



Esperanza Newsletter

Spring 2022



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Esperanza Win



Carlos, from El Salvador, entered the U.S. in February of 2015. He fled due to gang threats after his aunt witnessed a murder. Through the work of his Esperanza legal team, he was awarded Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and is currently awaiting his Green Card. Just this month, he also received his work permit. Carlos is a big techie and is currently learning to code.

Dear Esperanza Family,

Spring is finally here. The season often represents a new day, a fresh start, and hope. Our name, Esperanza, offers a message of optimism to our clients, and compels our fearless advocates to keep on serving immigrants in our community. However the dire realities of the day – the unfolding crisis in Ukraine and the ongoing humanitarian disaster at our southern border – require all of us to step up and up once again. In the past two months almost 10,000 undocumented Ukrainians have been processed by U.S. border officials, the U.S. announced it will welcome 100,000 Ukrainian refugees and aims to reduce the immigration court backlog of cases.

These actions and announcement portend what is possible when policy is grounded in the humanity of people, inclusion and potential. These actions also highlight shortcomings in the government's approach. All refugees must be treated with dignity and compassion regardless of national origin, race or religion. All immigrants should have access to justice and due process, no matter the color of their skin and ability to pay. The immigration system needs a drastic overall to better protect the most vulnerable. This FY Esperanza has helped thousands of individuals in fighting for asylum and seeking to avoid deportation from the U.S. Specifically, we are working with 900 clients in removal proceeding, and we have provided legal services to more than 2,000 unaccompanied minors. We remain committed to our clients and providing a source of stability for the community. As always – we are heavily reliant on our family of supporters. For instance, more than 15 cases were placed with pro bono attorneys in the past two months. In the coming weeks and months we will be calling on you to help us continue to support families, children – and yes Ukrainians who may also find themselves entangled in the U.S. immigration court labyrinth. From legal to language support, events and donations, all help is welcome and needed.

Together we will continue to work towards a more just and humane immigration system. Thank you for your solidarity and please support Esperanza today.

Kimberley Plotnik
Program Director



Remote Services

For general inquiries, please call:
(213) 251-3505 or **(213) 534-7594**

For information on how to contact our community education programs to receive assistance, please visit our website at

www.esperanza-la.org

Program Highlight: Pro Bono Program

Interview with Pro Bono Coordinator, Carlos Valdes

Tell us a little bit about yourself and the role you have within the Pro Bono Program.

I am a proud licensed attorney in Mexico (UNAM) and a fully DOJ Accredited Representative in the United States. My journey at Esperanza started in early 2018 as a volunteer with our Immigration Court Helpdesk, and I am currently fortunate to be a Pro Bono Coordinator with our Pro Bono Program, where –among a mighty team– we focus our efforts to find, train and collaborate with volunteers from all backgrounds to serve the immigrant community, especially those facing deportation who otherwise would have to defend themselves against trained government attorneys. As an immigrant myself, I feel incredibly privileged to be able to facilitate pro bono services for other immigrants.

What are some of the challenges the Pro bono Program faces?

Unfortunately, we have an overloaded immigration system where laws are very dynamic and the lifespan of cases may vary from months to a few years, which could be barrier for volunteers with limited time or resources to do pro bono work. We are aware of this and always look for ways to evolve and adapt to encourage volunteerism.

Also, we've seen an increase in the need for pro bono representation in the Greater Los Angeles Area. New policies are limiting the ability for judges to give continuances so individuals have to secure representation fast or proceed unrepresented. Unfortunately, non profit organizations in the area do not have enough to capacity to cover the need. At Esperanza, we work very hard to close this gap by recruiting pro bono attorneys. We try to make sure our volunteers are provided with enough resources, free trainings and direct guidance so they feel comfortable taking on a case.

What are your hopes for the Pro Bono Program moving forward?

In an ideal world, we would love to see a more fair immigration system, where everyone is guaranteed access to counsel and provided with better opportunities to understand and navigate the complex process we have for immigrants coming to the United States – especially for those whose safety and lives depend on a favorable decision to remain here.

Until that happens, I see our Pro Bono Program as an anchor for unrepresented immigrants, and a doorway for volunteers that want to join our efforts and support the immigrant community. I cannot express enough how grateful I am to all of our volunteers that push back, fight and advocate on behalf of their clients inside and outside the courtrooms.



Pro Bono Team: Ingrid Salazar, Capacity Building Coordinator (Left), Heidy Pienda, Director of Pro Bono and Capacity Building (middle), Carlos Valdes, Pro Bono Coordinator (right)

Title 42

Legal Updates

A federal court in Louisiana issued an order temporarily preventing the Biden administration from winding down Title 42, an inhumane public health policy that allows immigration officials to rapidly expel asylum seekers and migrants from the border, leaving them in imminent danger in Mexico.

New Asylum Rule

On March 22, 2022 the US government issued a new asylum rule where asylum officers will have the authority to deny or grant asylum to individuals seeking protection at the U.S.-Mexico border. The accelerated process is of concern as asylum seekers may not have the justice and due process that they deserve.

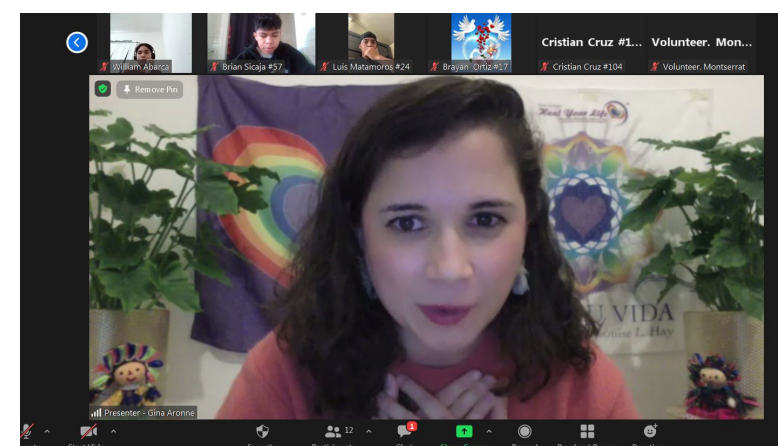
To learn more about these policies visit:

- <https://cgrs.uchastings.edu/news/new-asylum-rule-sacrifices-justice-name-speed>
- <https://welcomewithdignity.org/>
- <https://immigrationimpact.com/2022/04/28/temporarily-halt-title-42-wind-down/?emci=8212c377-c3c7-ec11-997e-281878b83d8a&emdi=cb2d8b72-59c9-ec11-997e-281878b83d8a&ceid=4542605>
- <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/marking-two-years-illegal-inhumane-title-42-expulsions-nearly-10000-violent-attacks>

Latest Happenings

Reyes Magos Event

Since 2016, Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project has organized a 'La Fiesta De Los Reyes Magos' or 'Three Kings Day' Event for Unaccompanied Minors and their families during the holiday season. With a rise in COVID-19 cases at the end of 2021, Esperanza hosted a virtual event this year, on January 8th. The virtual event was packed with fun and educational activities including a Zumba class, Covid-19 information, healthy cooking classes, interactive math strategy activities, self-esteem building activities and more. Esperanza collaborated with community volunteers and the following organizations to provide another wonderful event to Esperanza clients: Clinica Romero, UCLA's Global Health Program, and Julia Robinson's Math on the Border Program. With the generous support of donors Esperanza was able to raffle off gift cards to families and distribute backpacks filled with presents for the children who attended.



Webinar on April 20, did you miss it?

**IMMIGRATION DETENTION IN THE U.S. TODAY-
What Has Changed Since the Death of Martin
Vargas and the Road Ahead**

April 20, 2022 , 1-2pm (PT)



Robyn Barnard,
Senior Advocacy Counsel,
Refugee Protection, Human
Rights First



Margaret Hellerstein
Staff Attorney,
Esperanza Immigrant
Rights Project,
Catholic Charities of
LA, Inc.



Lizbeth Abeln
Deportation Defense
Director, Inland
Coalition for Immigrant
Justice

Recording available here:

<https://youtu.be/uric2GVqDu4>

April was #NationalVolunteerMonth

Every year, Esperanza relies on hundreds of volunteers for interpretation, administrative work, pro bono legal work, fundraising support and more. Thank you to all of our volunteers, for your time, skills, passion and dedication to further Esperanza's mission.

Check out our social media handles for our volunteer shout-outs this past month.



@EsperanzaImmigrantRightsProject



@EsperanzaCCLA

To learn more about how you can volunteer, visit
www.esperanza-la.org/get-involved

"Working on a pro bono asylum case with Esperanza has been one of my most fulfilling experiences. As an educator and attorney, I feel gratified and humbled to be able to help a family seeking safety navigate the labyrinth of our immigration court system. I feel that I have made a real difference."

-Sumangala Bhattacharya, Pro Bono Attorney with Esperanza, and one of the first to take on a family case affected by the very harmful Dedicated Docket policy

Summer Fundraiser is Coming!

This summer we are looking to hold our annual summer fundraiser in-person, mid-July. Stay tuned for more details!

If you are able to donate an item or service for auction, please contact Ingrid Salazar at isalazar@ccharities.org.

Thank you, sustaining donors!

Thank you to all of our monthly donors for your sustaining support!
If you would like to commit your monthly support, of any recurring amount, please visit www.esperanza-la.org/donate



@EsperanzaImmigrantRightsProject



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Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project

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Want to unsubscribe? Contact isalazar@ccharities.org