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Law Clerk Sworn in at LACLJ



ALEXANDER PEREZ  
California Western School of Law — Class of 2014

On July 30, LACLJ summer law clerk Alexander Perez was officially sworn in as an attorney by Administrative Law Judge José Tello at LACLJ's office. Alexander graduated from California Western School of Law in December and volunteered for 10 weeks in our Access to Justice program. He supported attorneys to conduct client interviews, draft motions and declarations, and provide court accompaniment.

**What surprised you most about working here?**

I was surprised that LACLJ offers so many different services to assist clients through multiple legal issues related to family and immigration law and domestic violence. Also, with the assistance of Community Care Advocates [who provide safety planning and social service

**LACLJ helps reunite immigrant family after a decade apart**

LACLJ recently helped Melanie\* and her children after nearly a decade of not seeing each other. Facing violent threats to her family's safety, Melanie traveled alone to the United States from Central America nearly 10 years ago. In the United States, Melanie began dating and living with a man who eventually began to severely abuse her, even while she was pregnant with their child.

Melanie came to LACLJ, where our immigration team helped her file a U Visa petition, which was approved last fall. This allowed Melanie to petition for her children who were still living in Central America. Her children were especially vulnerable to gang-based violence and had stopped attending school because it was too dangerous to take the bus there.

Senior Attorney Michelle Carey and Legal Advocate Teresa Vargas Valdes communicated with the children while they were still in Central America to process their forms and coordinate their interview with the U.S. Consulate. As a result of LACLJ's advocacy, the children finally reunited with their mother in the United States in June.

This was LACLJ's first case that completed the consular processing to reunite a U Visa client with her children. LACLJ is one of the few organizations in Los Angeles offering this work at no cost. Today, Melanie is working and living safely in her own home with her children, who can now go back to school.

\* Client's name has been changed for confidentiality.

**Senior Attorney testifies at Capitol to support immigration bill**

Last month, LACLJ Senior Immigration Attorney Michelle Carey attended the Assembly Public Safety Committee hearing in Sacramento.

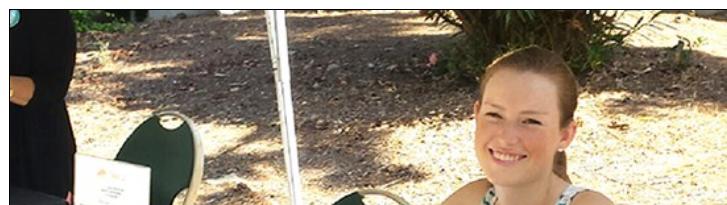
Michelle was invited by CA Senate President Pro Tempore, Kevin De Leon's Office to testify as a subject matter expert on **SB 674**, a U Visa-related bill which mandates California law enforcement agencies to review and sign U Visa certificates on behalf of undocumented crime survivors. This certification serves as proof that the individual was the victim of an abusive crime and that they assisted with law enforcement's investigation of the criminal activity. Without this, immigrant victims are ineligible to apply for U Visas that could otherwise help find them achieve stability independent of abusers. The bill received a unanimous supportive vote.



AB 900 Levine  
Juveniles: special immigrant juvenile status.

Michelle also testified in support of a Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) bill, **AB 900**. Immigrant children who have been abandoned, abused or neglected may qualify for SIJS. However, in California, the definition of a "child" is 18 years old or younger, while the federal definition is anyone under the age of 21. AB 900 would enable probate courts to appoint guardians to youth up to age 21 (rather than age 18), so that these youth could file for a SIJ order. Michelle provided testimony expressing strong support for the bill, citing LACLJ's work on behalf of vulnerable unaccompanied minors.

**Teen/LA expands outreach, bids farewell to Jesuit Volunteer**



referrals], LACLJ helps clients beyond the courtroom in a way that has lasting effects.

**What did you find most challenging about your work?**

There are so many issues I would like to help clients with, but the reality is that there are limited resources that can be offered to each client. Coming to terms with my limitations has been difficult, and I sometimes feel I am not doing enough.

**What kind of work do you want to pursue after LACLJ?**

I hope to continue building my skills in the world of family law. I thoroughly enjoyed working with LACLJ's clients and am now even more determined to make a positive impact on the lives of many clients and their families in the future.

**What might someone be surprised to know about you?**

I worked in the medical field for almost 10 years before going to law school. I have experience in the Emergency Medical Department, ambulance services, respiratory therapy, hemo-oncology, and HIV care.

**What is your favorite quote?**

"Find what you love, and let it kill you." —Charles Bukowski. I am a big fan of Bukowski when I'm not reading legal literature.



LACLJ's Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) Legal Advocate, Emily Harrington, tabling at Denim Day Community Resource Fair at East Los Angeles College on April 2nd.

This year, LACLJ's Teen Legal Advocacy (Teen/LA) Program expanded its outreach and education to teens and young parents and to other service providers in the community. Education is crucial to ensuring that teens have the tools needed to navigate crisis situations such as domestic violence, sexual assault and high-conflict co-parenting.

**Survivors of Interpersonal Violence:** Teen/LA presents quarterly at the [East Los Angeles Women's Center](#) and [YWCA Greater Los Angeles](#), two local rape crisis centers. Our team trains these service providers on the legal needs and rights of sexual assault survivors. In April, our team participated in Denim Day Community Resource Fair (to provide East LA College students with resources related to sexual assault and domestic violence) as well as Spring into Love - Healthy Teen Summit (an event hosted by [Black Women for Wellness](#) to educate youth on reproductive health topics).

**Young Parents:** In partnership with the Los Angeles Superior Court, LACLJ conducts "Young Parents Day," a monthly workshop at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse. Attendees are young parents ages 14-24 who learn about their legal rights, family law issues, and conflict resolution. This year, our attorneys also conducted presentations to [Home-SAFE](#) (a program of Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services, which focuses on family support services) and [Alliance for Children's Rights](#) (who hosted an event called "Raising Baby" to provide resources to young parents).

**Pregnant and Parenting Foster Youth:** Our Equal Justice Works Fellow, Erica Carroll, conducts outreach for her project which focuses on foster youth who are also parents. She frequently meets with agencies serving foster youth, including the Department of Children and Family Services, [First Place for Youth](#), and [Children's Law Center](#). Erica's outreach to potential clients includes presentations at [New Village Girls' Academy](#) (an all-girls high school for pregnant and parenting youth) and [St. Anne's](#) (a residential placement for pregnant and parenting foster youth).

**FAREWELL, EMILY!** — LACLJ's 2014-2015 [Jesuit Volunteer Corps \(JVC\)](#) Legal Advocate, [Emily Harrington](#), completed her year of service this month. Emily provided legal support to attorneys, conducted outreach, and worked closely with clients on safety planning and court accompaniment in the Teen/LA program. We will miss her, but are excited for her new chapter. Emily is headed to Central and South America to continue her work in human services and improve her Spanish skills. She plans to eventually attend graduate school for her Master's in Social Work. **Thank you, Emily, for being an amazing advocate for our teen clients!**

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