



**LEGAL AID
FOUNDATION**
OF LOS ANGELES

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



MORE THAN \$17 MILLION

VALUE OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO CLIENTS

WHAT WE DO

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

- Pursue legal strategies aimed at preventing unfair displacement, preserving and expanding affordable housing and defending civil rights for indigent clients
- Preserve neighborhood stability by providing legal support to community-based organizations seeking to build healthy, economically vibrant communities
- Partner with low-income residents and community-based organizations to challenge policies and practices that contribute to homelessness and remove barriers to housing using community-lawyering approach

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

- Assist and represent survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in family law cases (e.g., obtaining restraining orders, divorces, and orders for child custody, visitation, and support including emergency orders for child abduction)
- Collaborate with courts, domestic violence community-based organizations, and service providers to work with survivors where they are
- Assist and represent immigrant survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, and other serious crimes in obtaining legal status, work authorization, permanent residency, and citizenship

- Represent torture victims and victims of violence in filing for asylum and related immigration relief
- Protect unaccompanied children throughout immigration process

ECONOMIC STABILITY

- Assist vulnerable populations in getting benefits to fulfill basic needs: food, shelter, medical care, and services to attain self-sufficiency
- Fight wage theft, wrongful terminations, and discriminatory employment practices
- Remove barriers to employment related to criminal records, traffic citation fines, and driver licenses, so that individuals can gain access to housing and employment
- Remove barriers to attainment of quality, affordable higher education by helping low-income borrowers manage student debt or seek redress for deceptive and unlawful higher education practices

PROJECT IMPACT - REENTRY ASSISTANCE

- Resolve legal issues which pose barriers to employment for people on probation or parole
- Work in conjunction with employment services and behavioral health partners to provide holistic services to improve employment outcomes and avoid recidivism

EVICTION DEFENSE CENTER

- Provide free direct representation for low-income individuals and families facing eviction
- Defend residents of public housing and Section 8 voucher holders against losing their housing or housing subsidy
- Help clients living in uninhabitable conditions get reductions in rent and necessary repairs through outreach, advocacy, and litigation
- Preserve Rent Stabilized Ordinance tenancies and prevent Rent Stabilization Ordinance violations

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION (Measure H)

- Provide legal services to households facing homelessness, as well as homeless individuals and families, living in South Bay/Harbor area and southeast areas of Los Angeles County
- Provide legal representation to households facing eviction and at imminent risk of homelessness
- Assist homeless individuals by removing legal barriers for housing and income benefits

ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT

- Advocate for language rights in civil courts, administrative proceedings, and other government agencies for limited-English proficient clients



25,831 CALLS HANDLED THROUGH LAFLA'S CALL CENTER



- Provide linguistically accessible, culturally intelligent, and trauma-informed services in all substantive areas LAFLA handles in Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Khmer, Vietnamese, Thai, and other requested languages

VETERANS JUSTICE CENTER

- Obtain life-sustaining income, health, and housing benefits so veterans can thrive
- Prevent veteran homelessness by fighting wrongful evictions and preserving housing vouchers
- Remove barriers to employment to promote self-sufficiency
- Advocate to upgrade unjust less-than-honorable military discharges
- Work with hundreds of pro bono legal volunteers annually to hold large-scale legal clinics for homeless veterans

MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Offer two MLPs: at The Children's Clinic in Long Beach and Martin Luther King Jr. Outpatient Center in Los Angeles
- Provide clients with access to legal services as they seek medical attention from their trusted health care provider
- Enable lawyers to address systemic barriers to health care for those who are low-income

SELF-HELP LEGAL ACCESS CENTERS (Inglewood, Torrance, Santa Monica, and Long Beach)

- Assist self-represented litigants regardless of income or immigration status by completing and reviewing legal documents involving family

law, evictions, and a limited range of other civil legal matters

- Provide appropriate litigant referrals to attorneys, pro-bono/low-cost legal services, community organizations, government agencies, and other public social safety-net programs
- Provide legal education workshops on family law, evictions, and other civil matters such as guardianships, expungements, and conservatorships

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLINICS (Downtown LA, Santa Monica, and Long Beach)

- Provide holistic help to survivors of domestic violence, including restraining orders, custody arrangements, and property control orders

SANTA MONICA COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

- Serve the needs of this client community, especially in the areas of housing and homelessness, employment and tenant harassment

PRO BONO

- Coordinate volunteers to provide comprehensive, free legal services to low-income clients through direct representation, legal projects, and clinics
- Provide legal training to volunteer attorneys, law students, law school graduates, paralegals, undergraduate students, social workers, and translators to assist in providing legal services to expand the number of clients that can be helped



39,849

NUMBER OF PEOPLE HELPED AT SELF-HELP CENTERS AND COMMUNITY CLINICS

LAFLA HELPED MORE THAN **100,000** PEOPLE IN 2018.

LAFLA HAS MORE THAN **1,617** VOLUNTEERS WHO DONATED **47,705** HOURS OF SERVICE.



FROM L TO R: JOY, OLIVIA, BEATRICE, FLOR, APRIL



FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM FOR TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS

April left her family in the Philippines, including her children, for a chance at a better life in the United States. She pursued what she believed to be a legitimate job as a teacher—but that turned out to be a false promise. Instead, April became a victim of human trafficking.

An agency tricked April and countless other women from the Philippines, guaranteeing positions at Los Angeles-area schools. April paid a placement fee of \$10,000 to receive her visa and teaching credentials from a recruiter.

However, once April arrived in the United States, she was shocked to learn the teaching position did not exist. Rather, she worked as a caregiver without pay. The recruiter also forced April to sleep in a living room with no furniture and with several other people at a time. The group was not allowed to leave, and they faced constant threats of arrest and deportation. April suffered severe emotional distress from the recruiter’s verbal abuse and harassment.

Eventually, April worked a string of volunteer teaching jobs for short periods in order to sustain herself. After a few years, she escaped from the recruiter’s house and lived in hiding: “My life was in danger,” said April. “I lived close to the agent, and she had relatives [in the Philippines] so my family might also have been in danger.”

Through other teachers tricked by the same agency, April learned about LAFLA and our advocacy on behalf of trafficking victims. Our Special Counsel on Language Justice, Joann Lee, worked with April as she interviewed with law enforcement—and helped her obtain her T visa. That opened

the door for April’s children to join her: “I wasn’t able to see my kids for six years,” she said. “My visa had expired, but [LAFLA] changed my life... and was able to petition my kids so they are here.”

“My life was in danger.” – April

April is especially thankful her youngest daughter is with her for a specific reason: “[She] has autism, and being here really helps her. She’s now in a school for special kids.”

Over the last few years, April has worked with other LAFLA staff to maintain and adjust her immigration status, including Equal Justice Works Fellow Brian Tan. She now awaits her green card.

LAFLA is one of the few legal aid organizations in the U.S. with a program dedicated to the unique needs of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities. Our API Community Outreach Project ensures our clients have access to the full range of LAFLA services, and advocates for language access in courts and other government settings.

April’s experience is similar to those of the agency’s other victims who received help from LAFLA. According to Olivia, “Before, I was limited...and always afraid. LAFLA gave me the chance to see my family and come back, and then apply for a stable job. To not only survive, but to also help my parents back home.”

“Living here in California is really hard, especially if you don’t have any family—nothing, just myself,” said Joy. “Having LAFLA, and someone who you can lean on and trust is a humongous help.”

After years of hiding in fear, the women are finally free and their futures—along with those of their families—are brighter than ever.



RESTORING DIGNITY AND HONOR OF OUR VETERANS

For Victor, military service was a family tradition: Both his father and grandfather had served in the U.S. Navy. He was proud to follow their example and enlist in the military. Yet he found himself homeless and unemployed shortly after his service ended.

Victor arrived in Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake, as part of the U.S. humanitarian response. More than 300,000 people died in the aftermath of the magnitude 7.0 quake. Victor was a member of a Navy relief team, responsible for transporting food, water, and medical supplies to survivors. He witnessed the devastation of the earthquake firsthand, including piles of decomposing bodies.

During his downtime on the ship, Victor could not escape the earthquake's horrors: His rest quarters were next to the medical ward, where Victor heard the cries and screams of survivors receiving emergency care.

It was not long after the relief mission when Victor's PTSD symptoms began: He felt constant anxiety, and experienced vivid nightmares and intrusive thoughts about death. To numb the pain, Victor drank heavily—which led to a less-than-honorable discharge from the Navy. After that, "I was homeless. I didn't have anything in my pocket," said Victor.

He applied twice for disability benefits, but the Veterans Administration (VA) denied both claims. The VA alleged some of his medical records were missing, and there was insufficient proof he had exposure to a traumatic event.

Victor was still pursuing his claims when he first encountered LAFLA staff at the VA West LA Medical Center, during a clinic. Veterans Justice Center Attorney Louis Truong filed an appeal on Victor's behalf, arguing that publicly available information about Victor's ship in Haiti corroborated his claim in the absence of medical records—proving he had suffered PTSD-inducing stress under VA precedent.

At first, the VA granted his appeal, confirming the onset of symptoms during Victor's Haiti mission, and awarded him a 70-percent disability rating for severe PTSD symptoms, along with back pay.

Louis did not stop there. He continued to fight on Victor's behalf—and less than a year later, the VA awarded Victor a 100-percent disability rating.

"It's hard to think where I would be [without LAFLA]," said Victor. "I've come a long way. Without LAFLA, I'd still be trying to fight my case right now."

LAFLA's Veterans Justice Center helps reinstate the dignity of low-income Veterans who are grappling with a range of legal issues, from VA and government benefits to housing issues and military discharge upgrades.

Meanwhile, Victor is enjoying his new life, along with a renewed sense of hope—and credits LAFLA and the dedication of his attorney for the turnaround: "He changed my life for the best. I can't thank him enough."

"It's hard to think where I would be [without LAFLA]. I've come a long way." – Victor

1,375
VETERANS HELPED



DEFENDING TENANTS FROM WRONGFUL EVICTIONS

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For nearly 20 years, Maritza has lived in the same rent-controlled apartment in South Los Angeles. She is the primary caretaker for her adult son, David, whose leg was amputated several years ago. Despite a consistent record of paying her rent on time, Maritza nearly lost her home after a new owner took over her building.

Maritza had dutifully paid her rent by the 15th of each month during most of her tenancy. Her \$800 monthly rent for her one-bedroom unit is well below the market rate.

Yet the new landlord did not comply with this earlier arrangement. Instead, the new company began strategically targeting Maritza—issuing her eviction notices each month when she did not pay her rent by the fifth.

Within six months, Maritza faced her first eviction action. She sought help from LAFLA upon a friend's recommendation. Fortunately, Eviction Defense Center Attorney Joshua Johnson was able to negotiate a dismissal. Yet Maritza's ordeal was not over.

She received another Unlawful Detainer just a few months later: "I was so sad, unhappy, so stressed," Maritza said. She eventually had to leave her job over the ordeal, due to the amount of time she dedicated to her fight.

LAFLA staff helped Maritza throughout the process, which culminated in a jury trial. Eviction Defense Center Attorneys Eric Daco and Sheyda Joolharzadeh prepared Maritza, who

was nervous: "LAFLA helped me a lot... Every time that I needed them, they were there with a response."

In the end, the jury reached a unanimous verdict in favor of Maritza. Her courtroom victory motivated Maritza to sign a new lease, which changed the terms of her tenancy and extended her \$800 monthly rent.

"Estoy muy agradecida con LAFLA por todo lo que hicieron conmigo y con mi hijo." – Maritza

LAFLA's Eviction Defense Center advocates for low-income individuals and families threatened with eviction, and fights to preserve safe, affordable housing. Staff ensures tenants' rights are upheld in the face of adversity.

Maritza credits LAFLA with giving her a sense of empowerment: "Estoy muy agradecida con LAFLA por todo lo que hicieron conmigo y con mi hijo. Principalmente por mi hijo, que me ayudaron estar en este lugar. Estoy muy contenta con ellos. Muy feliz." ("I'm very grateful for LAFLA for everything they did with me and my son. Mainly for my son—[this] helped me stay in this place. I'm very happy with them. Very happy.")

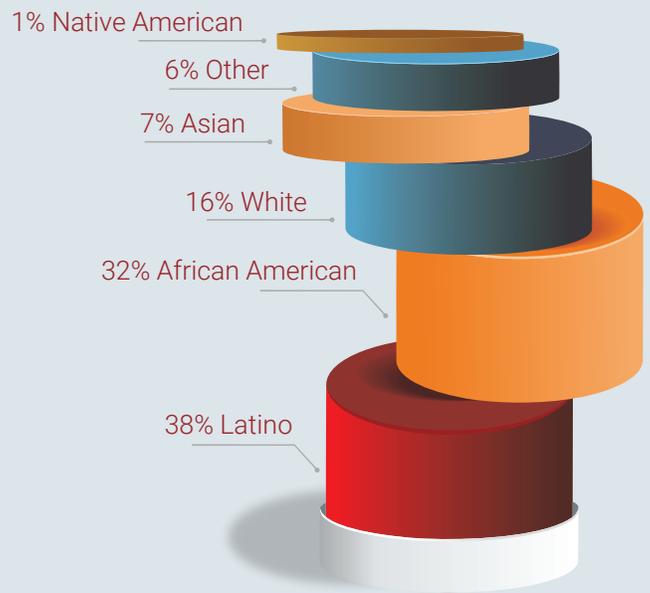
(Source: Shriver Housing Project)

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2018



SUPPORT & REVENUE	TOTAL
Income:	\$18,274,125
Government Contracts: \$11,758,653	
Grants and Contributions: \$3,424,245	
Special Events: \$703,480	
Misc. Income: \$2,387,747	
Expenses:	\$16,765,940
Program Services: \$13,314,140	
Support Services: \$3,017,118	
Fundraising Services \$434,682	
Donated services from volunteers: \$16,765,940	

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS



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 PRO BONO TRAININGS
 AVAILABLE THROUGH
 PRO BONO
 TRAINING INSTITUTE
 (pbtraining.org)

93,250
 USERS ON LAFLA WEBSITE



- 33% of our clients are disabled
- 24% of our clients are seniors
- 9% of our clients are veterans



ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNITY OFFICE LOCATIONS

Ron Olson Justice Center

1550 W. 8th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90017
Tel: 800-399-4529

East Los Angeles

5228 Whittier Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90022
Tel: 800-399-4529

Long Beach

601 Pacific Ave.
Long Beach, CA 90802
Tel: 800-399-4529

Santa Monica

1640 5th St., Suite 124
Santa Monica, CA 90401
Tel: 800-399-4529

South Los Angeles

7000 S. Broadway
Los Angeles, CA 90003
Tel: 800-399-4529



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