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CARECEN's History

In 1983, a group of Salvadoran refugees and human rights advocates in Los Angeles formed what is now the Central American Resource Center-CARECEN- to fight for the rights of Central American immigrants and secure legal status for the thousands fleeing the violence of civil war.

Starting off as a legal resource center, where CARECEN attorneys represented detainees and community organizers provided social services to refugee families, it quickly became apparent that CARECEN needed to go beyond their scope of work. CARECEN organized international delegations, defended human rights work in El Salvador, and played a significant role in the solidarity movement in Los Angeles. In addition to advocating for public policy that would have profound long-term effects on a growing Central American community.

CARECEN drew the American public's attention to the unfair treatment of Central American refugees and campaigned for Salvadorans to receive the same exemption from deportation as refugees fleeing war and violence in other countries. CARECEN met with lawmakers who had been ignoring the legitimate asylum claims of detained and deported Central American refugees, while at the same time accepting asylum claims from other countries affected by civil war. CARECEN participated in a series of lawsuits that eventually resulted in some measures of protection for refugees. This includes the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA); as well as the Immigration Act of 1990 that established Temporary Protected Status (TPS), a program that protects individuals from deportation and allows them to lawfully live and work in the U.S. if their countries cannot take them because of civil war, natural disasters, or other temporary conditions. CARECEN worked to win TPS for Salvadorans and helped thousands of people process their applications. In the 1990s, CARECEN fought against California's racist Proposition 187 initiative, which denied basic services and education to undocumented immigrants and their (U.S.-born) children.

The fight for immigrant rights continues at the center of CARECEN's mission. Ensuring that immigrants can become strong community leaders and improve their lives and their communities is our organizational drive. In its more than 39 years of existence, CARECEN has grown from a small grassroots group to the largest Central American organization in the country, providing high-quality immigration legal services and organizing, policy, and advocacy programs.



THANKS TO THE CARECEN STAFF FOR YOUR COMMITMENT!

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Morales, Esther M

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Morataya, Kassandra B

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Panahpour, Azita

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Perez, Christopher L

Perez, Jennifer

Peterson, Christopher C

Pineda, Martin A

Pineda, Samantha

Pinzon, Jacqueline

Pitones, Yessenia M

Polanco, Michelle

Porras Figueroa, Marilyn E

Portobanco, Sabrina E

Quiju, Marcela E

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CARECEN's 2022

After two years of a pandemic, we have all dealt with our fair share of illness, a sharp recession, and the impact of inflation. This is especially true for the immigrant families that CARECEN serves, who are among the hardest hit. The pandemic exposed structural inequalities and the lack of an existing safety network for our community. We pride ourselves on being able to stand as a community pillar during these difficult times.

Coming out of the pandemic, we realized the critical need for our clients to experience wraparound services beyond legal services. Most of our families, whether in our Legal Department or through our Organizing, Advocacy, and Policy Department, need additional resources and support to continue with our services or our programs; it is fundamental. Therefore, we have taken a step in this direction by hiring our first-ever case manager and we hope to expand our holistic approach and social service unit in the coming year.

All the while, we continued to partner with health clinics and other community-based organizations to promote vaccine equity and education, especially for low-income Latino men at our Day Labor Center.

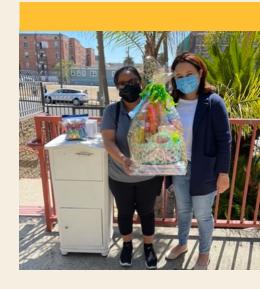
In addition, it was critical to continue placing pressure on the Biden administration by rallying around the immediate termination of draconian border policies, such as Title 42. While it was challenging to keep community members engaged with no solidified bill or legislative avenue to residency, it was critical to keep pressure on Congress to pass a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, TPS holders, farm workers, and all immigrants vulnerable at risk of deportation. We know Temporary Protections will continue to leave members of our immigrant community vulnerable. Therefore, we will continue to fight for permanent solutions for our community.











Legal Services

"The work we have done and continue to do this year would not be possible without our amazing staff and group of volunteers. Similarly, we could not have reached and assisted as many people and Angelenos as we have this year without the support of our valuable partners." - Managing Attorney, Miriam Nunez.

As our community members say, La union hace la fuerza, "unity is strength." Unity, collaborations, and relationship building are pivotal in our work. From staff working closely with our clients to partnerships with neighborhood Councilmen, these successful partnerships allow CARECEN to continue its mission of providing quality legal work to our migrant community. Councilmember District 9 Curren Price Jr. granted \$250,000 for immigration consultations and case preparation. Los Angeles Public Library has helped fund our virtual Citizenship Classes, the City of Bell Gardens and the New Americans Campaign (NAC) promoted our citizenship hybrid services, and newly established partnership with Change Reaction, the largest and most impactful direct giving platform in Los Angeles.

Our Post-Pandemic Reality: Beyond the Legal Work

In addition to assisting hundreds of *Survivors of Violence* with their legal paperwork, including work permits and status adjustments, our Survivors of Violence Unit (SVU) has gone above and beyond to provide more holistic support for its clients. They have created their *CARE Committee*, which has collected and donated holiday gifts, and winter clothing for our client's families. The team put together Easter baskets for 4 families and partnered with Baby to Baby to provide back-to-school backpacks filled with supplies donated by the team to give to 10 children from our client families.

Legal Services By The Numbers

98%

Success Rate

Of all citizenship applicants, 98% have passed their citizenship interviews and exams.

830

DACA Applications Filed

By our DACA General Department.

1,970

One-on-one Consultations

Led by our College Dream Centers Team.

464

Intakes Competed

By our satellite office in San Fernando Valley. These include adjustments of status, DACA, U-Visas, and Work Permits. **150**

Dismissal of Removal Proceedings

Dismissals for children and families across our Los Angeles & San Bernardino offices.

\$18,546

Aid provided by Change Reaction Donors

For one-time assistance with filing fees, rent, utilities, and other unexpected circumstances.



Organizing, Advocacy, and Education

This year we continued to engage with Congressional offices around the issue of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and have expanded our relationships with a few of them - mostly with our local elected leaders here in Los Angeles. We advocated for the extension of protections and new TPS designations. Venezuela, Afghanistan, Cameroon, Sudan, and Ukraine were successfully assigned TPS status. Activism took the form of call-in days to Congress, press conferences, and rallies. Our local TPS committee members also engaged in press conferences as speakers and local leaders. CARECEN remains an important partner in advocacy for many statewide campaigns. This year, we engaged in Immigrant Day of Action to lobby for our policy priorities, such as Notario Bill, California IDs for All, and the VISION Act!

In education, we have emphasized our advocacy and programs for the newcomer population of students in our district. For newcomer migrant youth to successfully integrate, they require quality education that centers on their needs, language, and culture. We therefore participated and cohosted candidate forums to engage with our future school board members and press them to take newcomer migrant youth a priority. In addition, we launched our Newcomer Advocacy Coalition! NAC is a local group of community partners that will work on identifying gaps in education for newcomer youth and take lead in advocacy efforts for these issues to be elevated and addressed







Organizing & Advocacy By The Numbers



