



Esperanza Newsletter

Spring 2024



Dear Esperanza Community,

Every day, you are instrumental in reshaping lives, providing safety for families, fostering joy for children, and amplifying the voices of those on the fringes of our society. Your involvement in the Esperanza family is nothing short of transformative, and I am continually inspired by the collective strength and the individual triumphs that define us.

Reflecting on the FY23-24, I am struck by what we have managed to achieve despite the odds. In the last year, Esperanza provided free legal representation to over 800 clients at risk of deportation from the United States, and we provided community education services to over 9,000 immigrants in deportation proceedings. We joined the Los Angeles Welcomes Collective, a network of immigrant rights legal services providers, and faith organizations, to assist migrants bused to the region. We also expanded our Opportunities for Youth Program, to provide rapid response services to meet urgent and critical needs for unaccompanied children facing deportation and their families. In May we launch a new representation program for children, and host the biggest Unaccompanied Minors Welcome Fair to date, to provide holistic support to unaccompanied minors, and send a resounding message to the community that Esperanza welcomes immigrants, and the community can depend on Esperanza.

Together, we are making a change, one life at a time. I thank you for continuing to stand alongside us. Whether through legal aid, language support, participation in events, or generous donations, every contribution makes a tangible difference. Together, we are agents of change, working tirelessly to build a more equitable and humane immigration system.

Warm regards,

Kimberley Plotnik

Kimberley Plotnik
Program Director



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Client Success Stories



P first arrived in the U.S when he was only 11, fleeing the Sandinistas regime in Nicaragua. Around 1997, P was wrongfully convicted for a crime he did not commit, and he was sentenced to 27 years. It was not until 2023, that the criminal court found that the conviction was legally invalid and that he should have only served approximately 5 years for the crime. P had already served 27 years and was set to be released from prison when ICE showed up to apprehend him on the day of his scheduled release. ICE incarcerated him once more, but this time, in immigration detention. P was in immigration detention for 6 months, but an Esperanza staff attorney was able to represent him in his bond hearing thanks to a referral from the Legal Orientation Program. His attorney was able to prove to the court that P was a changed man who had unjustly served more than enough time for the mistakes he made in his youth. P has since been released and continues to fight his immigration case while being reunited with his loved ones.

M and her daughter have been with Esperanza since 2013. Esperanza represented them both in M's U Visa, their U Visa Extension, and now their Adjustment of Status (AOS). M's daughter's AOS was approved in January and M's was just approved in March! M is so happy and is planning to visit her hometown in Mexico this month. She hasn't been able to return in over 20 years!



K, her husband and their two young children fled Nicaragua in the summer of 2021 after K received a notice to appear in court from the authoritarian government. Both K and her husband knew that they could no longer live in Nicaragua for fear of being arrested, detained, and disappeared like many other anti-government activists had been. In early 2024, K and her husband appeared in court with pro bono counsel Joanna Mexicano Furmanska. The judge commended the filing as especially comprehensive and limited the testimony he sought to just one issue: clarifying the persecution the family had suffered and would likely suffer upon their return. He found that they had a well-founded reasonable fear of persecution based on their political opinion given the continued risk to anti-government protesters in Nicaragua. After just about ten minutes of testimony, the judge granted the family of four asylum!



Learn
about!

Welcome Fair for Unaccompanied Minors

What is the Welcome Fair?

Throughout the year, the OFY team hosts events that are geared towards supporting community-building amongst youth and their sponsors and family. One of these events is the Unaccompanied Minors Welcome Fair that will be held on Saturday, May 25th at the Los Angeles City College (LACC) from 9 am – 4 pm. The Welcome Fair will include a resource fair, legal consultations, legal orientations, art activities, food and entertainment.

More about OFY

Opportunities for Youth Program (OFY) provides holistic services for unaccompanied refugee children. Case management, program navigation, and youth mentoring/coaching are offered to recently arrived unaccompanied minors to support them in their transition to living in a new country. OFY focuses on serving the whole child, on fostering their wellbeing, community integration, and one-on-one support in navigating systems to break down barriers youth may experience in accessing education and mental health services, to name a few. One of the unique aspects of OFY is the support that mentorship provides which includes English and math tutoring and “funshops” which create a safe space for unaccompanied minors to socialize with one another.



The OFY team at the
December donation event

Help
out!

Volunteers Needed May 25th!

ESPERANZA
IMMIGRANT RIGHTS PROJECT



Help Welcome Unaccompanied Minors with Esperanza!

We need volunteers to help us on the day of the event!
Volunteer roles can include set up, registration,
attendee assistance, breakdown and more.

To register as a volunteer please go to this link:
<https://forms.gle/7ABHnvYBzfAcyLLPA>

Questions? Email LThoms@esperanza-la.org

Other Ways to Get Involved!

For attorneys

ESPERANZA IMMIGRANT RIGHTS PROJECT 

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY
INTRODUCTION TO SIJS
Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

THIS LEGAL TRAINING WILL INCLUDE: ++
• An overview of Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.
• The process in California state courts.
• The requirements for immigration relief.

Steven Shafer
Senior Managing Attorney 

WHEN: June 5th 5:00-6:30 PM
REGISTRATION:
https://us06web.zoom.us/join/register/WN_wlxXJAo6S4WfcfZnW4KJhg

 **1.5 hours of CA MCLE provided**
Any questions?
Please contact Sventrudo@esperanza-la.org

 **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

For non legal volunteers

NON LEGAL

Volunteer Info Session

 **JUNE 12TH**

Looking for translators and interpreters!

12PM PT  **VIA ZOOM**

**SIJS Online Training
June 5th!**

**Pro Bono
Info Session!**

**Interpreters and Translators
Needed!
Join us June 12th!**

-Esperanza Staff Wellness Day-



Esperanza staff gathered together in beautiful Elysian Park for a community wellness day. Our team got the chance to connect outside the office/online, make vision boards, eat together and be led in mindful movement and breathwork.

Thank you to the organizers of the event and our guest teacher, Esperanza volunteer Joana Allis, for a day to care for ourselves so that we can continue this important work!



@EsperanzaImmigrantRightsProject



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Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project

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