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Spotlight: EJW Fellow



ERICA CARROLL

Erica worked at LACLJ for two years through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) before attending law school. She returns this fall as a 2014-2016 [Equal Justice Works Fellow](#), sponsored by [Greenberg Traurig LLP](#). Her project will expand our existing [Teen/LA](#) program.

What is the focus of your project?

My project focuses on providing family law services and education to pregnant and parenting foster youth in Los Angeles County. The goal is to prevent an intergenerational cycle of foster care by helping foster youth with children of their own gain the stability and resources needed to thrive as a family.

Why are you interested in pursuing this work?

**Letter from Brandy Davis, Interim Executive Director**

When I first came here a decade ago, I never imagined LACLJ would be where it is today. I spent two years at LACLJ then, learning how to be a lawyer from some of the most dedicated and passionate people I know.

LACLJ has always been a place with heart; for its leaders – Hakha Mortezaie, Nancy Ramirez, and Hellen Hong – LACLJ was a labor of love. I am so privileged to stand on the shoulders of these inspiring leaders to lead LACLJ through its next transition.

LACLJ is stronger than ever. Building on the growth and success of the last decade, our talented staff and board are committed to a [strategic vision](#) of increasing LACLJ's impact and sustainability. As we select LACLJ's next leader, I am so excited for what's in store in the decade to come.

Sincerely,  
Brandy Davis  
Interim Executive Director



**Growth at LACLJ welcomes new staff members**



Pictured from left to right: Emily Harrington, Marilyn Florentino, Erica Carroll, Sylvia Gribbell, Alex Zúñiga, Krystal De Santiago, Julian Ponce, Teresa Vargas Valdes, Lazaro Cuevas, Arianne Wang.

Over the past few years, LACLJ has doubled its budget while expanding programs and strengthening infrastructure in order to meet the needs of our community. Not only have we increased capacity for existing programs, but we have also created new staff positions to incubate programs and enhance our holistic service model:

- Our [Teen/LA](#) program has tripled in size, expanding to offer specialized services for young survivors of sexual assault as well as pregnant and parenting foster youth.
- We welcome back a former staff member as our [2014-2016 Equal Justice Works Fellow](#). See our [Spotlight](#) in the left sidebar to learn more!
- LACLJ hosts a Jesuit Volunteer this year. [Jesuit Volunteer Corps \(JVC\)](#) pairs organizations with yearlong volunteers who live in the communities they serve and immerse in the values of spiritual growth, simple living, community, and the pursuit of social justice.
- LACLJ created a new position, [MSW Field Instructor](#), to supervise our MSW student interns who provide case management for our clients.

We are thrilled to welcome new advocates to LACLJ's team! From administrative to programmatic capacities, every individual is committed to supporting our clients and their families. [Click here to get to know LACLJ's newest staff members!](#)

I already knew I enjoyed working with teens, but I could see how often they felt invalidated or confused by the legal system. I wanted to help develop a project that would be supportive and empowering to young parents, building their confidence in themselves as well as in the potential for positive interactions with the legal system.

#### **How does it feel to be back?**

It is exciting to be back at LACLJ and serving in a different capacity. Having seen the organization change and grow over the past few years, it was appealing to return to a community that I care about while having new opportunities and projects to explore within that setting.

#### **Share a fun fact about yourself!**

I'm training for my second half marathon and hope to run a full marathon within the next year!

## **Success for teen sexual assault survivor in employment case**



Cynthia\* is a 19-year-old working to transition out of homelessness and into a life of stability and self-sufficiency. She was sexually assaulted by her ex-boyfriend, who was living in the same transitional housing program as her at the time. Cynthia called the police the same night she was raped, immediately sought medical attention, and requested time off from work to receive treatment. Cynthia's employer then fired her for missing work due to the sexual assault.

In addition to losing her job, Cynthia was worried for her personal safety. The transitional housing program had since kicked out the ex-boyfriend, but after getting out of jail, he immediately showed up at Cynthia's program and demanded to speak with her. Cynthia's therapist connected her to LACLJ, where she met with Teen/LA Attorney Angela Turner.

Angela provided safety planning and helped Cynthia understand her legal options. Angela wrote a demand letter to Cynthia's employer, explaining that they had discriminated against her and violated state leave laws. After negotiations with LACLJ, the employer reinstated Cynthia and moved her to a different location to protect her from retaliation. Angela is also helping Cynthia file an administrative appeal because she was denied financial assistance.

Teen/LA's sexual assault project and its community partnerships allow LACLJ to provide comprehensive, life-changing services to young survivors like Cynthia. Today, Cynthia is safe, financially stable, and can continue to move toward a brighter future.

*\*Client's name has been changed to protect confidentiality.*

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