



Summer 2024 Community Newsletter

ESPERANZA IMMIGRANT RIGHTS PROJECT

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Dear Esperanza Family,

As you know, the challenges our community faces are both urgent and critical, and the immigration cases we handle often stretch over many years, creating prolonged uncertainty and unpredictability for our clients. During the summer, while many enjoy a break, our clients do not get a respite from their immigration struggles or their uncertain futures. Their battles persist, regardless of what is happening nationally, globally, or politically. As the federal election approaches, anti-immigrant rhetoric is once again on the rise, threatening the most vulnerable among us. This divisive sentiment, when weaponized, tears families apart and punishes those who have already endured unimaginable hardships in their pursuit of safety. We share our clients' concerns because we know the stakes are high.

Despite these challenges, Esperanza remains steadfast in our mission to support the most vulnerable immigrants in our community. We remain focused on the positive change we can create together. Each step forward is a testament to our collective resilience and a reminder that a more just future is within reach. We are deeply grateful for your ongoing support. This summer, I have been inspired and energized by the outpouring of solidarity from our community. Specifically, Esperanza had the privilege of hosting several remarkable interns from law schools and colleges across the country. These interns gained invaluable experience working with clients and in the courtroom, culminating in the legal victory of securing bond for a detained client. Additionally, we quietly launched the project, **Rising Together: Advancing Legal Services and Opportunities**, this summer, where Esperanza's dedicated team of experts partnered with private law firms to prepare immigration applications for unrepresented immigrants. This collaboration has significantly increased our legal capacity and enhanced the services we offer to the community. From asylum filings to work permit applications, the needs of our community are immense, and we are eager to explore new and innovative solutions to these complex challenges. The road ahead may be difficult, but together we have the power to shape the future.

Together we can continue to educate, to empower and to defend working towards a more just and humane immigration system. Please continue to stand with us and support Esperanza today.

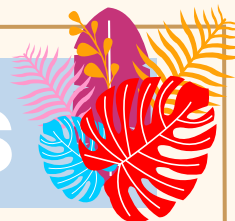
In Solidarity,

Kimberley Plotnik

Program Director



Program Highlights



Reflections from Directing Attorney Evelyn Cedeno-Naik, Community Education for Unrepresented Immigrants (CEUI) Program

Navigating immigration proceedings can be overwhelming, frightening, and complex, especially for those who cannot afford private attorneys. Esperanza's CEUI program steps up to meet this need and fill the gaps.

Bridging the Justice Gap

Immigration courts do not provide attorneys to individuals who cannot afford one. This leaves many low-income and non-English-speaking immigrants facing the judge and government attorney alone. The CEUI team is dedicated to addressing this issue by providing unrepresented folks comprehensive, free support. Our program stands out as one of the region's largest pro se application support and preparation programs. We have supported over 1,000 unrepresented asylum seekers and are proud that immigration court staff, judges, and other legal services organizations regularly refer asylum seekers in need to us.

Recent Accomplishments

Our work can greatly impact the lives of those in immigration court. For example, we recently assisted two families who faced their final immigration court hearings without representation. The CEUI team stepped in, guiding them through the preparation of their asylum applications and providing crucial information to help them present their cases. CEUI staff were thrilled to witness these families receive grants of asylum in person!



Managing Attorney Jonathan Vallejo Providing an Asylum Workshop

Why Social Services are Essential In Supporting Unaccompanied Immigrant Children (UCP) Program

Integrating social services and legal support is not just beneficial—it's essential! Lidia Flores Bush, Case Management Supervisor, sheds light on how Esperanza addresses clients' multifaceted needs. By educating youth about their legal rights and facilitating their integration into new communities, the UCP Program helps empower newly arrived young people become active, supported members of their communities.

The Need for Holistic Legal Representation

A holistic approach to immigration services looks like clients working with attorneys and social service professionals to ensure client needs are met. The model centers on the client, recognizing that legal issues are often intertwined with trauma, unemployment, housing, and other concerns. We aim to achieve the best possible legal outcomes while simultaneously advocating for improvements in other areas of the client's life. The goal is to foster healthy development and well-being.

Navigating Challenges

One major challenge is managing clients who are overwhelmed when receiving multiple referrals to service providers. Clients may struggle with navigating unfamiliar locations, understanding complex documents, or overcoming language barriers. Lidia addresses these challenges by simplifying the referral process -- she provides visual aids, translations, and assists clients with completing forms and understanding documents. Lidia and her colleagues ensure that complex process remain accessible and manageable.



Lidia presenting a financial literacy workshop to families

Esperanza Impact

Niki Nguyen's Outstanding Achievement



Managing Attorney, Anabel Merino, extends a special shout-out to Niki for successfully securing a bond grant for a client detained at the Desert View Annex facility in Adelanto, California.

Niki faced a challenging DHS attorney, but her preparation and skillful rebuttals overcame every argument presented.

Thanks to Niki's dedication, the client—who has a strong fear-based asylum claim—can now fight his case outside detention and reunite with his family.

Niki's efforts were commendable, especially given the tight timeline of just three weeks to complete the case. Despite not knowing Spanish, Niki went above and beyond to communicate with the client's family and prepared a comprehensive evidence packet.



Securing a \$3,000 Bond for a Detained Client

DOJ Accredited Representative Andrea Ortiz and summer legal intern Daniel Caballero worked together to secure the release of a client from Desert View Annex facility in Adelanto, California.



Andrea and Daniel's collaboration was crucial! Daniel's exceptional work, from client communication to crafting compelling arguments, helped them achieve this outcome.



Daniel reflected: "helping a client obtain bond and be released from immigration detention will remain a highlight of my legal career. Advocating for our client reminded me of why I chose to attend law school: to use the law as a tool to uplift others. Through this process, I learned how to work with staff at the Adelanto detention facility, navigate bond procedures, and structure persuasive arguments. Most importantly, our client will now be reunited with loved ones in the U.S. and continue their path to obtaining legal immigration status."



Thank You to Summer Law Student Interns



"Learning how to explain complicated immigration proceedings to unrepresented individuals has showed me that knowledge truly is power."

Naydin Zepeda, 2L



"Something I will always hold close from this experience is the warm and welcoming environment that is fostered by the wonderful attorneys and staff at Esperanza."

Daniel Caballero, 2L



"I also continue to be in awe of the communities EIRP serves, the wisdom they hold and share, and am honored to work alongside them and uplift their thought leadership throughout and beyond the duration of cases."

Niki Nguyen, 2L



"Although my time here in LOP has been short, I feel as though I've learned so much from the team. I have done individual orientations with clients, helped translate their declarations and I-589 applications, and have even made appearances in court."

Sebastian Lemus, 1L



"I worked on an asylum brief involving complicated, niche issues which required me to implement strong legal research and writing skills. The asylum brief will be used for clients' hearing."

Kimberly Garcia, 2L



"This internship has not only enhanced my legal skills but also reaffirmed my passion for advocating for immigrant rights and social justice."

Hector Sanchez, 1L



Other Ways to Get Involved!



Become a Pro Bono attorney and change a life!

Join our Pro Bono information sessions to learn more about the many opportunities for you to get involved! There are opportunities for all attorneys and levels of immigration experience.

DATE: 1st Thursday of each month, 12:30-1:30 pm

WHERE: Via Zoom, register or email for link!

RSVP: www.esperanza-la.org/get-involved-attorneys

Direct Mentorship

We are committed to guide you, and make you feel comfortable and knowledgeable throughout the entire case.

Resources

Sample documents
Practice tips
Training and Manuals
Interpreters/translators
Malpractice Insurance
...and more!

Strong cases

Our team screen the most vulnerable clients, and identify strong cases for pro bono placement.

BRING HOPE TO THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY BY USING YOUR LEGAL SKILLS!

Questions? Contact Scott Ventrudo sventrudo@esperanza-la.org

NON LEGAL

Volunteer Info Session

SEPTEMBER 11TH

Learn about our programs and available opportunities!

12PM PT VIA ZOOM

Support our cause and make a difference today by donating through PayPal —every contribution helps us continue our important work.

[Click here !](#)



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Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project

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