute can call Nancy Long, the program director, at (201) 653-3888.

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The International **Institute** is at 880 Bergen Avenue and is open weekdays from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.

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