



Emily Allen, a lawyer with Legal Aid of Santa Barbara County, consults with a client.

Where Have All the Lawyers Gone?

For those who need it most, legal help can be hard to find in Santa Barbara.

By Karen Pelland, July 31, 2013

Taurino Torres was driving home with his 11-year-old son when he made what he thought was a routine turn onto East Gutierrez Street from Milpas Street in downtown Santa Barbara. A police car pulled him over and, according to Torres, the officer asked him if he knew why she stopped him. He didn't. The officer said he had been speeding and changed lanes without signaling. Torres denied the speeding charge, which, he says, upset the officer.

“She said, ‘Give me your car keys!’” Torres recalls, replaying the Feb. 4, 2011 incident as if it happened yesterday. “I said, ‘No, I’m not going to give you my car keys.’ And then she said it again.”

Torres’ son pleaded with his dad to hand over the keys. Instead, Torres dropped them on the floor of his car. At that point, the officer called for backup, ordered Torres out onto the curb and questioned him. She asked him for his driver’s license. Torres, who had just gotten his license renewed, only had a permit and didn’t have that with him. He offered his expired license instead.

An on-site computer check of California DMV records showed that Torres’ license was “valid, withheld by the Department of Motor Vehicles”—meaning something was holding up the issuance of a new or renewed license. Next thing he knew, a tow truck was hauling his car away and he was cited for driving without a valid driver’s license, as well as speeding and making an unsafe turn. Torres was confused—he knew he had a valid permit.

One of the officers gave Torres and his son a ride home, where he promptly found and showed the officer his valid permit. “You should have had it with you,” the officer told him.

The following Monday, Torres took the day off from his construction job so he could retrieve his car from the impound lot. Nearly \$600 later, plus \$200 in lost wages, he had his car back. In addition, the three tickets ended up costing Torres more than \$500.

Torres fled his home in the southwestern state of Michoacán, Mexico in 1984, where, he says he could “hardly afford a bicycle.” His goal was to make it to Santa Barbara because he had an aunt and uncle who lived here. He made the journey by himself but eventually built a family—he has four children—and became a U.S. citizen in 2000. He is 49 years old. He has lived in other U.S. cities briefly, but Santa Barbara has always felt like home to Torres.

“I love living in Santa Barbara,” he says.

Sitting at a conference table in his lawyer’s office, Torres is weathered, stocky and soft-spoken. He is dressed in the work clothes he wore to the eastside construction site where he was assigned that day. He says the police in Santa Barbara have a habit of targeting Latinos.

“I knew she didn’t have the right to ask for my keys before asking for my driver’s license,” Torres says. He told the officer that she was making him feel like an illegal immigrant. “Which I’m not. I’m a legal citizen,” he says. “They always think, oh, we’re all Latinos, we’re not going to do anything, we’re not going to say anything, and we’re all going to stay quiet.”

Outraged at how he had been treated that night, Torres went to the local nonprofit economic justice group Pueblo, which helped him file a claim with the city for his financial losses. The claim was denied and the city told him to find a lawyer if he wanted to pursue the claim.

Torres nets \$700 a week, so a lawyer is hardly in his budget. But he got lucky—Santa Barbara attorney Joe Allen heard about Torres’ case at a local American Civil Liberties Union Christmas party and took it on pro bono—for free.

“Turns out he is a nice guy, and I wanted to help him,” says Allen. “The reason for the stop was not whatever violation the officer



Taurino Torres at work.

thought she saw. The reason for the stop was that she was hunting for Hispanic, unlicensed, undocumented people.”

To bolster his claim, Allen keeps on hand a 36-page spreadsheet of data obtained from the Santa Barbara Police Department last year by the *Santa Barbara Independent*. The data compiles 1,100 citations over a 12-month period starting June 1, 2011 for driving without a valid license, which by law can result in car impoundment.

Based on evidence showing a pattern of excessive traffic stops in poor Latino neighborhoods and interviews with several of those stopped, Allen is convinced the police target drivers like Torres as possible undocumented immigrants. As such, they would likely not have a valid license. This means police can impound the vehicle and charge a \$215 “administrative fee” before the cited driver can even go to the impound lot where he or she must pay several hundred more dollars to retrieve the vehicle.

“It’s a tax on the poorest people,” Allen says. “It’s guys going to work as dishwashers, fish cutters and gardeners.” Allen says the Torres’ case is the tip of the iceberg. “There are clearly a lot of people out there having their cars inappropriately seized... I’m trying to figure out if there’s some way to make a class-action [suit] out of it.”

For the time being, Allen sued the officer and the chief of police for violation of Torres' constitutional rights "not to be deprived of property without due process of law" and "to be free of unlawful and unreasonable searches and seizures," according to the complaint.

Taurino Torres is lucky in one regard: Joe Allen was willing to take on his case at no charge. This makes Allen somewhat of an anomaly among the legal community here in Santa Barbara, despite a venerable tradition within the profession of donating time and energy to those who can't afford it.

In fact, the State Bar of California has a standing resolution that urges every licensed attorney in the state to perform 50 hours of pro bono work each year "to indigent individuals, or to not-for-profit organizations with a primary purpose of providing services to the poor... with a purpose of improving the law and the legal system, or increasing access to justice."

Fifty hours may not sound like a lot, but of the 1,385 lawyers listed by the state bar who are active in Santa Barbara County, it appears from polling, interviews and anecdotes that only a small fraction do pro bono work at all, let alone 50 hours of it. And to be clear about what is meant by pro bono work, the state bar resolution suggests the "substantial majority" of those 50 hours be given strictly "without fee or expectation of fee" to the poor or to organizations that directly serve the needs of the poor, such as charitable, religious, educational or civic groups.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 60,193 Santa Barbara County residents live below the national poverty line (who survive on an income of \$22,314 for a family of four). That's 14.2 percent of the county population. Those living in poverty include the mentally ill, homeless, elderly, addicts, immigrants and any family simply working to keep the lights on and put food on the table. Such people can often barely afford the basic necessities in life, let alone a lawyer if and when needed. Plus, poverty increases one's vulnerability to issues ranging from police or domestic abuse to unlawful evictions or firings.

Furthermore, within the most vulnerable communities, minor infractions frequently snowball into legal fracas. For example, without legal guidance, when a homeless person gets ticketed for camping (staying outdoors) or having an open container in public, the citation will often turn into an arrest warrant.

Recognizing that low-income Californians are being denied their basic rights "simply because they cannot afford a lawyer," in 2010 the State Bar of California launched a "Campaign for Justice" to increase legal resources available to the poor. California currently ranks No. 22 nationally in legal aid funding, and the campaign's ultimate goal is to raise \$10 million to distribute among 95 legal aid organizations throughout every county in the state. The campaign's credo is simple: *California's most vulnerable residents are facing housing crises, job losses, domestic violence, elder abuse, and obstacles to health care and education. When justice is available to those who need it, society benefits from increased family stability, safer communities, and a stronger workforce.*

Richard Solomon, who started practicing law in Santa Barbara in the 1970s, says Santa Barbara is a particularly difficult place to get pro bono legal help if you need it. "There's never been a culture of pro bono here... ever," says Solomon. Though there were more lawyers giving their time back in the more progressive days when he began practicing, Solomon says, "there's always been a great reluctance."

When it comes to pro bono legal work, Santa Barbara is up against more than its own history—the practice of law itself is evolving in a way that leaves barely any room at the edges for donating legal work.

Back in the '50s and '60s, says local immigration attorney Arnold "Arno" Jaffe, "people went to law school because they wanted to make a difference in the world and in people's lives." Jaffe includes himself in this group, adding, "there's nothing closer to what the essence of being a lawyer is than pro bono work."

Then came the era of specialization, a movement that picked up steam toward the end of the 1970s, whereby lawyers would master one area of the law. This, of course, limited the kinds of cases lawyers could take. So now, says Jaffe, "to get information on wills and trust and tax and criminal and divorce from one lawyer is very difficult."

Santa Barbara Superior Court Judge Thomas Anderle started his legal career here in the 1960s and tried to do as much pro bono work as he could and still make a living. In those days, says Anderle, "to take a landlord/tenant case, a family law case or a domestic violence case wasn't unrealistic for us." But now in the era of specialization, he says, "to ask

somebody who is a securities expert to do that, they have a 100 percent learning curve.”

Specialization may have been necessary due to increasing and near-blinding complexity in the law, but there was another factor at play. “Money,” says Anderle flatly. Knowing one area of law inside and out and backwards and forwards increases a lawyer’s value. Specializing, Anderle says, “is a far more lucrative path than that of a general practitioner.”

Solomon knows this dilemma all too well. He was a board member of the Santa Barbara chapter of the ACLU for several years starting in 2001 and was president from 2002 to 2005. But while the Southern California affiliate of the ACLU is well stocked in Los Angeles, the local chapter is a low-budget team of mostly retired volunteers who must first try to woo local attorneys to take cases pro bono before calling the mother ship in Los Angeles for help.

Solomon recalls the case of then-35-year-old Michael Tocher, who was arrested on Veterans Day in 2004 outside of the former Borders bookstore location on State Street (currently Marshall’s). He and his brother George had been reading aloud the names of U.S. soldiers killed or injured in Iraq. After a few hours, police arrived, questioned and then handcuffed Tocher, searched his belongings, hauled him off to the police station and charged him with disturbing the peace.

“Well, that,” Solomon says, “was patently illegal.”

Although the district attorney chose not to file charges and the case was dropped, Tocher felt his constitutional rights had been violated. He reached out to the ACLU and Solomon made calls, trying to get a local lawyer to take the case. “They’d say, ‘I can’t do it, I don’t have the time. I don’t know anything about constitutional law.’ I mean, this is something they could learn! Lawyers learn new stuff all the time. So I got excuses, basically. It was like pulling hen’s teeth.”

Solomon was forced to go out of town to the ACLU in Los Angeles, which managed to win Tocher a \$17,000 damages settlement and a judge’s order that the police department alter its training policies regarding what constitutes “disturbing the peace.”

Between Los Angeles and Orange County, the Southern California ACLU affiliate stretches a dozen lawyers pretty thin. There is no NAACP or Southern Poverty Law Center branch with staff attorneys here. The largest pro bono law firm in the country, Public Counsel, is also based in Los Angeles, but its 61 staff attorneys and 5,000 volunteer lawyers don’t make a habit of operating here. Santa Barbara is a victim of its own size and geography when it comes to getting attention from such service providers.

On the bright side, there is the Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County. The 54-year-old nonprofit group provides free legal services from its office on East Canon Perdido in a building that once upon a time was a general store. The address’ quaint and well-maintained façade belies the intensity of the work going on inside.

With an annual budget of around \$2 million, Legal Aid’s 14 staff attorneys represent victims of domestic violence and elder abuse, landlord/tenant disputes and the homeless. They also handle cases of consumer debt, bankruptcy and securing public benefits such as Social Security, disability and MediCal. A \$450,000 state grant has recently allowed Legal Aid to launch a foreclosure-assistance program, including the addition of two attorneys. Without even advertising its existence, the foreclosure staff has already fielded a steady stream of calls for help.

In 2012, Legal Aid helped about 6,100 people, but “that doesn’t touch the big numbers,” says Executive Director Ellen Goodstein. “Only about one-third of the legal needs of the poor are being met, statewide.”

So when demand exceeds supply, which it always does, or for issues outside its wheelhouse such as probate, immigration and civil rights, Legal Aid depends on private attorneys to volunteer time.

Jackie Hall, Legal Aid’s pro bono coordinator, has the tough job of getting local lawyers to work for free. “A lot of the time, I end up making five or six phone calls before I will get someone who will talk to me,” Hall says. “Out of five or six, I might actually talk to one or two.”

When she came on board in March 2012, Hall sent a letter to 920 lawyers in the county asking if they would consider



Legal Aid of Santa Barbara County helped 6,100 people last year.

pro bono work, which areas of law they provide pro bono services in, what languages they speak and if they would donate money. “I got six attorneys who responded, saying they’d be willing to do pro bono work, and a few sent in checks,” says Hall.

Hall has seen a slightly encouraging development since then. A handful of lawyers have contacted her to offer pro bono services—four, to be exact.

It’s possible there is no segment in greater need of pro bono legal services in Santa Barbara than the homeless. The latest estimate of the number of homeless people in Santa Barbara County is more than 6,000, and they can find themselves embroiled in the same kinds of situations any of us could—getting hit by a car, custody battles, civil rights cases or theft. Perhaps more vexing, though, are the legal problems that can mount for the homeless from the number of infraction tickets they get for public intoxication, open container violations, sleeping outside and the like.

“These tickets can clog up the courts,” says Legal Aid attorney Emily Allen, Joe Allen’s daughter. “If people don’t appear [in court] on these tickets, then they go to warrant, and people can be arrested.”

In 2009, the two Allens partnered with Legal Aid to start H.E.L.P., the Homeless Education and Legal Project. Every Monday and Tuesday morning, Allen arrives at her office to find up to eight or nine homeless people waiting to talk to her—though some days she might have no callers.

From her office, Allen can help them apply for housing or health services online. Though as much as possible, Allen says she will “ride the bus with them or meet them at their Social Security appointment, making sure they get to their follow-up doctor’s appointment.”

But a great deal of what Allen does is simply dealing with those infraction tickets. She’ll explain to someone they can get the ticket dismissed by doing 10 hours of community service, for example, and shepherd him or her through that process.

In a 2012 pro bono study conducted by the American Bar Association, the No. 1 reason given by the nearly 3,000 attorneys surveyed for not doing pro bono work was time constraints. Few can attest to that better than Santa Barbara criminal defense attorney Bob Sanger, who is handling the longest-running pro bono case by a private attorney in California.

Filed in 1981, *Inmates of the County of Santa Barbara v. the County of Santa Barbara* is aimed at alleviating overcrowded conditions at the county jail. “I’ve spent half my life doing this,” says Sanger. “I was 32 when I filed it, I’m 64 now.”

Thirty-two years later, Sanger can celebrate several victories along the way that have helped improve the jail conditions, such as capping the capacity of the women’s jail where many inmates had been living in the basement with no natural light, expanding work furloughs and creating a separate sobering center for arrested drunks instead of tossing them in jail. And although he can’t even begin to calculate the hours and money he’s spent—and sees no end in sight—he has no regrets.

“This goes back to pro bono,” Sanger says. “People say, ‘How can you represent those people?’ But we are privileged to be lawyers. We’re here to stand up for people’s dignity, and we’re here to demand that the system give people respect.” Sanger has little patience for colleagues who may not share this view. “There are all these other [lawyers] sitting there making the money and going to court and being big shots and not doing a thing for the rest of the legal community,” Sanger says, “and if they’re offended because they think I’m talking about them, so be it.”

These so-called “big shots” are, for the most part, employed by medium to large-sized firms and specialize in issues such as estate and trust planning, business litigation and land use—areas of law that bring big fees and generally don’t involve poor people. But these gilded firms are where the Bob Sangers and Joe Allens see an opportunity. With support from multiple lawyers to pay the bills, prosperous firms can theoretically afford to spare individual attorneys for pro bono casework.

“Even a modest-sized office would not go bankrupt if it donated 10 hours a month to some project,” says Allen. One problem, however, is the “billable hours” conundrum, wherein associates are often under crippling pressure from the partners to bill a certain number of hours annually, usually around 2,000. Again, the California Bar Association recommends firms allow up to 50 hours of pro bono work to count toward a quota, but at the majority of firms that don’t follow that guideline, lawyers are understandably averse to moonlighting pro bono.

In Santa Barbara, few larger firms do pro bono work, and fewer still do pro bono for poor people. For example, Price, Postel & Parma, one of the biggest firms in town reports all of its 23 attorneys “do some pro bono work,” which includes various transactional, labor/employment, contracts and other issues for nonprofit organizations, plus some unspecified representation for individuals. This work is not billed and does not count towards a billable hours quota.

A number of other sizeable local firms contacted either do not engage in pro bono work, or if they do, such work does not count toward billable hours. For example, for the 14 lawyers at Hollister & Brace, any pro bono work is not counted as billable, and the same goes for the nine lawyers at Griffith & Thornburgh. Fell, Marking, Montgomery, Abkin, Granet & Raney did not clarify its policies to Mission and State despite the publication’s repeated inquiries.

A modest standout is Mullen & Henzell, which reports having a strong pro bono and community service ethos within the firm, though it is somewhat informal and loose in its parameters. Most of the pro bono work done by its 22 active attorneys does not involve representing individual poor people, but rather is on behalf of nonprofit organizations such as Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics and Habitat for Humanity, and the Santa Barbara Zoo and Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Only the firm’s seven associates keep track of such work, which does count toward their annual billable goal of 1,800 hours.

At Buynak, Archbald, Fauver & Spray, managing partner Tim Buynak says pro bono and community service work is “part of the fabric of the firm.” He says all of the firm’s 11 attorneys donate their time and legal expertise, whether by representing individuals who cannot afford a lawyer in matters such as immigration or simple fender-bender cases, or nonprofit organizations in their legal needs. The hours spent on such cases are not logged, however, and the firm does not count them toward its attorneys’ annual goal of 1,800 billable hours.

The pro bono leader in Santa Barbara is probably Denver-based Brownstein Farber Hyatt Schreck, which has 14 offices

nationwide, all of which represent indigent clients for free. The firm's website reads: "Pro bono work isn't an obligation we endure, it's an opportunity we relish." The Santa Barbara branch has 23 lawyers working out of a swank office with a cathedral-ceilinged lobby that could swallow a Starbucks.

"[Pro bono work] is part of our culture," says local Brownstein attorney Steve Amerikaner, adding that any young lawyer who interviews for a job there should know it. "I explain to them that we have a commitment to giving back to the community. It's simply not enough in our firm to work hard and go home to your family. Being involved in community issues and pro bono work has to be the third leg of the stool."

And it doesn't matter that few, if any, Brownstein attorneys specialize in the kinds of legal problems that often face low-income residents. Amy Steinfeld, a water rights attorney, remembers the first time she took on an immigration case pro bono. "Frankly, I didn't know what I was doing," Steinfeld admits. "But you figure it out, and then you're more inclined to take more cases, and you realize, 'I can do this.'" To some extent, Steinfeld says, "legal training prepares a lawyer for all types of cases."

Steinfeld is also the local branch's pro bono coordinator, which means she fields requests for pro bono representation, primarily from Legal Aid, and sees if anybody on staff can take the case.

Brownstein allows up to 100 hours of pro bono work to count toward each lawyer's annual billable hours quota of 1,900. As a result, the staff collectively logged 1,158 pro bono hours in 2012. With only 22 staff attorneys in 2012, that's an average of 52 hours per lawyer. In addition, the firm and individual lawyers are collectively donating \$11,000 per year to Legal Aid for the next three years.

Pro bono legal work has long been touted as good for the community at large and for the struggling in particular. Pro bono advocates often quote Richard Nixon, in fact, who wrote in a 1973 statement to Congress supporting the establishment of the Legal Services Corporation: legal assistance for the poor, when properly provided, is one of the most constructive ways to help them help themselves. But what is rarely mentioned in reports and speeches about pro bono work is what a powerful experience it can be for the attorney.

Just ask 28-year-old Brian Simas. Legal Aid approached the Santa Maria attorney in 2011 to take a pro bono case involving a woman who was being wrongfully evicted from her home by someone else claiming ownership of the property. Simas specializes in business and real estate transactions for the wine and viticulture industry, but he'd never undertaken something of this nature, much less for free. He was wary, but agreed to do some preliminary digging one afternoon and was hooked.

"Long story short, I ended up sitting in my office until about two o'clock in the morning," Simas recalls. "There was this very large real estate fraud scheme, and it was unraveling at my fingertips." Simas called Legal Aid the next day and said he was on it.

Nearly five months and roughly 45 hours of pro bono legal work later, Simas was able to uncover the scheme and prove that the woman, a widow, was the rightful owner and occupant of the home, reversing a previous judgment against her. "Our client was incredibly grateful," says Simas. "She did not have the means otherwise to get this done herself, and today she still owns the home and lives there. It's the only home she had."

And feeling good about your work, particularly legal work, is critical. Many lawyers, including Simas, will tell you that the early stages of any legal career can break you.

Lawyers enter the arena "bright eyed and bushy tailed," Simas says, and then reality sets in. During the first few years, he explains, "100 percent of your work is fed to you by someone else. You might work for a huge firm in downtown L.A., and you're going to the 33rd floor of some building in Century City and going to your cubicle and hammering out these large contracts for some corporation—you don't even really know what they do—you've never met anybody there, you're proofreading this thing, and there's no personal connection. How do you walk into work every day and say, 'I feel like I really have purpose in what I'm doing today'? Purpose is one of the greatest things that you can strive for in any career or profession or job, but especially in the legal industry, and providing pro bono work to people like my client achieves that."

Simas and his client were lucky to find each other, but the California state bar is working on taking chance out of the equation. A bar task force made a recommendation in February that would require 50 hours of pro bono work from every new lawyer as a condition of admittance to the state bar. If passed, California would be only the second state to institute such a requirement. New York became the first last summer, requiring 50 hours.

It appears further relief for poor people who need legal help is on the way in the form of a \$550,000 state grant to California Rural Legal Assistance. CRLA provides free legal services to the poor in rural communities statewide (primarily to farmers and laborers and their families). It has 22 offices across the state, staffing 51 attorneys, including three in Santa Barbara County. The grant will be shared among CRLA branches in Kern, Madera, Merced, part of San Luis Obispo, and north Santa Barbara counties to help primarily Spanish-speaking, low-wage workers deal with the foreclosure crisis.

CRLA's presence in Santa Barbara proper has also just been upgraded. In early July, the local branch relocated from donated space in a hard-to-access business park in the Riviera to a brand-new office in a heavily low-income downtown location on Milpas Street. The office will focus on labor, housing and civil rights issues—sexual harassment, language access, anti-bullying—as well as education, working to curb excessive disciplinary methods that create the so-called “school-to-prison pipeline.” The Milpas Street branch operates with one full-time attorney, one full-time community outreach worker and a full-time legal secretary, and may add a few volunteer interns or paid fellowships down the road if possible.

As a result of Mission and State's probe, the Santa Barbara County Bar Association says it is coordinating a class taught by Joe Allen on how lawyers can overcome the financial, ethical and logistical barriers to such work. Plus, depending on the success of Allen's class, the county bar's board has green-lit a program of pro bono courses applicable to the annual minimum required continuing education lawyers must take to stay members.

But pro bono is only one piece of the puzzle, says Santa Barbara County Bar Association President Donna Lewis. “The biggest threat to access to justice is cuts to court funding,” she warns.

The California state court system is the largest in the world, serving 38 million people. Over the past five years, funding for the state's judicial branch has been gutted by about \$1.2 billion statewide. That translates locally to a 33.6 percent drop (or \$7 million) in state funding for Santa Barbara County trial courts. It also means the loss of 47 full-time positions, the doubling of furlough days for court employees from 12 to 24 and the likely elimination of night court, which represents 10 percent of small-claims cases and 90 percent of traffic cases. And the worst is yet to come.

“The real tsunami is going to hit at the beginning of fiscal year 2014, on June 1,” says Gary Blair, the former Santa Barbara County Superior Court executive officer, referring to when the court's current reserves run out. He anticipates more staff cuts and furlough days, and less support at the civil and criminal clerk's office.

Aside from the old adage that justice delayed is justice denied, in practical terms the cuts means critical processing delays in family law matters such as child custody mediation, as well as domestic violence restraining orders.

“When you really need that kind of service,” says Blair, who recently retired after 37 years with the court, “you need it quickly.” There are also backlogs of violent-crime cases, less courthouse security and fewer court reporters. Not to mention the Superior Court's \$52,000 annual support to Legal Aid has been cut.

As for Taurino Torres, it's been just over 18 months since Joe Allen first heard about his case, and Allen figures he's spent about \$10,000 in time and court fees. “I would like to get Taurino \$10,000-\$20,000,” says Allen, adding that a civil rights win would also earn him recovery of some, but not nearly all, of his legal fees.

But the news today is not good. Turns out that although Torres was legally licensed to drive that night, the DMV computer dished out inaccurate information to the police. The city then shifted blame to the DMV and moved the case to federal court in Los Angeles, where it was promptly dismissed in May.

Allen says it would have been near impossible to simply amend the complaint naming the DMV (an agency of the state) as the defendant. “It's very difficult for constitutional reasons to sue a state in federal court,” he says.

And now, Allen isn't sure how or if to regroup and go after the DMV. "There's considerable tolerance in terms of civil rights law for innocent mistakes," says Allen. In other words, it's highly likely the DMV would win in court by shrugging and saying, "Oops, my bad."

The notion of a class-action suit against the police department for racially motivated traffic stops is always on the table, Allen says, and would be relatively quick and easy to file if he had more conclusive evidence across a swath of the local Latino community. Unfortunately, collecting that evidence is not quick and easy, and is made more complicated by potential victims who already feel vulnerable and don't want to make waves.

"I feel that Joe is doing what he can," Torres says. "I hope that he continues to do so, because I personally am not going to stop fighting the case. I want respect of my rights."

