The student attorneys in the Immigrant & Non-Citizens Rights Clinic (INRC) continue to represent clients seeking assistance with all forms of affirmative and defensive immigration proceedings, including: asylum, criminal immigration matters, gender-based violence related claims, and deportation defense. Additionally, INRC students represent prisoners currently or formerly held by the U.S. military, primarily in Guantánamo Bay.

In the past year, clinic students have experienced several victories related to their cases, including successfully obtaining relief under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), preventing a client’s deportation by suppressing evidence in a matter that was appealed before the Board of Immigration Appeals, and securing Special Immigrant Juvenile Status for unaccompanied minor clients. Recently, a client of INRC since 2011 was released from the Guantánamo Bay detention facility. Several classes of INRC students played a vital role, both in court and out, in securing positive outcomes in all of these matters.

A sampling of current cases includes: appealing the wrongful naturalization denial of a young American activist, negotiating prosecutorial discretion for a client picked up by ICE despite not falling under the Obama administration’s enforcement priorities, preparing an asylum application for a domestic violence survivor from Peru, and continued advocacy before U.S. and international courts on behalf of our clients indefinitely detained in Guantánamo Bay. In addition to their active litigation docket, student attorneys participate in a host of other projects. This year that project work has included work related to language and educational accessibility with NYCLU and NYSED (the New York State Education Department), documentation and advocacy on improving immigration detention conditions with NYLPI (New York Lawyers for Public Interest), and continued work in the in-house, cross-clinical CLEAR project.

CLEAR
As part of the CLEAR project (Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility) students in INRC and other clinics represent and work with Muslim, Arab and South Asian communities who are targeted by local and federal law enforcement as a result of national security and counter-terrorism policies.

Since last year, student attorneys, both in the INRC clinic and participating in CLEAR, represented a Yemeni-American man whose passport was seized by the U.S. embassy in Sana’a on unfounded accusations that he had obtained it fraudulently. Under the leadership of Prof. Ramzi Kassem and CLEAR Staff Attorney Naz Ahmad, Nabila Taj (’15) who graduated last spring, took on this man’s case and in December the client’s passport was reinstated.

In addition, CLEAR students Cassie Veach, Hilal Khalil, and Jackie Mariano helped draft and submit a report and complaint to the U.S. State Department Inspector General, calling for an official investigation into multiple instances where Yemeni-Americans had their passports seized at the U.S. embassy. The name of the report is Stranded Abroad: Americans Stripped of their Passports in Yemen.