

ESPERANZA NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025



Dear Esperanza Community,

This year has been a difficult one for Esperanza and immigrants in Los Angeles, as we witnessed widespread immigration raids and detentions, and the incessant attacks on due process. Attaining justice for our clients became more challenging and cumbersome.

However, this year also taught us the importance of resiliency and community. After receiving federal funding cuts in the Spring, our team had to pivot quickly to continue services and engage in new legal strategies. Our case management team was integral in ensuring clients had their basic needs met and emotional support during periods of heightened fear.

Despite the challenges, we provided over **16,500** services to over **6,000** immigrants in Southern California. We are thankful for the unwavering support we have received from our funders, volunteers, including the pro bono community, interns, and most importantly, our staff, for making our work possible.

Program Director
Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project,
a program of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc.



Kimberley Plotnik
Esperanza Program Director



Meet Our Volunteer

EVE SYMINGTON

I am a filmmaker working on narrative and commercial projects in Los Angeles and around the world. In my work, I explore cross-cultural connections and dramatize unique stories to find common humanity. I first approached Esperanza almost ten years ago while I was researching for a narrative screenplay about a young woman trying to navigate the complicated – often bewildering – immigration system. I quickly connected with some of Esperanza's incredible staff and in exchange for answering my many (many!) questions and court visits, I offered to create a promotional video for the organization. Making the first video for Esperanza was an eye-opening experience; the staff is tireless, compassionate, and infectious as they serve their resilient and inspiring clients. I couldn't get enough of the place!

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I've worked with the Esperanza staff on various media projects over the years, and I was so pleased to create a new, updated video for the organization this year. In telling Esperanza's story in a video format, I'm able to highlight the voices of both staff and clients who make this organization so special. I aim to convey the same kind of magical energy I feel whenever I'm in the Esperanza orbit and remind viewers that empathy and diversity are what make us strong.



BENNETT MOORE

Esperanza Volunteer

A feeling of helplessness was setting in by the spring of 2025, just a few short months into Trump's regime. Particularly disturbing to me was seeing the way ICE had been unleashed on a group of people who are frequently guilty of nothing more serious than a misdemeanor, but nonetheless being thrown away to rot and denied due process, treated more inhumanely than child traffickers or war criminals. Being denied food and water. Living in soiled clothes. Being lied to and tricked, sometimes into signing deportation consent documents and shipped off without even having a translator or lawyer present to have them know what they are signing. It's downright disgusting that so many Americans are ok with treating fellow human beings this way.

But I'm preaching to the choir. I was looking for opportunities to devote time and energy where there could be a real impact, in the face of such helplessness and I came across Esperanza. What drew me to Esperanza is my interest in the legal system and the practicality of the service they provide. Everyone who runs afoul of the legal system deserves a lawyer and deserves to understand what they are facing, regardless of what language they speak or what imaginary border line they crossed. And Esperanza gives the undocumented community these basic but critical tools, for free.

I came to Los Angeles from the East Coast to make movies and narrative TV, but instead my career pulled me away from that and into issue-driven stories. Trump's first election in 2016 and in particular his racist comments about Latinos is what awakened me politically, radicalized me against the status quo and against the right wing in particular. The core of my style is underpinned by the goal of distilling and communicating the most emotional and parts of a given topic to the audience, and presenting them with a call to action. My experience with this started at a company called ATTN:, which used to produce viral stories with a documentary bent covering important topics like the environment, healthcare, criminal justice reform, and immigration. When I left ATTN: in 2019 to start my company West Ghost, I didn't know exactly what kind of clients I would be looking for, and I found myself more drawn to documentary projects that were planned and executed with a goal or result in mind.

For the Esperanza videos, the idea was to communicate how valuable the work was, both for the volunteer and the person they were helping. The idea that another lawyer, or a prospective interpreter, might see the videos and finally get the push they needed to decide to volunteer their time and resources was what compelled me throughout the project, and I hope that the goal has been realized.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to help people in such a direct way, by making videos that inspire those with legal and interpretation skills to put those skills to use in a meaningful way. I'm also grateful for my parents who put me in a Spanish immersion school as a kid, with diverse classmates.



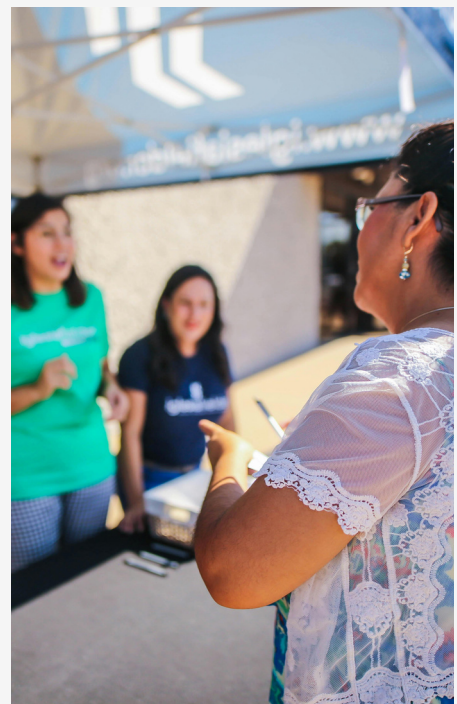
Esperanza's **MOBILE IMMIGRANT SERVICES PROGRAM**

2025 marked the successful launch of the Mobile Immigrant Services Program (MISP), a collaborative initiative led by Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, Amanecer Community Counseling, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice with the support of the Los Angeles Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) and the Center for Nonprofit Management (CNM).

MISP was created to address critical gaps in access to immigration legal services for individuals across Los Angeles County who are experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

What distinguishes MISP is its mobile service model. Rather than requiring participants to travel to fixed locations, MISP meets individuals where they are—at shelters and other trusted community spaces. This approach proved especially vital in 2025, as increased raids and enforcement activities heightened fear within the immigrant community.

In its first year, MISP delivered a range of pro se services: including individual immigration consultations, assistance with the preparation of immigration applications (e.g., asylum and employment authorization applications), Know Your Rights (KYR) presentations for community members, and Immigration 101 trainings for community-based organizations and service providers across LA county. In its first year, the program was able to provide almost 400 legal consultations to detained and non-detained individuals, deliver 22 KYRs and 18 Immigration 101 presentations to over 1,000 service providers and attend 21 community outreach events. Additionally, the program was instrumental in co-developing a comprehensive 39-page resource guide, which includes immigration information and information on tenant rights and resources.



Community Education

Helping Where it Matters Most



In 2025, Esperanza's community education programs went through significant challenges, including funding cuts and consequential legal changes. Nevertheless, our CE team persevered and continued to provide the critical services needed by our community.

Those facing cases in immigration court alone, as well as those looking to determine their legal options, can access our services by registering online or attending our walk-in days. Our team ensures that program participants receive accurate information about their legal options and rights, and the latest updates in immigration. By educating our participants, Esperanza hopes to empower them to make important decisions in their cases during these difficult times.

Since our funding cuts in Spring 2025, our program has guided over 700 unrepresented individuals through the complex immigration process and assisted over 300 with various important services, including asylum application preparation and court motions. We are extremely proud of the work we completed this year and will strive to continue being a trustworthy resource for our immigrant community in the new year and beyond.



NON-LEGAL VOLUNTEER INFO SESSIONS

Via
Zoom

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9TH
AT
12:30 PM PT

Looking for Translators and Interpreters!



Non-Legal Volunteers

Esperanza Immigration Rights Project

IS NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS:



LEARN ABOUT WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH ESPERANZA
AS A NON-LEGAL VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORT OUR WORK!

Questions? Contact **Liza Thoms** at
LThoms@esperanza-la.org

More Information

WWW.ESPERANZA-LA.ORG/GET-INVOLVED



PRO BONO VOLUNTEER INFO SESSIONS

Via
Zoom

EVERY FIRST THURSDAY
OF THE MONTH!
12:30 - 1:30 PM PT

Become a Legal Volunteer and change a life!



Pro-Bono Volunteers

Esperanza Immigration Rights Project

IS NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS:



USE YOUR LEGAL SKILLS AND HELP US CHANGE THE LIFE OF
AN IMMIGRANT FACING DEPORTATION!

Questions? Contact **Scott Ventrudo** at
Sventrudo@esperanza-la.org

More Information

WWW.ESPERANZA-LA.ORG/GET-INVOLVED