

SPEAKERS

Estrellita Alvarado

Safe Repatriation Manager,
Maya K'che' Manager,
Safe Repatriation Project,
Young Center

Estrellita collaborates with domestic and international partners to support best interests advocacy for unaccompanied youth. Before joining the Young Center in 2017, Estrellita served as a Clinician providing trauma-informed mental health services for unaccompanied immigrant children. Estrellita has nine years of experience in direct services assessing for abuse and human trafficking, facilitation in individual and group counseling, and crisis intervention. She received a Master of Science in Social Work with a minor in International Social Welfare and Services to Immigrants and Refugees from Columbia University's School of Social Work. Estrellita graduated from Arizona State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, a Bachelor of Science in Family and Human Development, and a minor in Communication. She has experience working with historically marginalized youth, undocumented survivors of domestic violence, and immigrant families. Estrellita is passionate and committed to social justice and is honored to work alongside immigrants and Maya indigenous families.

Esther Araya

Staff Attorney,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Esther is a Staff Attorney on the Family Separation Response Team at KIND. Her work includes direct representation of children who were separated from their parents at the border and overseeing KIND's work under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) to hold the government accountable for the harms of family separation. Esther graduated from Yale Law School in 2020 and began her work at KIND as a Skadden Fellow. She is based in Washington, DC.

Reta Arbusto

Staff Attorney,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Reta is a Staff Attorney in KIND's Northern Virginia office. Prior to joining KIND in 2021, Reta spent nearly eight years at Legal Services of Central New York where she launched an Immigrant Rights Project focused on adult immigrants with disabilities and migrant children. Reta earned her J.D. from Syracuse University College of Law in 2013 and her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Washington.

Katie Annand

Managing Attorney,
Immigrant Legal Defense (ILD)

Katie is a managing attorney with Immigrant Legal Defense (ILD) in Oakland, California. Katie represents unaccompanied children and youth in removal proceedings, primarily through a partnership with Oakland Unified School District. Prior to joining ILD, Katie opened the San Francisco field office and Fresno offices of Kids in Need of Defense. Katie has extensive experience training legal advocates on representing unaccompanied children and youth, integrating a trauma-informed lens and cultural responsiveness, and direct experience working with young people. Katie opened and ran a solo practice in San Francisco, California, where she led regional efforts to advance Special Immigrant Juvenile Status protections for children and youth. Katie also worked with the Immigration Center for Women and Children and as an associate with Reed Smith, LLP. Katie is a graduate of University of California, Hastings College of Law, and Wesleyan University and is licensed to practice law in the state of California. She is fluent in English and Spanish.

Ana Moraga Archila

Supervising Attorney,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Ana is a Supervising Attorney at KIND's San Francisco Office. Ana's interest in the law was awakened through her experience as co-founder of the organization MuJER- Mujeres por la Justicia, Educación y el Reconocimiento (Women for Justice, Education and Awareness). Ana served as MuJER's Executive Director for five years where she developed spaces of personal and political empowerment with Central American women sex workers and advocated for policies to end violence against women in Guatemala. Prior to KIND, Ana represented unaccompanied minors and detained community members with Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project.

Ana's work is sustained by the love of her wife and family, in addition to her practice in the Afro-Brazilian martial art of Capoeira. Ana received her J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law.

Biridiana Ballesteros

Senior UC Specialist,
ProBAR

Biridiana is a Senior UC Specialist with ProBAR's shelter services department. Biridiana received a B.S. degree in Rehabilitation Services from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Ms. Ballesteros is a Senior Unaccompanied Children Legal Services Specialist with the South Texas ProBono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR), a project of the American Bar Association, Commission on Immigration that provides legal services to immigrants and asylum seekers in South Texas. Ms. Ballesteros joined ProBAR in 2019 and has over ten years of experience working with children. In her position, Ms. Ballesteros serves as a mentor and guide for staff. Ms. Ballesteros also provides legal orientations and legal screenings to children ages 0-17 years old. Ms. Ballesteros has experience working at a behavioral center teaching children behavior skills and educational skills as an instructor at a University.

SPEAKERS

Karen Baker

Legal Associate,
U.S. Protection & Solutions Unit,
UNHCR

Karen Baker is a Legal Associate in the U.S. Protection & Solutions Unit of the UNHCR Multi-Country Office in Washington, D.C. Her work focuses on refugee protection in law and policy. Prior to joining UNHCR, Karen spent five years representing asylum seekers as a Senior Attorney at Kids in Need of Defense, a Clinical Teaching Fellow & Supervising Attorney at the Center for Applied Legal Studies (asylum clinic) at Georgetown University Law Center, and a Staff Attorney at the Asylum and Human Trafficking Clinic at South Texas College of Law. Before law school, she worked on community development initiatives in Guatemala for Manna Project International. Karen received a J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law, an LL.M. in advocacy from Georgetown University Law Center, and an M.P.H. with Certificate in Humanitarian Studies, Ethics, and Human Rights from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She earned a B.A. in Latin American Studies from Vanderbilt University.

Jonathan Barrales

Program Director,
Detained Youth Empowerment Program (DYEP),
Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef)

Jonathan is the Program Director for the Detained Youth Empowerment Program (DYEP) at Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef). As the son of previously undocumented immigrants, Jonathan has dedicated his career to serving the undocumented community, with a special passion to do so through art and education. For the last 7 years, he has been focused on working specifically with Unaccompanied Children (UC). He was one of the first members of the DYEP team, and from his time as an associate through his growth to management, he has been instrumental in growing this unique team, both by improving the quality of services they provide and in expanding their capacity to serve an increasing number of children. Jonathan played a crucial role in leading ImmDef's team during 2021, as they navigated the opening of several Emergency Intake Sites in Southern California.

Scott Bassett

Senior Attorney,
Detained Children's Program,
CAIR Coalition

Biridiana is a Senior UC Specialist with ProBAR's shelter services department. Biridiana received a B.S. degree in Rehabilitation Services from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Ms. Ballesteros is a Senior Unaccompanied Children Legal Services Specialists with the South Texas ProBono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR), a project of the American Bar Association, Commission on Immigration that provides legal services to immigrants and asylum seekers in South Texas. Ms. Ballesteros joined ProBAR in 2019 and has over ten years of experience working with children. In her position, Ms. Ballesteros serves as a mentor and guide for staff. Ms. Ballesteros also provides legal orientations and legal screenings to children ages 0-17 years old. Ms. Ballesteros has experience working at a behavioral center teaching children behavior skills and educational skills as an instructor at a University.

Tami Benchoam Rogers

Social Worker,
Young Center

Tami is a social worker for the Washington, DC office of the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights. Previously, Tami worked at a local non-profit in DC conducting home visits and parent groups with families who have young children. Tami obtained her Master's degree from Tulane University School of Social Work with a certificate in Global Social Work. During her degree training, Tami interned in Pretoria, South Africa working on a research project to highlight the difficulties experienced by refugees and asylum seekers; and in the United States she worked as a case manager for victims of trafficking. Tami's passion for social justice and working with the immigrant population comes from her mother, who came to the United States as a refugee.

Zachary Bleckner

Staff Attorney,
Released Children's Program,
RAICES

Zachary is a Staff Attorney in the Released Children's Program at RAICES-Austin. Before joining RAICES, he clerked for the Honorable Juan R. Torruella on the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. Zachary has extensive human rights advocacy experience across the Americas as well as a background in theater and education. He received his J.D. from Stanford Law School and his B.A. in Comparative Literature from Brown University. Outside of lawyering, he loves learning languages and training dogs.

Matthew Brill-Carlat

Detained Team Paralegal,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Matthew is a Detained Team Paralegal at KIND's New York City office. He and his colleagues provide Know Your Rights presentations and legal screenings to children at a temporary foster care ORR shelter. The team advocates on behalf of detained children and pursues immigration relief for children released from the shelter and living in New York City. Prior to joining KIND, he worked to develop university-level curricula on forced migration and displacement at a Mellon Foundation-funded consortium of colleges and is an editor of a forthcoming collection of essays on forced migration and higher education. Matthew was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland.

SPEAKERS

Sarah Bryan

Managing Attorney,
RAICES

Sarah Bryan is the Managing Attorney of the RAICES Houston office. She has been practicing immigration law at nonprofit organizations for over 10 years. Sarah has focused her career on representing immigrant survivors of crime in their path to seeking stability post victimization. She has also provided direct representation and extensive supervision in the areas of asylum, family-based petitions, naturalization, and other affirmative immigration processes. Sarah earned her J.D. from the University of Georgia School of Law and her B.S. from Vanderbilt University.

Dalia Castillo-Granados

Co-Founder and Director,
Children's Immigration Law Academy (CILA)

Dalia (she/her) is the co-founder and director of the Children's Immigration Law Academy (CILA), a project of the American Bar Association Commission on Immigration. CILA is a capacity-building organization that supports advocates representing unaccompanied children in their immigration proceedings through trainings, technical assistance, resources, and collaboration. Prior to working at CILA, Dalia was a Senior Attorney at Kids in Need of Defense, a Staff Attorney at Tahirih Justice Center, a Clinical Supervising Attorney at the University of Houston's Immigration Clinic, and began her public interest career as a Greenberg Traurig, LLP Equal Justice Works Fellow with Catholic Charities' Cabrini Center in Houston.

Andres Cervantes

Senior UC Specialist,
ProBAR

Andres is a Senior Unaccompanied Children Specialist at ProBAR. He has worked at ProBAR for over three years. During this time, he has daily interactions with unaccompanied children that arrive at the Mexico-United States border. During these interactions, he has provided children with Know Your Rights Presentations, Legal Screenings, Age Out Talks, Pregnant & Parenting talks, completed Sponsor Intakes, and other needed services provided by the organization. Currently, he provides these services to children aged five to seventeen. While at ProBAR he has continued to learn and develop himself to better provide services to the population served. Andres holds a Bachelor's Degree in Spanish, followed by a Master's Degree in Public Affairs. Andres believes that providing children with high quality services will positively impact their life.

Karen Noemi Coronado Martinez

Supervising UC Specialist,
ProBAR

Karen has a dual Master's degree in Child & Teen Psychology and Emotional Intelligence Coaching in Youth from Esneca Business school as well as a Bachelor's in Rehabilitation Services with a concentration in Deaf population from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. She joined ProBAR in September 2018, where her work with unaccompanied children began. During her time at ProBAR, she has worked with teen populations in providing "Know Your Rights" presentations and legal screenings. She has also provided trainings focusing on the conduction of services for youth with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community. She has served as Shelter Coordinator for facilities with pregnant and parenting children varying from 0-17 years old. Currently, Karen is a Supervising UC Specialist where she provides guidance, training, and support to UC specialists conducting direct services to unaccompanied children.

Margot Dankner

Policy Analyst,
Office of Policy & Strategy,
Humanitarian Affairs Division, USCIS

Margot is a Policy Analyst in the Office of Policy & Strategy where she serves as a subject matter expert on humanitarian immigration benefits, with a focus on Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) classification and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Prior to joining USCIS, she worked in the non-profit sector as an attorney specializing in juvenile and humanitarian immigration law, including as an Equal Justice Works Fellow representing noncitizen child survivors of sexual abuse. She holds a BA from Washington University in St. Louis and a JD from the Georgetown University Law Center.

Rachel Leya Davidson

Co-founder,
End SIJS Backlog Coalition

Rachel (she/her) is the co-founder of the End SIJS Backlog Coalition and a Visiting Scholar at Tulane University School of Law where her research focuses on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, legal violence, and youth participation. She is an immigration attorney licensed in New York, with expertise in participatory action research and community organizing. She represented youth in humanitarian immigration matters and spearheaded the creation of the policy department at The Door, where the End SIJS Backlog Coalition had its first home. The Coalition is a national group of directly impacted youth and over 70 allied advocate organizations, working to educate Congress, relevant administrative agencies and the public about the harmful impacts of visa caps on immigrant children, and to advocate for an end to the SIJS backlog.

SPEAKERS

Neha Desai

Senior Director of Immigration,
National Center for Youth Law (NCYL)

Neha is the Senior Director of Immigration at the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL). Desai leads NCYL's work on behalf of immigrant children, which includes federal litigation and policy. For over 15 years, she has been working with youth in government custody including children in federal immigration custody and children in state child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Desai began her legal career at the Juvenile Law Center where she served as a member of the team litigating the infamous "Kids for Cash" scandal. She has worked abroad at NGOs focused on the human rights of women and children and domestically with organizations serving immigrants and refugees. Desai has testified in the California legislature, briefed members of Congress and appeared in multiple media outlets. She received her law degree from Berkeley School of Law and her undergraduate degree from the University of Chicago.

Nathaniel Dunstan

Program Manager,
Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)

Nathaniel oversees the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Refugee and Asylee Program, providing support to newcomer students and families in OUSD for the past 10 years. Prior to joining OUSD, Nate managed a homeless family shelter in San Francisco and worked for the International Rescue Committee in Oakland, Thailand and Malaysia. Nate has an M.A. in International Relations from San Francisco State University and a MSc in Forced Migration from the University of Oxford.

Hannah Eash-Gates

Staff Attorney,
Released Children's Program,
RAICES

Hannah is a Staff Attorney with the Released Children's Program at RAICES-San Antonio. She was inspired to go to law school by her work at RAICES starting as a volunteer in 2008, and subsequent role representing detained children as a BIA Accredited Representative. She returned to RAICES after gaining her J.D. at Northeastern University as a Public Interest Law Scholar. Hannah has years of experience working with detained and released children, as well as experience with refugee and asylum law both domestically and internationally. She loves hiking, board games, and chasing her three toddlers.

Laura Egan

Managing Attorney,
Pro Bono & Communications,
ABA's Children's Immigration Law Academy (CILA)

Laura is the Managing Attorney for Pro Bono & Communications with the ABA's Children's Immigration Law Academy (CILA). She graduated from The Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law in Washington, DC in 2011. She obtained a certificate in Comparative and International Law and participated in the International Business and Trade program in Krakow, Poland and interned in a Human Rights clinic while in Krakow. Laura became passionate about immigration law during law school when she participated in her school's Columbus Community Legal Services Families and the Law Clinic and worked with refugees and asylees while interning with International Rescue Committee's immigration program. Laura started her legal career as a disability attorney with Russell & Hill in Everett, Washington representing hundreds of clients in administrative hearings in Washington, Oregon, and California. Prior to joining CILA, Laura worked in removal defense for Carney and Marchi, an immigration law and criminal defense law firm in Seattle, Washington, where she managed the non-detained docket.

Natalia Eisenstadt

Legal Assistant
Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR)
Coalition

Natalia is a legal assistant at Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition who graduated from Tulane University with a bachelor's degree in psychology. Prior to her work at CAIR Coalition she worked with Prison of Peace, a non-profit which empowers people who are incarcerated to become mediators, and CASA, a grass roots immigrants' association in the Mid-Atlantic region. She has been at CAIR Coalition since 2021, and while there has primarily worked with a Temporary Foster Care (TFC) shelter program giving Know Your Rights presentations to a diverse group of children.

Azadeh Erfani

Senior Policy Analyst,
National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)

Azadeh works for NIJC's D.C.-based Policy team. Azadeh previously led impact litigation on racial justice and immigrants' rights at the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban affairs. Prior to that position, Azadeh was a Managing Attorney at the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition, defending detained children and youth in secure ORR custody from deportation. Azadeh leads NIJC's response to regulatory attacks, asylum, and immigrant children and youths' rights. Azadeh holds a B.A. from Bryn Mawr College, an M.A. from DePaul University, and a J.D. from Villanova University; she is licensed in Virginia and the District of Columbia.

SPEAKERS

Cruz Espitia

Staff Attorney,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Cruz is a Staff Attorney in the Detained Program at KIND's Atlanta Office. He joined KIND in January of 2022. As part of the Detained Program, he works alongside other attorneys, paralegals, and social service coordinators to provide legal and social services to unaccompanied immigrant children. Prior to joining KIND, he graduated from the College of Law at Georgia State University where he was a Student Attorney at the Immigration Clinic. Growing up as the child of Mexican immigrants, Cruz has long been personally invested in helping the immigrant community thrive in the U.S.

Hannah Feldman

Staff Attorney,
Bet Tzedek Legal Services (Bet Tzedek)

Hannah is the LAUSD Kinship Care Attorney at Bet Tzedek Legal Services in Los Angeles, California. Hannah facilitates an educational-legal partnership between Los Angeles Unified School District and Bet Tzedek's Kinship Care team, which represents unaccompanied minors in state court guardianship proceedings and in immigration matters. The partnership allows Bet Tzedek to conduct outreach and education, assess students' legal needs, retain students and families, and meet with student-clients on campus. Hannah joined Bet Tzedek in 2021 as a Berkeley Law Public Interest Fellow to launch the partnership, which grew out of a Los Angeles Times op-ed by Bet Tzedek CEO and President Diego Cartagena and LAUSD School Board Member Nick Melvoin.

Cynthia Felix

Managing Attorney,
Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef)

Cynthia is a Managing Attorney in ImmDef's Children's Representation Project. She joined ImmDef in 2017 and has also represented detained adults through ImmDef's Santa Ana SAFE cities Universal Representation program and Franco class members through the National Qualified Representative Program. Her work has focused on removal defense for the most vulnerable detained immigrant populations. She currently supervises ImmDef's work on behalf of children in short-term ORR custody. Cynthia is the grandchild of Mexican Immigrants and several of her family members have faced deportation. She is a fearless advocate and draws on her personal experience to fight for her clients and against injustices in the immigration system.

Mariah Ferraz

Supervising Attorney,
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP)

Mariah has served as an attorney with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) for five years. In her current role as a supervising attorney with the Tacoma office, she represents immigrant youth in state guardianship and custody actions as well as before the immigration court and US Citizenship and Immigration Services. Ms. Ferraz also serves as the pro bono coordinator for attorneys representing youth in state court proceedings in Southwest Washington. Ms. Ferraz graduated from the University of Washington Law School and is a member of the Washington State Bar.

Michelangelo Fleury

Shelter Services Coordinator,
ProBAR

Michelangelo has a Bachelor's in Iberian and Ibero-American Literature and History from the University of Bordeaux, France. He joined ProBAR in August 2016 as a UC legal service specialist. He has worked with Tender age populations to provide them with "Know Your Rights" presentations and Individual legal screenings. He has served as a Shelter Services Coordinator with children ages 0 to 17 years old, pregnant and parenting, and aging-out children.

Rebekah Fletcher

Director of Legal Training,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Rebekah is a Director of Legal Training with Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) and develops staff training programs and provides case-by-case legal technical assistance to field office staff and pro bono attorneys. In 2021 Rebekah served as KIND's Acting Director of Emergency Response Programs to oversee its program to provide legal services to children at five of ORR's Emergency Intake Sites in California and Texas. Rebekah has worked in children's immigration law since 2008, beginning with KIND's predecessor organization Volunteer Advocates for Immigrant Justice where she helped build its legal services program for detained unaccompanied children in Washington State. In 2016 she taught with the University of Washington School of Law's Children and Youth Advocacy Clinic and consulted with UNHCR to monitor ORR's national program for the custody of unaccompanied children. Rebekah is a 2007 graduate of the City U. of New York School of Law.

SPEAKERS

Alondra Flores

UC Specialist,
ProBAR

Alondra is a UC Specialist at ProBAR who works for the shelter services department. She has worked at ProBAR for more than a year and has experience working with teens and tender age children. Alondra helps others with teen KYRs and screenings within their trainings and is currently also part of the training services for preverbal children.

Noe Flores

Shelter Services Coordinator,
ProBAR

Noe is a Shelter Services Coordinator and has been working at ABA ProBAR for nearly 4 years. Previously, Noe worked for 2 years at a local Office Refugee Resettlement (ORR) facility where he worked with children ages 8-17. He held positions as direct care worker, teacher and administrative assistant. Noe is an active volunteer with a faith based nonprofit organization, where he has worked with youth ages 13-21 for the past 15 years. As a Shelter Services Coordinator, Noe coordinates initial services for unaccompanied children at different ORR facilities. He has gained experience providing Know Your Rights Presentations and conducting legal screenings. As an immigrant, and former DACA recipient, Noe has deep passion for helping the immigrant population and has developed great advocacy skills along the way.

Lilia Garcia

Social Worker Supervisor,
ProBAR

is a Social Worker Supervisor with ProBAR's Social Services/Clinical Team. Lilia graduated with her Master of Science in Social Work degree from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in 2016. She has over 10 years of experience working in the Rio Grande Valley's Local Mental Health Authority, where she held positions as a Case Manager and Program Supervisor. As a Case

Manager she worked with children and families providing case management services, skills training, parenting, and crisis services. In her position as a supervisor, Lilia, supervised adult programs and was the interim supervisor to the local Mobile Crisis Outreach Team. At ProBAR, Lilia is currently working as a Bilingual Clinical Supervisor in the Release Support Department. This opportunity has provided her with additional insight on the challenges that our immigrant population faces in the community regarding accessing services, including mental health services in a culturally sensitive manner. Lilia believes in the importance of empowering our clients and helping them build capacity to address their needs.

Marta Garcia-Lascurain

Staff Attorney,
CLINIC

Marta is a Staff Attorney, Training and Technical Assistance with CLINIC. She provides training and legal support to member agencies and other organizations nationwide. Prior to joining CLINIC, Garcia-Lascurain practiced immigration law for almost eight years at CLINIC affiliate organizations. She worked as a staff attorney at Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, where she provided direct representation in naturalization, family-based applications, adjustment of status, asylum, and more. Garcia-Lascurain also worked as an immigration attorney at Catholic Charities of Baltimore, focusing primarily on work involving unaccompanied immigrant children. Prior to her work at Catholic Charities organizations, she served as a judicial law clerk for the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, Maryland. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and a member of the Maryland bar.

Daniel Gestal

Senior Attorney,
Capital Areas Immigrants' Rights (CAIR)
Coalition

Daniel has been an attorney with the Capital Areas Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition since 2019. He works in CAIR Coalition's Detained Children's Program, which provides legal services to children detained in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, direct representation to minors both in and released from ORR custody, pro bono mentorship and training, and community outreach. Daniel received his J.D. from American University Washington College of Law is licensed to practice in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

Vickie Giambra

Managing Attorney,
Children's Immigration Law Academy (CILA)

s the Managing Attorney for Technical Assistance & Training with the ABA's Children's Immigration Law Academy. She has been practicing immigration law since 2009. Previously in private practice working on a variety of matters, Vickie began her nonprofit immigration law career when she joined Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston in January 2017. As a Managing Attorney, she led the General Immigration Program at Catholic Charities, which encompassed family immigration matters and provided a full range of immigration services for refugees and asylees. With a B.A., cum laude, in Latin American Studies from Barnard College, Columbia University, and an M.Phil. from the University of Cambridge, Vickie began her career working in HR and recruitment for a large international law firm in New York and London. This sparked an interest in employment and immigration law, which led Vickie to enroll in the University of Houston Law Center, graduating in May 2009. She is a member of the Texas Bar and is also a Certified Professional Co-Active Coach.

SPEAKERS

Mary Giovagnoli

Senior Counsel,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Mary is the Senior Counsel for Policy and Advocacy at KIND. She is the former Executive Director of Refugee Council USA and a past DHS Deputy Assistant Secretary for Immigration policy during the Obama administration. For over twenty-five years, Mary has worked in the immigration field as a government attorney, a public policy expert, and a senior leader for organizations promoting fair and pragmatic immigration reform. She currently represents KIND as the co-lead for the Unaccompanied Afghan Minor subcommittee of the Evacuate Our Allies Coalition, working with child advocates around the country to lift up the needs and press for support of UAMs.

Anna Rae Goethe

Managing Attorney,
Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef)

Anna is a managing attorney at Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef) in Los Angeles, California. She represents immigrant youth in state court proceedings, in their removal cases with EOIR, and with their petitions filed with USCIS. Prior to her position at ImmDef, Anna Rae was a staff attorney at the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project's office in Tacoma, Washington. Anna Rae holds a B.A. from the University of Chicago and a J.D. from the University of Washington School of Law. She is licensed to practice law in Washington State and is a Registered Legal Aid Attorney in California.

Jena Gutierrez

Managing Attorney,
Young Center

Jason is the Managing attorney at the Young Center's Phoenix office. After graduating from the University of Michigan Law School in 2012, her legal work focused primarily on representing unaccompanied children seeking protection through various forms of immigration relief and coordinating pro bono programs. She has worked at the Florence Project, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Ascentria's Immigration Legal Assistance Program, and Community Legal Aid in Worcester, MA. While attending Michigan Law, she was awarded a Bergstrom Child Welfare Fellowship, served as a Contributing/Associate Editor for the Journal of Law Reform, and worked as a student attorney in the Pediatric Advocacy Clinic. Before attending law school, Jena completed a year of service as a domestic violence advocate through an AmeriCorps program and worked at a small private firm. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with a minor in Spanish from the University of Michigan.

Eric Hassell

Coordinating Immigration Attorney,
New York Legal Assistance Group

Eric is a coordinating immigration attorney with New York Legal Assistance Group's LegalHealth Unit. He has been part of LegalHealth since 2017 and has run legal clinics at numerous New York City hospitals within their broad network of medical legal partnerships. He handles a wide range of immigration matters faced by unaccompanied immigrant children with an emphasis on improving patient health outcomes and access to care.

Josephine Herman

Staff Attorney,
New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children

Josephine is the first Staff Attorney at the New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children and represents unaccompanied immigrant children in removal defense, asylum, SIJS and other matters. Josephine was previously an Equal Justice Works fellow and Staff Attorney at Catholic Charities Community Services of New York, where she focused on improving legal representation for Indigenous Central American migrants and medical-legal partnership. Prior to law school, Josephine lived and worked in Guatemala supporting community led gender-based violence interventions. Josephine is a graduate of Tufts University and Harvard Law School, where she was a member of the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau.

Scott Hollander

Executive Director,
KidsVoice

Scott is the Executive Director of KidsVoice. Under his leadership, KidsVoice grew from ten attorneys representing 5,000 children with a \$500,000 budget to a staff of more than seventy and a budget of over \$7 million. With that growth, KidsVoice expanded beyond just legal advocacy to add professionals with backgrounds in social work, child development, drug and alcohol treatment, mental health, case management and foster care. This more holistic multidisciplinary advocacy approach allows KidsVoice to better meet the needs of each child by providing every client with both an attorney and social service professional to work on the case.

SPEAKERS

Sarah K Howell

Founder
STAR Counseling and Consultation

Sarah, LCSW-S is the school social worker at Las Americas Newcomer School in Houston ISD. She manages the social work department at Houston reVision and is the founder of STAR (Survivors of torture, asylees and refugees) Counseling and Consultation and STAR Support a 501c3. Sarah has built her career working with immigrants and refugees and specializes in trauma and torture survivors within those populations. Additionally, Sarah is passionate about educating others about trauma and trauma informed education. Sarah is an advocate for the immigrant and refugee community as well as mental health services for youth. She has published book chapters on refugee trauma and school-based interventions for immigrant and refugee youth. She has traveled extensively to understand the clients she works with, including trips to Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya and Northern Triangle countries; Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to trace the journey Unaccompanied minors are making north and the experience of those that are forced to return. She co-facilitates the Central American Minors Working Group in Houston, TX and is currently pursuing her doctorate in Clinical Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania with a focus on trauma and forced migration.

Jessica Howton

Managing Attorney,
Tahirih Justice Center

Jessica Howton is the Managing Attorney at Tahirih Justice Center's Houston office. Jessica has been with Tahirih since 2011, leading Houston's legal team as they provide holistic, trauma-informed advocacy alongside immigrant survivors of violence. She provides direct legal representation to asylum seekers, survivors of human trafficking, unaccompanied immigrant children, survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and female genital mutilation. Additionally, Jessica provides technical assistance and mentorship to pro bono attorneys and community partners on an individual basis as well as

through trainings and CLEs. She is a community partner with the Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and the Houston Immigration and Legal Services Collaborative's crime victim working group. Jessica is a graduate from the University of Notre Dame Law School.

Luis Enrique Jacquez

Social Service Coordinator,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Luis is the Social Service Coordinator for KIND in the El Paso Field Office at the ICF Ft Bliss site. Luis works to develop art projects, provide emotional support to minors when needed, provide additional assistance to the legal team on site, and works to create a child friendly space while minors are awaiting to speak with KIND staff. Luis has worked for more than ten years in multiple ORR sites as a Case Manager, Transportation Clerk, and Youth Care Worker. Luis graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso with a bachelor's degree in Social Work. Luis has extensive experience working with displaced populations. He has volunteered at shelters in El Paso, Tijuana, Mexico City, and Peten, Guatemala. Luis is from El Paso, Texas and plans to pursue a master's in social work.

Daniel Jeon

Assistant Attorney General,
Washington State Attorney General's Office's
Civil Rights Division

Daniel is an Assistant Attorney General in the Washington State Attorney General's Office's Civil Rights Division, which investigates and enforces laws prohibiting discrimination. He was previously a voting rights staff attorney at Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Los Angeles and a legal fellow at the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. He is a graduate of the University of Washington and New York University School of Law.

Anne Kelsey

Policy Analyst for Disability Rights,
Young Center

Anne is a Policy Analyst for Disability Rights at the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights. Anne has worked on disability and health rights issues for more than ten years. She has previously held positions at the Center for HIV Law and Policy; Disability Rights New York (New York's Protection and Advocacy organization); the Community Service Society of New York; and at Disability Rights Advocates. Anne received her J.D. from the Fordham University School of Law and her undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia.

Melody Koch

Staff Attorney,
Young Center

Melody is a Staff Attorney in the Young Center Houston's office. Prior to joining the Young Center, Melody worked in the business immigration landscape helping international clients seek employment in the United States with petitions before USCIS. While in law school, she participated in the International Human Rights Clinic, researching issues for the UN and the International Criminal Court relating to human right violations. She also interned for Public Law Center advocating for individuals who were victims of human trafficking, crimes, and persecution in their home country. Melody was also a public policy fellow at the Center for Poverty Research conducting research on issues that affect immigrant communities. Melody graduated from Loyola Law School, Los Angeles. She earned a B.S. in Community and Regional Development with a minor in Human Rights from University of California, Davis. In her spare time, Melody works with religious and philanthropic organizations to support the development of immigrant children in local communities.

SPEAKERS

Cindy Liou

State and Local Policy Director,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Cindy Liou Esq. is the State and Local Policy Director (and previously the Deputy Director of Legal Services) at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), advocating for unaccompanied immigrant children. Previously, she was the Director of the Human Trafficking Project at Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach, where she represented survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse in immigration, victims' rights in criminal matters, and other civil legal matters. Cindy is an Advisory Board Member of TEACH (Training in Early Abortion for Comprehensive Healthcare). She recently served on the Steering Committee of the Freedom Network to Empower Trafficked and Enslaved Persons (USA), and is the winner of their 2018 Paul and Sheila Wellstone Award. She is also the recipient of the 2013 San Francisco Collaborative Against Human Trafficking Modern Day Abolitionist Award for Policy and Advocacy. Cindy is the co-author of several articles and manuals on multi-disciplinary approaches to anti-trafficking work and filing T visas. She is a graduate from Stanford Law School and the University of Washington.

Dr. Sara-Jean ("SJ") Lipmen

Newcomer Instructional Coach

Dr. Sara-Jean is a Newcomer Instructional Coach. She is an educator and native Los Angeleno with roots in Mexico and Guatemala. She has taught, run programs, directed schools, supervised educators, led professional development, created curricula, and worked with students, in a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, all over the world including; Los Angeles, DC, rural China, London, Bermuda, Jerusalem & Mexico City. She received her BA in Educational Understanding of Religion & Government from the American University in Washington DC, her MA in Education and Teaching Credentials from Pepperdine University, and her Doctorate in Educational Leadership with a focus on Teacher Education in Multicultural Societies from USC. She works as a Newcomer Instructional Coach in a large comprehensive

high school in Southern California, creating professional development for educators and teachers around supporting, teaching, and advocating for recent immigrants and those inspirational students. She is also honored to be an adjunct professor of Curriculum and Pedagogy at USC. She lives with her partner and is proudly raising their three beautiful children in the LA urban jungle.

Jane Liu

Senior Litigation Attorney,
Young Center

For 15 years, Jane has engaged in legal advocacy and litigation to advance the rights of immigrant communities and communities of color. At the Young Center, Jane has centered her advocacy on the lived experiences of immigrant children; in 2021, she co-authored an amicus brief to the Supreme Court documenting the impact of Remain in Mexico on children and their families. Prior to joining the Young Center, Jane was the Legal Director at the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, where she led legal advocacy and litigation strategies to advance the rights of Asian American and Pacific Islander women and girls in the areas of reproductive rights and health, economic justice, and immigrant rights. Previously, Jane was a partner at Terris, Pravlik & Millian, a public interest law firm in Washington, DC, where she litigated public interest and civil rights cases, primarily class actions. She began her career as a public defender in Boston. Jane received her J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and her undergraduate degree from Princeton University.

Andrea Mangones

Director of Legal Training,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Andrea is a Director of Legal Training at Kids in Need of Defense, Inc. (KIND). Andrea has been representing immigrants seeking humanitarian immigration relief pro bono since 2009 as a full-time volunteer attorney at the Tahirih Justice Center, in private practice, and at KIND. She was previously the Managing Attorney of KIND's

Washington D.C. field office. Prior to joining KIND, Andrea was a Litigation and Trial Associate at Latham & Watkins, LLP. Andrea received her J.D., summa cum laude from American University's Washington College of Law and her master's degree in International Policy from the School of International Service. She holds a B.A. in International Relations from Duke University. Andrea is a member of the Washington Council of Lawyers and serves on its Pro Bono and Public Interest Committee, the D.C. Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and is currently serving on the D.C. Bar Board of Governors.

Alysa Medina

Staff Attorney,
Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education
and Legal Services (RAICES)

Alysa is a Staff Attorney working in the Released Children's Program at the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES). She represents unaccompanied children in immigration court, USCIS, before the Houston Asylum office, and in Texas state courts. Alysa has worked in the immigrant rights movement since 2010 and has held posts during her career as a community organizer and advocate with the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Center and later as a BIA partially accredited representative at Catholic Charities of East Tennessee. During the Trump administration, Alysa was compelled to return to law school in order to expand her practice to more underserved immigrant community members. She attended the University of Dayton School of Law as part of the Leadership Honors Program and graduated cum laude with a concentration in Human and Civil Rights Law. While in law school, she was recognized by the Supreme Court of Ohio and Ohio Access to Justice Foundation with the Pro Bono Commitment to Community Award.

SPEAKERS

Lesly Mendoza

Staff Attorney,
Bet Tzedek Legal Services (Bet Tzedek)

Lesly is a Staff Attorney with Bet Tzedek Legal Services in Los Angeles, California. Before joining Bet Tzedek, she worked with a private immigration law firm for approximately eight years. Currently, she predominantly works with unaccompanied children and youth, by securing guardianships in state court, seeking Special Juvenile Immigrant Findings, filing relief before USCIS, and if necessary, representing them in their immigration matters in removal proceedings. She is an advocate for the youth throughout their immigration process and has extensive experience in representing clients in Immigration Court, USCIS, and state court practicing in SIJS, asylum, and related areas of law. She earned her Juris Doctor from the University of La Verne College of Law and her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Southern California. She is licensed to practice law in California. An immigrant herself, she was born in Guatemala and raised in Los Angeles, California.

Joanna Mexicano Furmanska

Staff Attorney,
CLINIC

Joanna is a Staff Attorney with CLINIC based outside of Los Angeles. She provides training and technical assistance on immigration law. Mexicano Furmanska joined CLINIC in 2021 after eight years of practice in immigration law, focusing primarily on humanitarian forms of relief, including Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, asylum, U and T Visas, and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). She worked at several Los Angeles-area nonprofits, including Bet Tzedek Legal Services, CARECEN-LA and Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project. Mexicano Furmanska received her bachelor's degree from Syracuse University and is a graduate of Loyola Law School. She is a member of the California Bar and admitted to practice before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Pamela Nickell

Deputy Program Director,
Young Center

Pam is a Deputy Program Director based out of the Young Center's Houston office. Pam joined the Young Center in 2016 as a Staff Attorney before becoming the Managing Attorney of the Houston office in 2019. Pam has assisted child survivors of human trafficking, children with complex medical needs, youth who are pregnant or parenting, children who are at risk of aging out into adult detention, and other particularly vulnerable children. Because of her commitment to serving unaccompanied children, Pam was appointed to the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative's Executive Committee, a strategic leadership body made up of representatives from service providers, advocacy organizations, educators, and funders that support immigrants and refugees in the greater Houston area. Pam received her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law. She graduated summa cum laude from Southern Methodist University with her B.A. in Spanish and International Studies.

Corie O'Rourke

Managing Attorney,
Children's Legal Services,
Ayuda

Corie is the Managing Attorney of Children's Legal Services at Ayuda. She manages the detained children's contract at Ayuda and provides direct representation to immigrants in both affirmative and defensive humanitarian and family-based immigration cases. She regularly presents on various topics including domestic violence, child abuse, and human trafficking. Ms. O'Rourke received her juris doctorate from the University of Oklahoma College of Law, as well as her bachelor's degree in International Studies cum laude and master's degree in International Studies from the University of Oklahoma College of International Studies.

Amanda Pennington

Director of Client Services,
Office of Colorado's Child Protection
Ombudsman

Amanda is the Director of Client Services, Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO). Amanda joined the Office of Colorado's CPO in May of 2019. As the Director of Client Services, she oversees the CPO's Client Services Team. This dynamic team of professionals work to resolve citizens' questions and concerns related to the child protection system; this often includes child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, childcare facilities, and unaccompanied immigrant children residing in facilities licensed by Colorado.

Monica Pepping

Legal Assistant,
Released Children's Program,
RAICES

is a Legal Assistant in the Released Children's Program at RAICES in San Antonio, TX. She has a B.A. in Political Science and Global Affairs from the University of Texas at San Antonio, and a Master's Degree in International Development from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. She was motivated to pursue her Master's Degree from her volunteer work at RAICES since 2017, where she worked at Karnes Detention Center, interviewing and preparing asylum seekers for their Credible Fear Interviews. She later joined RAICES' Bus Station Project to work with released asylum seekers. Outside of work, her five children keep her busy, and she enjoys all the time she can spend with them.

SPEAKERS

Yanira Peraza

STEP Supervisor,
Refugee Services of Texas

Yanira Peraza is the Survivors of Trafficking Empowerment Program (STEP) Supervisor for Refugee Services of Texas-Houston since 2019. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. She has been working with foreign nationals since 2018. Since 2019 she has been serving victims of human trafficking (sex & labor) of all ages. She was a former Unaccompanied Children Case Manager in a detention center for minors. Yanira is one of the Advisory Board Members for the University of Houston-Downtown Social Work Program.

Marisa Peterson

Staff Attorney,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Marisa was raised in Houston, Texas, and received her Bachelor of Arts in English from Utah State University. As a law student at Lewis & Clark Law School she learned the importance of trauma informed practice by participating in the National Crime Victim Law Institute clinic. Prior to graduating from law school, Marisa worked with asylum seekers in Costa Rica as an intern with the Association de Consultores y Asesores Internacionales (ACAI). She also completed internships with Catholic Charities of Oregon and KIND. After graduating from law school in 2015, Marisa returned to Texas where she has worked providing representation to unaccompanied children in ORR custody, adults in ICE detention, and asylum seekers in removal proceedings. She has experience providing immigration legal services in both direct representation and pro bono mentoring programs. Marisa is licensed to practice law in Texas and speaks Spanish and Portuguese.

Juliana Pinto McKeen

Social Worker and Child Advocate Supervisor,
Young Center

Juliana, LMSW, is a social worker in the Young Center's New York office. She holds a Master of Science in Social Work from Columbia University and a BA in psychology with a minor in African American, Puerto Rican, and Latino Studies from Hunter College. She has published in the Columbia Social Work Review's 2021 edition.

Jennifer Podkul

Vice President,
Policy and Advocacy,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Jennifer is an international human rights lawyer and expert on child migration in the United States. She has authored articles, handbooks and reports and presents regularly as an expert at various conferences, briefings, and professional trainings. Jennifer provides technical assistance and education to policy makers and testifies before Congress on issues related to migrant children. She co-authored "Forced From Home: The Lost Boys and Girls from Central America" and was a contributing author to "Childhood, Migration, and Human Rights in Central and North America: Causes, Policies, Practices, and Challenges." Jennifer has taught child migration at Georgetown Law Center's Human Rights Institute. Jennifer began her legal career as an attorney at Ayuda in Washington, D.C. first as an Equal Justice Works Fellow and later as a KIND Fellow. Prior to joining KIND, Jennifer Podkul was a senior program officer at the Women's Refugee Commission where she researched issues facing vulnerable migrants seeking protection in the United States and advocated for improved treatment. She served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras, holds a B.A. from Franklin and Marshall College and a J.D. with honors from the Washington College of Law, American University, where she was a Public Interest/Public Service Scholar.

Yesenia Ramales

Senior Legal Assistant,
The Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project (FIRRP)

Yesenia is a Senior Legal Assistant on the Advocacy Team at The Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project (FIRRP). She is a DACA recipient and has worked at FIRRP for 8 years. She was on the Children's Team initially, supporting attorneys in providing legal services to unaccompanied noncitizen children in both released and detained settings. In 2019, she joined the Advocacy Team, where she supports the team in larger scale actions and in raising issues that affect minor and adult clients of FIRRP. She lives in Arizona, but loves to travel all over the U.S.

Hillary Richardson

Managing Attorney,
National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)

Hillary is the Managing Attorney of NIJC's Non-Detained Kids Project, focused on serving unaccompanied immigrant children and other vulnerable immigrant youth. Prior to joining NIJC, Hillary worked in family law at the Legal Assistance Foundation's Children and Families Practice Group, and served as a staff attorney at the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project in Tacoma, Washington, where she provided legal orientation and removal defense for detained adults. Before attending law school, she worked as a paralegal and BIA accredited representative with NIJC's Adult Detention project. Hillary holds a B.A. from Earlham College and a J.D. from DePaul University College of Law. She is licensed to practice law in Illinois.

SPEAKERS

Xochilth Román

Senior UC Specialist,
ProBar

Xochilth is a Senior UC Specialist who works for ProBAR shelter services department. Xóchilth Román received a B.S. degree in Art Therapy from Long Island University and a master's degree in Disaster Studies from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Ms. Román has been working with unaccompanied minors for over nine years in the Office of Refugee Resettlement and with South Texas ProBono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR). Ms. Román joined ProBAR in 2018, where she currently serves as a Senior Unaccompanied Child Legal Services Specialist. In her position, Ms. Román serves as a mentor and a guide for new hires. Additionally, she provides legal orientations, legal screenings to children ages 0-17, and services to reunified children. Ms. Román is determined to improve PowerPoint materials and resources utilized for educating children of the complex immigration system.

Karla Ruiz

Legal Assistant,
RAICES

Karla is a Legal Assistant in the Released Children's Program at RAICES in Austin, TX. She has a B.A. in Political Science and Sociology from the University of Chicago. She wrote her thesis on Puerto Rican belonging and discontent in the U.S. after Hurricane Maria. She has previously worked in a private practice focusing on family based immigration and has been working on children's cases for two years.

Carly Salazar

USCIS, Office of Policy & Strategy,
Humanitarian Affairs Division, International &
Humanitarian Affairs Branch

Carly is a Policy Analyst in the Office of Policy & Strategy where she serves as a subject matter expert on southwest border issues and humanitarian immigration benefits, including humanitarian parole, refugee, and temporary protection programs. Her prior experience includes representing unaccompanied minors, detained families, and individuals seeking affirmative immigration benefits or relief in removal proceedings. She previously worked at the Department of Homeland Security as an expert in unaccompanied children and drafted Ombudsman recommendations on Special Immigrant Juvenile classification and the unaccompanied minor asylum process. She holds a Bachelor of Science from Northwestern University and a J.D. from the University of Illinois.

Elizabeth (Chiqui) Sanchez Kennedy

Executive Director & Co-Founder
Galveston-Houston Immigrant Representation
Project (GHIRP)

Chiqui is the Executive Director of Galveston-Houston Immigrant Representation Project (GHIRP), founded in 2020. Chiqui has devoted her professional career to providing high quality legal services to immigrants at non-profit organizations. Prior to starting GHIRP, she was the Director of Immigration Legal Services at the YMCA International Services (2017-2020). Chiqui was the Assistant Director of the Cabrini Center (Catholic Charities) in Houston from 2016-2017. Before moving back to Texas, Chiqui was a Supervising Attorney at Catholic Legal Services of Miami (2011-2016). Previously, Chiqui was a pro bono coordinator at Kids In Need of Defense (KIND) in New York City (2010-2011) and a staff attorney at South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR) in Harlingen, Texas (2008-2010). Chiqui received her J.D. from South Texas College of Law in Houston, Texas (2008) and her B.A. from Davidson College in Davidson, North Carolina (2003).

Carson Scott

Staff Attorney.
Litigation and Advocacy,
Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef)

Carson is a Staff Attorney on the Litigation and Advocacy Team at Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef), where she litigates immigrants' rights issues before federal, state, and administrative courts. Carson graduated from the USC Gould School of Law in 2020 and began her work at ImmDef as the USC Irmias Fellow. As a fellow, Carson advocated for unaccompanied children previously enrolled in the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP-UC) both through their individual immigration proceedings and through the impact litigation case, ImmDef v. DHS. Post fellowship, Carson has continued to advocate for MPP-UC, and has expanded her practice to include advocating to end the inhumane conditions unaccompanied children face in CBP custody. In April of 2022, she filed a CRCL complaint on behalf of numerous ImmDef clients, documenting the systemic abuse prevalent in CBP facilities. Carson is based out of Los Angeles.

Carly Sessions

National Senior Attorney,
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Carly is a National Senior Attorney at KIND, where she has spent most of her career providing legal services to unaccompanied noncitizen children in both released and detained settings. In April 2022, she filed a CRCL complaint on behalf of thousands of immigrant children who experienced inhumane treatment and conditions while in CBP detention. She is a 2014 graduate of The George Washington University Law School, where her note "Empowering the UNHCR to Provide More Consistent Protection for Refugees" was published in GW's International Law Review Online Notes. Her experience as a teacher working with undocumented high school students prior to law school inspired her to dedicate her career to serving immigrant children and their families. She currently lives in the Phoenix area and supports KIND field offices across the country.

SPEAKERS

Marie Silver

Managing Attorney,
Immigrant Children's Protection Project,
National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)

Marie is managing attorney for the Immigrant Children's Protection Project at the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC). The project provides legal services and representation to unaccompanied immigrant children, both detained and released, in their removal proceedings and applications for status. Marie co-manages the project and continues to represent unaccompanied children in applications for asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, T visa applications, and more. Marie received a B.S. in Spanish and a B.A. in communications from Northwestern University, and she graduated magna cum laude from DePaul University College of Law. While a law student, Marie interned at NIJC with the Immigrant Legal Defense Project, and at the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights. She also participated in the DePaul Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic and the Human Rights Practicum in Chiapas, Mexico. Prior to law school, Marie worked as a senior case manager in shelters for unaccompanied immigrant children and interned with the American Red Cross.

Brett Stark

Co-Founder and National Network Director,
Terra Firma National

Brett Stark Esq. is the co-founder and National Network Director of Terra Firma National. In his prior role Brett was Terra Firma's Legal Director at Catholic Charities New York, where he represented unaccompanied immigrant children in asylum and Special Immigrant Juvenile cases. A former Equal Justice Works fellow, Brett has worked in refugee resettlement in Kenya, researched human rights in Israel, and was a 2008 Fulbright Scholar in Taiwan. Brett is a graduate of Harvard Law School, where he was a student in the Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Clinic, and the University of Rochester, where he majored in Political Science, Cultural Identities, and minored in English Literature. Brett is admitted to the New York Bar, and the Eastern and Southern Districts of New York.

Raia Stoicheva

Managing Attorney,
Young Center

Raia Stoicheva, JD, is the Managing Attorney with the Young Center based in Chicago. She served as a Staff Attorney and Child Advocate Supervisor in the Chicago office for three years prior to her transition. Before joining the Young Center, she was a staff attorney and clinical instructor at the DePaul College of Law Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic. There she helped community-based organizations to provide legal representation to immigrants and taught a clinical course on immigration law. She graduated with honors from the Northwestern University Pritzker College of Law where she participated in the asylum law and the international human rights law clinics. Raia has served as a Child Advocate with the Young Center. She is originally from Bulgaria.

Michele Suarez

Supervising Attorney,
NWIRP

Michele has served as an attorney with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) since December 2015. She is a supervising attorney with NWIRP's Children and Youth Advocacy Program Unit located in the Seattle office. She represents immigrant youth in removal proceedings before the Seattle Immigration Court, in juvenile state courts, and in cases before USCIS. Ms. Suarez graduated from the University of Washington School of Law and is licensed in Washington State.

Sonia Suire

Supervising Attorney,
RAICES

Sonia is a Supervising Attorney with the RAICES Released Children's Program at the San Antonio office. She represents unaccompanied immigrant children in EOIR, as well as before USCIS. She has been successful in obtaining SIJS for her clients, and recently represented a client who received a grant of asylum by USCIS's Asylum Office. Sonia has had the privilege of representing clients through the adjustment process when they finally achieve their lawful permanent residence status. Participating in this life changing event for her clients, one client at a time, is what fuels her commitment to zealously advocate for her clients. Sonia also has experience working on VAWA and DACA cases. Sonia, who is originally from Puerto Rico, received her BA from Fordham University (NYC) and her law degree from Rutgers University Law School, in New Jersey. Sonia is licensed to practice law in Texas and Alberta (Canada). Whenever she can get away, Sonia likes to explore the Big Bend National Park and visit the West Texas cities of Alpine, Marfa and Fort Davis.

SPEAKERS

Elissa Steglich

Co-Director & Clinical Professor,
Immigration Clinic,
The University of Texas School of Law

Elissa is the Co-Director & Clinical Professor at the Immigration Clinic, The University of Texas School of Law. She co-directs and teaches the Immigration Clinic at the University of Texas School of Law. Professor Steglich has extensive experience practicing immigration law and has been a strong advocate for immigrant rights, especially the rights of immigrant children. Until June 2015, she was the Legal Services Director at the American Friends Service Committee's Immigrant Rights Program in Newark, New Jersey. She served as Managing Attorney for the program from 2006-2014. In addition to supervising legal staff, she provided direct representation to asylum seekers, immigrant children, and immigrant victims of violence and human trafficking. She was the Managing Attorney at the National Immigrant Justice Center in Chicago, Illinois from 2002-2006, and previously Trafficking Project Officer at DePaul College of Law, where she conducted extensive field research on trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean. Professor Steglich taught Immigration Law as an adjunct professor at Rutgers School of Law in Newark, New Jersey from 2010-2014. She holds a BA in English from Haverford College and a JD from the University of Texas School of Law.

Nancy Tangarife

Senior Legal Assistant,
RAICES

Nancy Cuadros Tangarife is a Senior Legal Assistant in the Released Children's Program at the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES). She assists attorneys with their unaccompanied children's cases in immigration court, USCIS, and Texas state courts. Nancy

has worked in the immigration field since 2016. Her career started at Catholic Charities of Baton Rouge as an administrative assistant, and she quickly became the program coordinator for Immigration Legal Services and Refugee Services programs. Nancy then went on to work for a private law firm during the Trump administration, concentrating her work at the many detention centers in Louisiana doing intakes, screening for relief, and preparing clients for their individual hearings. Nancy is currently pursuing her BIA accreditation as well as her court interpreter license and continues to further her knowledge in the immigration rights movement.

Tania Torres

Managing Social Worker,
Young Center

Tania Torres, LMSW joined the Harlingen office of the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights as an LMSW Social Worker and currently serves as the Managing Social Worker for the Harlingen office. Tania has been advocating for children and adolescents in some capacity for over 10 years. Prior to joining the YC team, Tania was a public-school teacher for 5 years and worked at ProBAR as a legal assistant. As a graduate student, Tania provided short term therapy for mothers with depression and facilitated support groups for Latin American parents. Tania has volunteered and interned as a Social Worker in both Guatemala and Mexico. Most recently, Tania served as a clinical counselor supporting children working through and living with depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Tania was part of the first cohort of YC volunteer child advocates in Harlingen and has continued her work with this community since then. Tania has a BA in Latin American History and a Master's of Science in Clinical Social Work from the University of Texas at Austin.

Erika E. Vera Livas

Supervising Attorney,
Removal Defense Team,
The Door

Erika E. Vera Livas, Esq. (she/her/hers) is a Supervising Attorney for the Removal Defense Team at The Door's Legal Services Center, where she specializes in defending teenage clients in removal proceedings and seeking relief such as asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and visas for trafficking victims and crime victims. Ms. Vera heads a project within the Door's Removal Defense practice providing universal representation to unaccompanied children who were previously detained by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. During law school, she served as an intern at the Bronx Defenders, the Legal Aid Society, the New York State Labor Bureau and the Vera Institute for Justice. Ms. Vera received her J.D. from Columbia Law School. She is licensed to practice law in New York.

Lauren Wert

Supervising Attorney of Children's
Legal Services,
Ayuda

Lauren is a Supervising Attorney of Children's Legal Services at Ayuda. She provides direct representation to immigrants in both affirmative and defensive humanitarian and family-based immigration cases. Ayuda's Children's Legal Services program focuses on providing representation to detained children. Ms. Wert received her juris doctorate from The Ohio State University, Moritz College of Law. She served in the United States Peace Corps in Guatemala and has a Bachelor's degree in Spanish from James Madison University.

SPEAKERS

Mishan Wroe

Senior Attorney,
National Center for Youth Law (NCYL)

Mishan is a Senior Attorney at the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL). Mishan's work focuses on impact litigation on behalf of immigrant children. She serves as class counsel in Flores and Lucas R. Prior to joining NCYL, Mishan was a trial attorney at Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP. While there, she maintained an active pro bono practice including a secondment at the ACLU of Northern California where she focused on reproductive justice litigation. Mishan received a B.A. in Public Policy from Stanford University and her J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School where she worked in the Federal Criminal Justice Clinic.

Yasmin Yavar

Deputy Director,
CILA

Yasmin Yavar is the Deputy Director with the ABA's Children's Immigration Law Academy. She is a 2004 graduate of the University of Texas School of Law, where she fell in love with immigration law through Barbara Hines' immigration clinic and a brief summer internship at ProBAR. She began her legal career as a commercial litigator at the Houston office of Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw. After three years, Yasmin relocated to Harlingen, Texas for a year to work for the South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR) and learn the ropes of removal defense for detained adults. She returned to Houston and was the first employee of Kids in Need of Defense's Houston office, serving as the pro bono coordinator. Immediately prior to working at CILA, Yasmin worked as a consultant for ProBAR's Children's Project.

Laura Zelaya

Social Worker,
Young Center

Laura (she/her/ella) is a licensed master's level social worker in The Young Center Houston's office. She received her Master of Social Work from the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work, where she completed a macro concentration with a focus in health and behavioral health. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Spanish from St. Mary's University in San Antonio. Laura has extensive experience working with community organizations providing services to people that have experienced trauma, such as survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence, and child abuse. Before joining The Young Center, she provided support as a social worker to children with hearing loss and their families. She has also worked as a speech language pathologist assistant in the home health setting. Laura volunteers as a medical interpreter and mentor to first-generation college students.