

April 2016



Friends,

This past year you helped to raise wages, improve labor standards, and win other meaningful reforms benefiting millions of workers and their families.

Thank you once again for your generosity and your commitment to low-wage workers. We are pleased to acknowledge you in our [2015 Honor Roll](#). We also would like to share our [2015 Annual Report](#), which details what your financial support has made possible.

Your support of NELP achieved:

- Historic minimum wage increases in states and cities across the country, ranging from \$15 or more in three major cities to first-ever city-level minimum wages in states like Alabama, Kentucky, and Iowa;
- Higher pay for tipped workers and a \$15 minimum wage for fast-food workers in New York;
- Expanded work opportunities for the formerly incarcerated and people with records through “ban the box” reforms in 6 states and 25 localities;
- Wage-and-hour protections for 2 million home care workers, and greater corporate accountability for workers misclassified as independent contractors;
- Major progress to expand eligibility for overtime pay, potentially benefiting up to 13.5 million workers – including “managers” earning as little as \$23,660 who are forced to work overtime with no pay.

We face an uncertain electoral outcome in November. And well-organized anti-worker forces continue to threaten our recent wins on wages and other workplace rights. In the coming months, we'll advance the ball where we can, and hold the line where we must. But rest assured: NELP will be there, fighting vigorously, for America's workers.

As always, we are grateful to you, and look forward to our continued partnership in the important work ahead.

Warmly,



Christine L. Owens  
Executive Director



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500 Riverside Drive  
New York, NY, 10027  
212-316-8400  
ihouse-nyc.org

March 15, 2018

Name  
Address  
City, State Zip

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you once again for giving so generously to International House's Welcome Fund.

The commitment you made at our Annual Awards Gala last year has transformed the lives of 12 young women and men from troubled regions all over the world. Thanks to you, these remarkable young adults – whose lives have been upended by war, political turmoil, and economic calamities – have reaped the rewards and joys of living at International House and forged friendships likely to last a lifetime.

Your generosity has made a difference in the lives of young men and women who came to the US to pursue their dreams and aspirations. They include:

- A resident from Turkey unable to return to her country after being blacklisted by that country's repressive government for her involvement in a human rights organization;
- A resident from Venezuela whose return to her native country would subject her to privation and violence unseen almost anywhere in the world;
- A resident from Brazil whose economic crisis has devastated her parents' small business, a source of financial support for her studies;
- A resident from Sudan whose education was disrupted by the United States' Executive Orders on immigrants and refugees; and
- A resident from Nigeria whose savings and source of financing for his studies lost half its value following a currency devaluation.

More detailed stories of three residents whose lives you have touched can be found in enclosure.

If you have any questions about your gift or about International House, please do not hesitate to contact me at [EWakeling@IHouse-nyc.org](mailto:EWakeling@IHouse-nyc.org) or (212) 316-8440.

Sincerely,

Emely Wakeling  
Vice President, Development, Alumni Relations  
& Communications

## **The Welcome Fund: Your Gift at Work**

These residents of International House are representative of the young women and men who have received financial assistance from you and the Welcome Fund.

### **Benjamin Itangishaka: Uplifting His Fellow Citizens in the DRC and Other Immigrants in the US**



Benjamin, 24, was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has been plagued by civil war and regional wars for many years. “My family was persecuted because of our ethnicity and forced into exile,” he wrote in his application to International House. Recalling his country’s troubled history, he said his aunt was killed amid the violence of war and his parents spent close to four years living in a refugee camp in Burundi during a regional war in the late 1990s and early 2000s that killed as many as 6 million people. When he was nine, his parents sent him to the U.S. and he settled in Denver, Colorado, where he was raised by a relative. Up until that time, he had seen few if any Caucasian people (except for “UN blue helmets,” he said) and he spoke French and Swahili, but no English. In Denver, Benjamin attended one

of the city’s most diverse high schools, where over 60 countries are represented in its student body. There, Benjamin was a peer mentor for students from Africa and from French-speaking countries. He went on to attend the University of Northern Colorado, where he volunteered at a local refugee resettlement agency serving as an interpreter and playing soccer weekly with teens from refugee families. While in college he worked as a volunteer helping international students to become acclimated to a new country and culture. Currently, he is pursuing a M.S. in Global Affairs at New York University, which he is paying for with student loans. “I took a risk and moved to New York to pursue my studies with virtually little to no scholarship, mostly loans,” he said. Although his father was a college professor and his mother a business woman in the Democratic Republic of Congo, they, like most refugees, had to start at the bottom of the economic ladder when they moved to the U.S. “The Welcome Fund has alleviated my financial burden, he said. “My debt has gone down considerably.” Despite a full course load, Benjamin has found the time to help start a nonprofit organization, the Jimbere Fund, to promote economic development and address poverty in his native country. For more information, visit <https://www.jimberefund.org/>

### **Anna Buzhor: A Geopolitical Conflict Hits Home**



Filling out the International House application in early 2015, Anna sat at a desk in her home in Kharkiv, Ukraine, about 200 miles from the armed conflict in the regions Donetsk and Luhansk, when the police descended on her apartment building, banging on doors and shouting for everyone to evacuate the building. A bomb had been planted in the building, the police feared. A false alarm, it turned out, and two days later she and her family returned to their home. But violence and war did not spare Anna and her hometown. Anna recalls an anti-Russia demonstration where bombs went off, killing a young boy. And the war between Russian-backed separatists and Ukraine took the life of Anna's aunt, one of approximately 10,000 people who have died since 2014 as a result of the conflict. Some of Anna's relatives, who are of Jewish ancestry, fled to Israel to escape the social and economic turmoil brought on by the war. Anna chose to continue her

studies in the US, landing in New York in August 2015 eager to begin her graduate program at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice while living at I-House. A highly selective and prestigious scholarship, which covered her tuition, was drying up when she heard about the Welcome Fund. This Fund has helped her to extend her time in the US as she completes an internship for a Department of Homeland Security project for which she is conducting research on US-based individuals with extremist political ideologies. In recent months she took part in the inaugural class of the UN's Core Academic Training in International Relations and Diplomacy, receiving instruction from former and current UN Ambassadors. Recently, Anna was accepted by Fordham University's Masters of Law program, also known as LL.M. Between her research and presenting at conferences, Anna has managed to serve as an I-House Resident Fellow, helping to organize food-themed social gatherings on her floor, each one focusing on foods such as waffles, pizza, and doughnuts. Her dream is to someday teach criminal justice at the university level.

## **Hani Al-Homsh: For Seven Years an Eyewitness and Hero to Many Amid Devastating Civil War in Syria**



*Hani Al-Homsh credits the Welcome Fund for affording him the opportunity to live once again with his family, pictured here in Central Park.*

For seven years Hani Al-Homsh worked for the UN World Food Program in Aleppo, Syria, part of that time overseeing 33 employees who fed more than 700,000 people each month, distributing foods baskets of bread, dried beans, vegetable oil and other goods to residents, many living in makeshift camps. For all residents, daily life took place in a battlefield. Each day hundreds of mortars – launched by ISIS in eastern Aleppo - landed on the western side, blowing up buses, homes, and businesses, leaving carnage in their wake. For three years, much of the city, including Hani's neighborhood, had no electricity, adding to the residents' misery and complicating the distribution of food. Water was also scarce. Hani and other residents would routinely cross the city to collect and bring back water in tanks or buckets for cooking and drinking. Three hundred miles away the city of Deir ez-Zor, near the Iraq border and where Hani grew up, was under ISIS control. Today,

after a long bloody battle to dislodge ISIS, the city is in ruins. It is completely cut off and Hani has no way of knowing if any of his relatives are dead or alive. Fleeing the war, Hani's siblings made their way to Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon, joining the approximately 5 million Syrian refugees worldwide. Six million other Syrians have fled their homes and sought refuge in other parts of Syria, including Hani's mother and two



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sisters who live in Damascus. In August of 2017, during a period of relative calm in Aleppo, Hani made the difficult decision to leave his post with the UN and move to New York to pursue a Masters in Social Work at Columbia University. His happiest day in many months was December 15, 2017, when he was reunited with his wife and two daughters, ages 4 and 1, in New York City. Today, Hani and his family have found safety and peace at International House. He credits the Welcome Fund for making it possible for his family come to the US. "I could not use my scholarship from Columbia to help pay for my wife and daughters to live with me. I am very grateful to the donors (of the Welcome Fund) for allowing our family to be together again."



<http://www.naacpldf.org/pollak75>

Dear (first name),

**“Clerking for Judge Louis Pollak was about as pure a slice of heaven as there is on this planet.”**

These words were spoken by John Savarese earlier this year when LDF honored the memory and legacy of the Honorable Louis H. Pollak at our 75th Anniversary dinner in Philadelphia. That evening Mr. Savarese presented an award on LDF’s behalf to Mrs. Pollak, one that honored the lifetime achievements of Judge Pollak in the struggle for equal justice.

After receiving the award, Mrs. Pollak said, “The other thing that Lou loved most besides LDF were his law clerks. There were 77 and each meant something special to him. And they enhanced his life as a judge more than I can possibly say.”

**I invite you to watch and listen to Mr. Savarese and Mrs. Pollak’s reflections about Judge Pollak in this six-minute [video](#). I know you will be as touched as I was.**

As always, I am grateful to you for honoring the life of this extraordinary man by helping us establish and fund the Louis H. Pollak Fund. Your generosity will advance the careers of law school students committed to racial justice and civil rights law.

One such law school student is Tony Johnson, our very first Louis Pollak Fellow who did tremendous work for us this summer supporting our litigation on school desegregation and voting rights. Tony will be back at the University of South Carolina Law School this fall, mindful of his solid contributions to our mission and all the new LDF friends and colleagues he can now count on for help as he pursues a career in social justice law.

All the best,

Sherrilyn Ifill  
President and Director-Counsel

**TONY R. JOHNSON**  
**LOUIS POLLAK FELLOW**



PS: Do you have a special memory of Judge Pollak or can you share a few words that capture what he was like? We’d love to hear from you. Please send it to us in writing by emailing [MLinton@naacpldf.org](mailto:MLinton@naacpldf.org). Please let us know if we can share it with others in an email similar to this one, and if we can attribute it to you or if you’d prefer a more general attribution such as “A Pollak clerk.”

**LDF**  
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