Esperanza Newsletter
Summer 2021

Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc.

Summer 2021

To our Esperanza family,

We are in the midst of Esperanza's summer fundraising campaign – and in just one week we will close out the month with a virtual-silent-auction on July 30. Now is the time to support immigrant rights! Now is the time to support Esperanza!

Our month-long campaign is raising funds to provide legal services to unaccompanied undocumented children facing deportation. It is unconscionable for these children to have to defend themselves in court – especially given that they are up against a trained government prosecutor, and because the lives of these children are literally at stake. The Biden administration has taken meaningful steps to undo several harmful anti-immigrant laws and policies in recent months, but so much more is needed and without zealous legal representation there is little prospect for success for the most at risk-immigrants. This is why Esperanza's work matters more than ever now. We must be resilient, deeply compassionate, generous and courageous.

Throughout the U.S. history, immigrants have come to the U.S., made a home, and contributed to the richness of our society. Almost 14% of the population are immigrants, and almost a quarter of immigrants in the U.S. live in California. We recognize the immense contribution of immigrants to every sector of society and to our community. We also believe that our clients deserve a chance and have the potential to thrive with our support.

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

Kimberley Plotnik
Program Director

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Recent Win!

After suffering severe persecution at the hands of 18th Street gang members in Honduras, as well as being assaulted by the leader of the gang, Sandy came to the U.S. pregnant, at the age of 14. Here she had the opportunity to meet with an Esperanza attorney. After a long legal battle, applications for asylum and special immigrant juvenile filed, Sandy was finally able to secure Legal Permanent Resident status in the United States in June 2021.

Because of your support, we are able to help wonderful, resilient youth like Sandy find solace and opportunity here in the LA area.

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

Immigration Law Update:

On June 16, 2021, Attorney General Garland issued decisions vacating three decisions that restricted the ability of asylum seekers to obtain protection. Read below for a summary of these decisions and their implications, written by Esperanza Summer Legal Intern, Noah Joseph

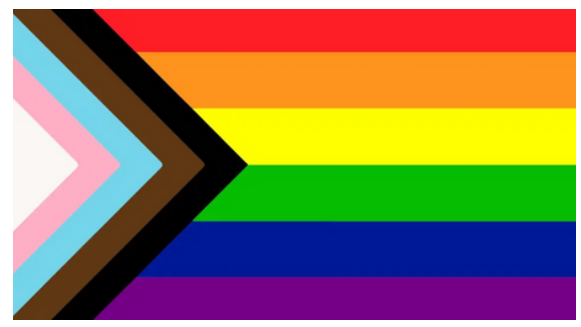
Overview

On June 16, 2021, Attorney General Garland vacated three decisions: Matter of A-B- I, Matter of A-B- II, and Matter of L-E-A- II. All three of these decisions restricted access to asylum in various ways. Matter of A-B- I held that persecution by a private actor is only a basis asylum if the government condoned the persecution and was unable to stop it. Similarly, Matter of A-B- II held that violence or threats from a private actor are not grounds for asylum if the government tried to prevent them. Finally, Matter of L-E-A- II held that most nuclear families do not qualify as particular social groups, so persecution based on membership in a particular nuclear family is not a basis for asylum.

AG's Decision

The attorney general vacated all three of these decisions on June 16, so none of their holdings are valid anymore. The vacatur of Matter of A-B- I and II will make it easier for individuals escaping gender-based violence and gang brutality to be granted asylum, since these are types of persecution by private actors. Likewise, the vacatur of Matter of L-E-A- II will help those who are escaping persecution against their family.

#EsperanzaVoices



Meet Larissa

Larissa is an Esperanza client who we featured on social media for Pride Month this past June. She is a transgender woman who has been a client with Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project since 2014. She just turned 21 and has an asylum case pending based on persecution in her home country, Honduras. She is currently enrolled in university and getting her degree in Sociology. We asked Larissa what Pride month meant to her.

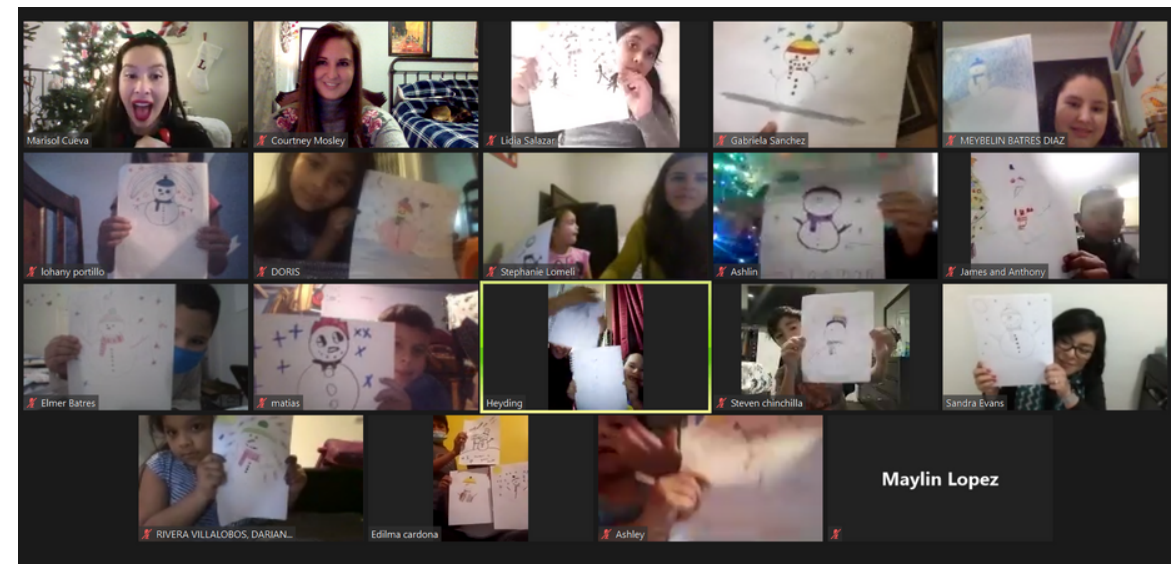
Pride Month means "Celebration for LGBTQ+ people! For me it means celebration, because in the whole world there is a lot of discrimination inflicted on the LGBTQ+ community. In this country, in the United States, the LGBTQ+ community receives more support. There are many programs for the LGBTQ+ community, which is different to most places. For example, there are not as many opportunities. In Honduras, they don't help transgender individuals. For me, this month is liberating."

To read mroe of Larissa's interview, visit: www.esperanza-la.org/voices/Larissa

A Story from the Field

Esperanza's Resources Coordinator, Courtney Mosley, writes about her years-long experience working with unaccompanied children.

I have been working with unaccompanied children for a few years, previously as a clinician in an Unaccompanied Children Shelter, and currently as Resource Coordinator post-release. What I have seen these past few years is that this population is outstandingly resilient. The pandemic and the inhumane Remain in Mexico policy (MPP) has only reinforced that truth.



Courtney, second from the top-left, leading a virtual activity workshop for unaccompanied children.

The Remain in Mexico policy put these children and their families in very vulnerable positions where some had been kidnapped and held for ransom., as well as threatened/harmed by local gang members near the border, oftentimes the exact reason they left their home country, to begin with. Some parents had to make the impossible decision of allowing their children to enter the U.S. without them. I have heard their stories of separating from their parents, the fear and trauma manifesting into nightmares and tears as well as thoughts of "will I ever see my mother again?". The pandemic only added to that stress. Families began to lose work, struggled to pay for rent and groceries, and were more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 than any other population.

From a very early age, these children are on high alert and their bodies are consistently in survival mode. The stress response is triggered and their bodies prepare for danger, releasing stress hormones such as cortisol. The journey to the United States, camps at the border, MPP, detention, and a global pandemic are all triggering that stress response. Living in an elongated state of fear and stress can affect a child's development, so it is important that after reunifying with family in the United States that they have a stable environment where they feel safe and protected.

We are not quite through the pandemic yet, and families are still struggling to recuperate. Not having stable housing and income is stressful for everyone in the household. Doing our part to ensure those who need resources have access to them is crucial. We can all do something to help our community heal and move forward. It takes a village to rebuild after tragedy.

I have had conversations with children who have endured these traumas and I have seen them come out on the other side stronger and more resilient than ever. Having a traumatic past or present does not define your future and these children have shown that to be true. They are more focused and passionate about their future than any other population I have worked with, despite the adversity they have faced. I am absolutely blown away by the drive and resilience that these children demonstrate and I am proud to be a resource and a witness of their journey.

Children who celebrated during our annual Reyes Magos Event for Unaccompanied Childrean

Esperanza's Summer of 2021 Fundraiser is Here!

What is it For?

Our month long campaign is seeking to raise funds to provide legal services to unaccompanied refugee children in the LA area. These children should not have to defend themselves in court when their lives and futures are at stake. They need attorneys to defend them – and with your help many of these children will become Esperanza's clients.

Here's how you can be a part of this fundraiser and help make it a success ....

Virtual Silent Auction!

Opens: Monday, July 26th @9am
Closes: Friday, July 30th @7pm

Bid on amazing items - trips, art, sports tickets, and an array of Latinx artisan goods.

To preview our auction, visit:
www.32auctions.com/Esperanza2021

For info on how to make a bid once the auction opens, visit:
www.esperanza-la.org/summer2021

Virtual Live Event!

When?
Friday, July 30th @6pm
Where?
From the comfort of your home! We will be streaming via Zoom and Facebook live. Links will be sent out and posted on this page and on social media the week of the event.
What?
Join us as we enjoy music from DEEJAY Kaboom (@therealdjkaboom), hear from our program director, a client testimonial and key note speaker - award winning journalist and documentary filmmaker -John Carlos Frey.

Make a Donation

Give a tax-deductible gift of any amount
www.esperanza-la.org/donate

Spread the Word

Repost us on Social Media, tell your networks about our fundraiser!

Special Volunteer Opportunities!

Esperanza has many opportunities for pro bono attorneys and for those looking for fall internships. Esperanza is also organizing a **Welcome Day for Unaccompanied Children on September 25th**. We need volunteers to help plan the event and to help with outreach.

Interested or have questions? Contact Ingrid Salazar at isalazar@ccharities.org