



ILDC NEWSLETTER

Spring Edition | April 2025

A Message from Our Executive Director, Julissa Peña

Dear ILDC Community,

For years, our immigration system has been broken. But today, the stakes have never been higher. Instead of reforming and modernizing our outdated policies, we face an administration that is actively dismantling the very protections immigrants deserve. With every executive order, billions of taxpayer dollars are wasted. The immigration court backlog grows. Families are torn apart. And the foundation of our democracy is under siege.

The Fourteenth Amendment enshrines a fundamental truth: everyone is entitled to fair treatment under the law. This is not a privilege—it is a right. A right that ensures no one is unjustly stripped of life, liberty or property.

Yet, this administration's actions have made its intent crystal clear: to deny immigrants the very due process our Constitution guarantees. They have crippled access to legal representation, fast-tracked deportations and expanded expedited removal for those who, under fair consideration, could qualify for relief. These policies do not reflect justice; they reflect a deliberate effort to silence, marginalize and dehumanize immigrants.

But no matter what, we will not stand by. We will not surrender to fear. We will not be silent. We will not back down.

However, this fight is bigger than any one of us. We need you.

So today, I am calling on each and every one of you to take action right now.

- **Stand with us.**
- **Speak up.** Challenge the false narratives that demonize and dehumanize our immigrant neighbors.
- **Support ILDC's important work.** No donation is too small.
- **Defend our shared mission of justice.**

When you stand with immigrants, you are not just protecting individuals—you are protecting the heart and soul of our community. You are safeguarding the values that make this community—and your home—so special.

The fight is far from over. Together, we will rise.

Julissa Peña

Likelihood of Representation in Immigration Court

- **People in Detention:** rates for people in detention have been around 30%, leaving the remaining 70% without legal counsel.
- **Family units:** in recent years, 70% of family units were unrepresented.
- As of 2018, more than half of children's cases were unrepresented.

Why Does Legal Representation Matter?

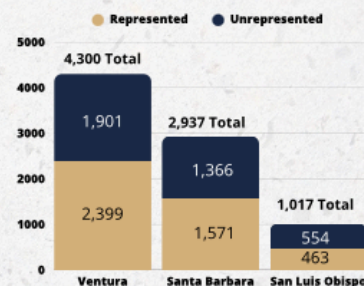
It is nearly impossible to win deportation cases without the assistance of counsel. Only 5% of cases that won between 2007 and 2012 did so without an attorney; 95% of successful cases were represented.

Sources: Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse and the Vera Institute of Justice, "Why Representation Matters?"



People Facing Deportation Proceedings in the Tri-County

Data through December 2024



Introducing Our New Staff Attorney, Jordan Rabani-Jenkins

By Julissa Peña, Executive Director



Photo Courtesy: Jordan Rabani-Jenkins

We are thrilled to welcome Jordan Rabani-Jenkins as the newest staff attorney to the ILDC team! Jordan moved frequently growing up and first moved to Santa Barbara during high school. Jordan received her undergraduate degree in Political Studies with a minor in Spanish from Pitzer College in Claremont, CA, in 2017. She spent two years teaching English in primarily immigrant communities in La Rioja and the Canary Islands, Spain, as a Fulbright grantee. While applying to law school, she taught Spanish at a middle school in Missouri. Jordan graduated from the University of Chicago Law School in June 2023, where she worked at the University's Immigrants' Rights Clinic (IRC). Through the IRC, she found her passion in immigration law, especially for client-centric and trauma-informed lawyering. I had the pleasure of sitting down with Jordan recently to learn more about the journey that led her to the ILDC.

¡Welcome!

Julissa: What challenges do you see immigrants facing today that motivate your work?

Jordan: The current administration has placed immigration at the center of national politics and has framed the conversation with misinformation and fear. This narrative has reduced immigrants to scary statistics rather than recognizing immigrants as whole people with their own unique backgrounds. This climate makes day-to-day activities, such as going to the grocery store or school and securing necessary services very difficult, let alone receiving access to justice. The current administration has also signed a slew of executive orders, which has created additional confusion and new challenges for the immigrant community. I am committed to listening to and advocating for my clients to try to alleviate some of the additional challenges they are now facing.

Julissa: What's one misconception people have about immigration law?

Jordan: I think people who are unfamiliar with immigration law imagine that immigration law is relatively black-and-white applications for family or employment-based visas or for citizenship. In reality, immigration law is complex and includes other legal processes such as removal defense and humanitarian relief. It is hardly ever black-and-white due to the fact that each person has a unique history and different needs.

Julissa: What are some goals you hope to achieve in this role?

Jordan: My primary goal is to secure the best outcomes for my clients possible! Most importantly, I want to ensure my clients are heard and supported. Additionally, I hope to continue developing my advocacy skills, deepening my knowledge of immigration law and improving access to justice for immigrant communities.

Sanación y Conexión: Empowering Lives Through Healing and Support

By Bianca Morales, Case Manager, and
Maria Ornelas Ruvalcaba, AMFT

At Sanación y Conexión, we believe in the transformative power of holistic care. Every day, we witness the profound challenges faced by immigrant families navigating trauma, displacement and unmet basic needs. Our program combines resource navigation with culturally sensitive mental health support to empower individuals on their journey toward healing and stability.



Sanación y Conexión: Empowering Lives Through Healing and Support (Cont.)



OUR MISSION: A Holistic Approach to Healing

Our mission is grounded in the understanding that true healing begins with addressing both physical and emotional needs. Through personalized support, we connect clients to critical resources while fostering emotional resilience through free trauma-informed therapy. Our services include:

- **Resource Navigation:** Connecting families to essentials such as food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare.
- **Mental Health Therapy:** Offering culturally sensitive sessions to address the unique traumas faced by immigrant communities.
- **Advocacy and Holistic Support:** Working with schools, legal systems, and community partners to create lasting change for our clients.

Amplifying Unheard Voices

In mid-2024, we began supporting a teenage girl who was facing immense challenges. Having fled her home country due to parental abandonment, she reunited with her family only to encounter neglect and harmful circumstances. These difficulties, compounded by systemic barriers at school, left her feeling unsafe, isolated and unheard. Her school attendance reduced drastically and she spent most of her time at home withdrawn and dissociating. She confided that she had no one she trusted or felt safe with, and that instead of finding refuge, she had exchanged one form of distress for another.

When she connected with our program, she was frightened—still withdrawn and stuck in survival mode. With ongoing support from our case manager and therapist, she gradually opened up and shared her story. Together, we have worked to improve her home environment to ensure her safety, have advocated for a 504 plan at her school to address her learning needs and have provided her with the emotional tools to rebuild her sense of self-worth and security. Today, she is steadily regaining her strength and is supported by our compassionate network that understands her needs and values her for who she truly is.

Why Your Support Matters

Since our formation last year, we have helped multiple families access stable housing, essential supplies and therapeutic care. Several clients have received free therapy and benefited from our advocacy efforts. Yet, the demand far exceeds our resources. Many of our clients, due to their immigration status, are unable to access traditional aid programs.

This is where you can make a difference. In addition to monetary donations, you can directly support our clients by purchasing essential items from our Amazon wish list. This curated list includes necessities such as hygiene products, school supplies, clothing, and household essentials items that go directly into the hands of the clients who need them most. Every item on the list is selected based on the direct needs and wishes of our clients. By donating tangible goods, you provide immediate relief and comfort to families facing hardship. Every contribution, big or small, makes a lasting impact.



Become a partner in healing and hope -
scan the QR code to view Sanación y Conexión's Amazon wish list.





IMMIGRANT LEGAL DEFENSE CENTER
1136 E Montecito St
Santa Barbara, CA 93103

What's Inside:

- Message from Our ED
- Introducing Our New Staff Attorney
- Sanación y Conexión



Congratulations



Photo Courtesy: Maria Salguero

to ILDC Senior Staff Attorney, Maria Salguero, and her client, "Rodrigo," on their recent win for asylum! "Rodrigo's" successful asylum case underscores the indispensable role of legal representation in **protecting the due process rights of immigrants**. Competent legal counsel is pivotal in navigating the intricate legal landscape, ensuring that clients comprehend their rights and the complexities of their cases. Beyond legal navigation, attorneys play a crucial role in shielding clients from potential re-traumatization during court proceedings. Asylum seekers are often required to recount traumatic experiences in detail, a process that can exacerbate psychological distress. Legal representatives, trained in trauma-informed practices, provide essential support to mitigate this risk, **fostering a more humane and just legal process**. Our legal team is committed to guiding clients like "Rodrigo" through these challenges, offering steadfast support throughout the asylum process.

We celebrate "Rodrigo's" victory and deeply appreciate the trust placed in the Immigrant Legal Defense Center.