



Los Angeles
Center for
Law and Justice

Summer Wrap-Up!



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LACLJ HELPS SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING



Jessica and her mother had been living in the US as undocumented immigrants for twelve years when her mom decided to return to her home country, Mexico. Jessica's aunt and uncle told Jessica, then twelve years old, that she could stay with them, promising that she could continue her education in the US. Over the next year, however, Jessica was forced to quit school to provide unpaid domestic labor at

her aunt and uncle's home and business and was sexually assaulted by her uncle and cousin on multiple occasions.

Fearing that her abusers would retaliate against her, Jessica remained quiet about the abuse even after her mom returned to the US a year later. It took Jessica thirteen years to gather the strength to report the abuse to the police, who then informed her that they did not have the resources to investigate things that happened over a decade ago. Jessica's uncle fled the country, but Jessica continued to live in a constant state of fear and Jessica was diagnosed with PTSD, depression and anxiety.

Jessica came to LACLJ to learn more about her legal rights as a survivor of sexual assault. After hearing Jessica's full story, LACLJ attorneys realized that Jessica's

experience made her not only a survivor of sexual assault, but also a survivor of human trafficking. LACLJ attorneys successfully petitioned for a Trafficking or T-Visa that was recently approved. As a result, Jessica now has a work permit and a greater sense of financial security and stability. Additionally, with help from LACLJ, Jessica will soon file for permanent residency, which will make her eligible for financial aid so she can achieve her dream of going to college.

*Name changed to protect client privacy.

LACLJ & GIBSON DUNN PRO BONO ATTORNEYS WIN MAJOR APPELLATE VICTORY FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Camila* came to LACLJ after losing custody of her seven-year-old son to her abusive ex-partner, Miguel*. Miguel had been physically, verbally, and emotionally abusive throughout Camila's relationship with him, beating her weekly, and holding a knife to his neck twice, threatening to kill himself if Camila ever left him.



Camila and her son finally did leave Miguel but Camila still wanted her son to have a relationship with his father. Camila agreed to let Miguel take their son for three weeks over the summer. At the end of the three weeks, however, instead of returning the child to Camila, Miguel kept the child, hired an attorney, and filed a petition for parentage, custody, and child support. Camila could not afford to hire an attorney and showed up for

the hearing on her own, completely bewildered by the process. The Court awarded joint legal custody but sole physical custody of the child to Miguel, based on the only evidence provided in the case by Miguel's attorney that the child was currently living with Miguel and that his best school option was near Miguel's home.

Desperate to get back her child, Camila sought legal assistance at the Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice (LACLJ). LACLJ immediately helped Camila file a request for a domestic violence restraining order (DVRO) against Miguel. Given the plethora of evidence of domestic violence Miguel committed against Camila (some of which had been documented in police reports), Camila was granted her request for a DVRO. The Court, however, refused to change the previously issued custody and visitation order, which meant Camila's son still remained mostly with Miguel and Camila could only see him on weekends.

LACLJ, with the help of its steadfast pro bono appellate partner, Gibson Dunn, immediately appealed the trial court's decision, arguing that the trial court erred in maintaining Miguel's primary physical custody of the child after finding that Miguel had

committed several acts of domestic violence.

On July 31, 2018, the Second District Court of Appeal (Los Angeles), agreed with the LACLJ-Gibson Dunn appellate attorney team and ruled that, in such a case, family courts must make specific findings, in writing or on the record, about the seven factors listed in Family Code Section 3044, including whether the abusive partner has successfully completed a parenting class, a batterer's treatment program, and an alcohol/drug abuse counseling program, before ruling on custody and visitation.

Thanks to LACLJ and Gibson Dunn's zealous advocacy, there is now a [published decision](#) that requires judicial officers to complete a thorough analysis of the abusive partner's record and behavior before awarding that party custody of any child. This will have a tremendously positive impact for domestic violence survivors up and down the state who find themselves in court fighting to keep their children.

*Parties' names have been changed to protect the clients' privacy.

LACLJ'S DIANE TRUNK RECEIVES BETTY FISCHER AWARD



LACLJ is proud to announce that the LA County Domestic Violence Council has awarded LACLJ's Director of Evaluation, Policy & Practice, Diane Trunk, with the Betty Fisher Award for her outstanding commitment and dedication to the field of domestic violence prevention and intervention.

We sat down with Diane to learn more about her and her job at LACLJ:

Why did you join LACLJ?

Opportunities to work on impact evaluation of legal services are very rare - when I heard that LACLJ was pursuing that type of work, I couldn't resist.

What is one of the most rewarding aspects of your job?

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is directing our Community Care Advocacy (CCA) Program. It is a very innovative model where students who are pursuing their Masters in Social Work degrees work alongside attorneys to provide supportive services to clients. These CCA interns have mental health superpowers which can be extremely helpful to traumatized clients.

What do you wish other people knew about LACLJ's work?

I wish people really understood the life-long impact a restraining order can have for a

survivor who wants one. Research shows it's one of the most effective interventions to help stop domestic violence.

Congrats on receiving this well-deserved award, Diane!

LACLJ's 45TH ANNIVERSARY AWARDS GALA WAS A BIG SUCCESS!

On May 31, 2018, LACLJ celebrated its 45th Anniversary Awards Gala with a record-breaking 380 attendees. The event raised over \$300,000 that will support LACLJ's critical provision of holistic legal services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

LACLJ presented this year's Justice Award to [Lisa Vidal](#), the Corporation of the Year Award to [Delta Air Lines](#), the Pro Bono Partner of the Year to [Irell & Manella LLP](#), and the Cultural Ambassador Award to [Jaime Camil](#).

LACLJ's annual gala is our largest fundraiser of the year that brings together community leaders from the nonprofit, legal, and corporate sectors. Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's event a big success!



WORK AT LACLJ!

LACLJ has an immediate opening for a family law attorney to provide legal representation to low-income clients who are survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

Click [here](#) to view the full job description.

We're
hiring!

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