

# What's Happening with Regina?

Update B March 22, 2006

We followed her plight on TV, radio, newspaper, Internet B our parishioner, Regina Imwa Bakala. Regina is a torture survivor whose dream of citizenship turned into a nightmare a year ago this week, March 22, when she was snatched from her husband and two preschoolers, taken away in pajamas and slippers, and imprisoned for 11 weeks while awaiting deportation back to Congo.

St. Mary's launched "Save Regina" and Miracle #1 happened! Thanks to many prayers, a great attorney and an amazing local response - Regina was released and her case reopened! In the months since, as we prayed for Miracle #2 - full asylum - her case has quietly progressed through some promising changes:

- G **December: The original judge in Atlanta, who had sole jurisdiction, agreed to change the venue to Chicago, handing it to a new judge.** Ah-h, less traveling, less expense and less stress. Regina will not have to go before the same judge who once denied her all relief.
- G **January 30: the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) unexpectedly reopened the asylum portion of her husband David's case.** David arrived in late 1997 after Regina's case was decided. Neither knew of the 1996 law mandating a person apply for asylum within the first year. Having just escaped a tiny, underground torture chamber, David hid in their North Carolina apartment, terrified lest some other Congolese betray his whereabouts to the dictator Kabila who had sentenced him to death. After their baby was born, David urged Regina to move here. In 2000, he applied for asylum. A psychologist certified that David's delay was caused by post-traumatic stress disorder. After a 7-hour hearing, the judge believed David's story but granted "withholding of removal" (no deportation) instead of asylum, saying that the final words of the diagnosis were not conclusive enough. Attorney Hal Block appealed the asylum portion of the ruling. The BIA said no this August, but the lawyer countered. Finally, the BIA remanded the asylum part of David's case back to the original judge.
- G **March 8: A Chicago judge combined their cases.** Last June, the "new evidence" that warranted reopening Regina's case had been David's arrival and the judge's ruling that deportation would put his life in danger. The BIA, therefore, reopened Regina's case on the finding of David's persecution, not hers. Now David may get full asylum. If he does, then Regina qualifies on a derivative basis.
- G **April 13 (Holy Thursday): David and Regina will appear before Judge O. John Brahos, David's original judge, to learn the date for their combined hearing.** Both their great lawyers, Hal Block and Mary Sfasciotti, will represent the couple. Visit [www.saveregina.org](http://www.saveregina.org) for updates.

For full victory, Regina and David still need our prayers and financial support. Their case is difficult and complicated, but prayer can and does move mountains. Regina said again, "We trust God. I know in my heart God wants us here in America. I have never experienced love like this in my whole life!"

They also need funds. It will take approximately \$80,000.00 more to cover legal fees. Because the *Save Regina Committee* benefits a single family, it does not qualify for non-profit status. They are working hard to raise funds. Please consider donating (again). Make checks payable to "The Regina Bakala Fund" and send them to M&I Bank, 7600 W. Layton Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53220, or donate safely online using Paypal at [www.saveregina.org](http://www.saveregina.org). Thank you for your wonderful prayers, love and support!