



Saving and rebuilding lives since 1973

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Resilience in the Face of Tragedy: Catherine's Story



"I first met Catherine* twelve years ago. She was brought to Ayuda by one of my former clients to apply for asylum. I remember her as a **timid, frightened woman** not being able to speak English and relaying on her Swahili speaking friend for translation.

During her intake process, it became obvious that **she suffered political persecution in Rwanda** but had no documentation to support her case. I also quickly realized that **she had escaped from terrible trafficking situation.**

Her trafficker was Rwandan member of the United Nations who brought her to New York with many promises of a good job but after arrival took away her passport and made her work seven days a week, abusing her emotionally and physically.

Catherine was afraid of her trafficker and feared contacting the authorities to report her trafficking situation. But she finally decided to come forward. When she came to Ayuda she'd never heard about T-visas, which are given to victims of human trafficking. **We were able to successfully apply for T-visa.**

Ayuda holistic social program for victims of trafficking supported Catherine in many ways. In years that followed Catherine studied diligently, learned English and got certificate allowing her to get a steady job working as a home care worker.

Eventually, Catherine was granted Legal Permanent resident status and was able to travel to Rwanda to marry her childhood friend. With assistance of Ayuda, Catherine applied for her husband who was able to join her in the United States as a Legal Permanent resident.

In the spring of 2018 Catherine applied for naturalization. Just a few days ago Catherine called me crying. I initially thought something bad had happened to her. But to my surprise and delight, they were tears of happiness. **She called to tell me that she passed her citizenship exam!**

I am happy that today Catherine is a different person from the woman I met many years ago. She is strong. She was resilient in the face of tragedy.

Today, Catherine is working through her church to assist others and give back to her community. **She is grateful to Ayuda and the holistic services she received."**

**Name has been changed at the client's request*

Ayuda's Work as an Anti-Trafficking Organization



Catherine's story is one that, unfortunately, is not uncommon at Ayuda.

Of more than 16,000 human trafficking cases reported in the United States in 2016 and 2017, nearly 750 of those cases involve victims in the Washington, DC metropolitan

area.

Many are women and girls induced into commercial sex or servitude through force, fraud, or coercion. Others are victims of labor trafficking who are forced to work against their will, *like Catherine.*

Ayuda's expert legal services team helps these victims successfully access and navigate our justice and U.S. immigration system so they can obtain visas, work authorization, legal status, and justice.

Over the last 3 years, Ayuda has represented approximately 150 human trafficking clients. More than 70% of these clients were survivors of labor trafficking, like Catherine. The map above shows the countries of origin of Ayuda's trafficking clients.

Ayuda's trafficking expert, Katie Soltis, was recently featured in an article in *The New Yorker*. [You can read more here](#) about how the current administration's changes have actually made the situation worse for victims and how organizations like Ayuda are responding.

Ayuda's Record-Setting Year End Campaign



Ayuda's 2018 year end campaign raised more than \$120,000!

This money is so important in helping fill in the gaps left open by restricted funding, allowing us to expand our programs and serve more low-income immigrants in the DMV.

***Thank you to all our donors who gave during the months of
November - January. You are so appreciated!***

***If you are interested in donating to Ayuda, you can click the link below or call
our development team at 202-552-3608.***



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