

CHANGELAWYERS[®]



CHANGE FROM THE INSIDE





FIRESIDE CHAT WITH
Margie Estrada



**Chief Counsel,
California State Senate
Judiciary Committee**

Margie Estrada, Chief Counsel at the California State Senate Judiciary Committee, has had immeasurable impact on the protection and advancement of immigrants' rights in California.

The legislation that Margie was instrumental in crafting expanded the universe of unaccompanied minors who can receive immigration relief, enables unaccompanied minors to have state paid legal representation, requires law enforcement to issue crime victims certifications critical to their U-Visa applications, is shutting down for-profit immigrant detention facilities in California, and more.

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2021 SCHOLARS

Our most well known program, ChangeLawyers Scholarships, provide critical support to first and third year law students. In the 31 years that we've existed, we've awarded scholarships to over 1,250 first generation, BIPOC, Queer, Non Binary, and Womxn students.



Ifechinyere Agbodike

Ifechinyere Agbodike is passionate about helping advance human rights on a global level and became motivated to pursue a law degree at a young age after hearing her father's retelling of his survival experience during the Nigerian Civil war. Ifechinyere is passionate about helping trauma survivors seek justice, which led her to volunteer with organizations like Agape International missions, which provides aid to sex trafficking survivors in Cambodia; Counsel to Secure Justice, which provides legal aid to sexual abuse survivors in India. It also lead Ifechinyere to intern in the Sex Crimes Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office. Ifechinyere hopes to work as public interest lawyer in the Los Angeles Area. Her ultimate career goal is to start a non-profit legal aid clinic that assists survivors of human trafficking. Ifechinyere is a 3L at Pepperdine Caruso School of Law, where she is concurrently earning a master of dispute resolution from the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution.

**Pepperdine Caruso
School of Law**

**SPONSORED BY DANIEL GOODMAN
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**





Jerry Agustin

Jerry Agustin's commitment to social justice and public service stems from his upbringing as a first generation Mexican-American from Los Angeles. He personally experienced a lot of hardships impacting the Latinx community, such as the effect of having a parent deported or the effect of having a family member beaten by police. Jerry plans to work with a non-profit that defends the rights of undocumented immigrants, or in criminal defense that provides services to indigent clients. Jerry graduated from UC Hastings College of the Law in 2020.



**UC Hastings
College of the Law**

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MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP





Violeta Alvarez

Violeta Alvarez grew up in a single parent household in San Diego, near the U.S./Mexico Border. A first-generation college student who completed her studies at the University of California, Berkeley, with a degree in Political Science, she is a Latina and parent of two boys, twelve and four-years old. Her motivation and commitment to social justice stems from her lived experiences growing up in a marginalized, low-income, and underrepresented community. At an early age, she went through many personal obstacles that ultimately led her to be passionate about bringing change to the criminal justice system and utilizing higher education as an empowerment tool for those who are most marginalized. Violeta is a 3L at UC Hastings College of the Law.

UC Hastings
College of the Law

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LAWYERS ASSOCIATION





Tiffany Avila

A first-generation college graduate from UC Davis, Tiffany Avila comes from a family of Mexican immigrants. After receiving her degree, she worked as a Victim Services Program Assistant for the Yolo County District Attorney's Office and later as a Victim Advocate for the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office. After serving in these roles she was certain she wanted to do more for her community by becoming a District Attorney. In law school, she became co-founder for the Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Social Justice Journal of Law. Tiffany spent her 1L summer as a law clerk for Alameda County District Attorney's Office in their Consumer Fraud Unit. During her 2L fall semester she was a law clerk for the Domestic Violence Unit at San Francisco County District Attorney's Office. This past spring Tiffany worked for the California Supreme Court as a Capital Central Staff extern working on death penalty cases. She spent her summer as a 2L honors law clerk for the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office. Tiffany is a 3L at the Golden Gate University School of Law.

**Golden Gate University
School of Law**

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Amara Blades

Amara Blades' own racially chilling work experience drove her to become an advocate for people of color in the workplace. She witnessed how human resources at her company prioritized profits over people—silencing victims of sexual harassment with settlement agreements while their high-earning harassers went unpunished and chilling employee rights with mandatory arbitration clauses. To that end, Amara has sought out work experiences that go along with her social justice spirit of fighting for discriminated employees. During her first year in law school, Amara served as an Intake Officer at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. She also worked part-time during the academic term at Sheik Law, a small employment litigation firm. Amara spoke to and defended discriminated employees at both of those internships by using the legal system to achieve just results. Amara continued in the field of workers' rights at Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld and the California Nurses Association fighting for worker's rights. Amara is a 3L at the University of San Francisco School of Law.

University of San Francisco School of Law

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BAR ASSOCIATION OF LOS ANGELES





Equiana Brown

Equiana Brown decided to pursue a legal education after working in the non-profit sector and seeing how black and brown communities were being railroaded by white saviors with JD credentials and how communities with soul were being whitewashed. She plans to expose and educate the next generation of black and brown children about the law and the legal profession. She wants to diversify the field and make the practice of law more attainable for individuals from spaces where she grew. Equiana Brown is a 3L at Pepperdine Caruso School of Law.

Pepperdine Caruso
School of Law

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BAR ASSOCIATION





John Paul Chakbazof

John Paul Chakbazof is pursuing a career at the Riverside Public Defender's Office and will use his knowledge and skills to best help those who are less fortunate. In an effort to better understand the system, his past experience also includes working at the Orange County District Attorney's office. In the future, he plans on applying to become a judge and contribute to our social justice system. John Paul is a 3L at Western State College of Law.

**Western State
College of Law**

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Maryam Emadi



The only reason Maryam Emadi attended law school was to serve the public. In her current externship with Legal ArtWorks, a non-profit IP organization, she demonstrates her commitment to work in public services by helping the clients with their IP legal issues. Prior to law school, she faced numerous challenges in her technical career that helped her become familiar with the similar experiences of female engineers in male-dominated fields. These challenges will help her advocate for a brighter future for women. She plans to change policies to pave the way for the next generation of female scientists. Maryam is a 3L at Golden Gate University School of Law.

**Golden Gate
School of Law**

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Emmanuel Garcia

At 13 years old, Emmanuel Garcia was taken from his parents and put through the foster care system. He later joined a gang. His best friend was shot in a parking lot and Emmanuel held him as he died. By 16, he was homeless sleeping at parks and at 17 he dropped out of high school. On one occasion, he found one of his best friends overdosed and attempted to give mouth to mouth to his cold body. He knew he had to change his ways and he decided he wanted to be a defense attorney. On Emmanuel's first day at law school, the security would not let him in the building. He stood there searching through his email for his acceptance letter while dozens of people were walking in and out unchecked. He knew he was in the right place because to make systematic changes sometimes you have to go to where you don't belong. After law school, Emmanuel will be working his dream job as a Los Angeles Public Defender. After having graduated with honors from UCLA, Emmanuel is now a 3L at UC Hastings College of the Law.

**UC Hastings
College of the Law**

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Marco Garcia

Marco A. Garcia is a first-generation Mexican American from Chula Vista, CA. He attended college and law school locally, focusing his efforts on connecting and engaging latinx to pursue legal careers through mentorship opportunities. He became motivated to pursue a career in criminal prosecution because of the important role prosecutors play in the community. Marco is a 3L at California Western School of Law.



California Western
School of Law

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LAWYERS ASSOCIATION





Ryann Garcia

Ryann Garcia focuses on Federal and Tribal Indian Law, with an emphasis in international Indigenous human rights protections. Post-graduation, she is eager to serve California Native communities to expand Indian rights and interests. Her goal is to utilize her academic and legal background to employ effective tools in the fight to restore Indigenous histories and for greater Indigenous self-determination. She is particularly interested in continuing her work with California Native tribes in cultural and natural resources protection, land claims, tribal economic development, and ultimately asserting greater tribal sovereignty. Ryann is a 3L at the UCLA School of Law where she specializes in Critical Race Studies and International and Comparative Law.



UCLA School of Law

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LAW ASSOCIATION





Alexandria Hopson

Alexandria Hopson has a passion for social justice as shown through her commitment to furthering women and African Americans in the San Diego legal community. Specifically, Alexandria has spent time during law school developing platforms to allow students to engage in tough conversations regarding the civil injustices within the community, as well as researching issues relating to women's rights, and fighting for 20,000 State employees to receive benefits relating to direct deposit. Alexandria plans on working in civil litigation as a way to create representation for African American women who are interested in civil litigation. She also plans on staying active and continuing to serve legal organizations to further help create change in areas like police accountability, women's rights both in law and in the community, and diversity in all workplaces. Alexandria is a 3L at Thomas Jefferson School of Law.



**Thomas Jefferson
School of Law**

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Jina Kim

During the beginning of her family's story in America, Jina Kim and her family struggled to survive in a foreign place with no voice and no power. These early experiences taught her the importance of listening to and amplifying the voices of people who our society often silences, and motivated my decision to pursue community lawyering. Jina will work with a grassroots organization to advocate with low-income residents of color for environmental justice and community resilience. Jina is a 3L at the UC Berkeley School of Law.



**UC Berkeley
School of Law**

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Marcus King

As a child growing up in South Los Angeles, Marcus King faced significant adversity from a young age, having lost his father when he was 8 and losing his mother when he was 14. He is disabled after losing his sight in his left eye from a drunk driver hitting him on October 4, 2000. After working for years, he attended a community college, and later attended UC Davis, where the African-American students comprised less than 3% of the student body. In law school, he competed and won the annual closing argument competition, and went on to win the best oralist as a member of our moot court team. Marcus plans to go work for the Public Defender, representing indigent clients. He didn't choose the set of facts he's been given, but he does have the opportunity with each client to give them the best representation possible. Marcus King is a 3L at the University of La Verne College of Law.



**University of La Verne,
College of Law**

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Leighton Lee

Leighton Lee is motivated to pursue a career in criminal prosecution. She has worked for several district attorney's offices throughout Northern California working in both felony and misdemeanor units with the San Francisco and San Mateo District Attorneys' offices, and with the human trafficking unit at the Fresno District Attorney's office. She participated in her law school's Paul C. Newman International Human Rights clinic where she researched and drafted a report on Social Media Grooming under the Resolution for the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children. She plans to work with the Santa Clara County District Attorney maintaining the highest ethical prosecution standards and working to reform the criminal justice system. Leighton Lee is a 3L at the University of San Francisco School of Law.

**University of San
Francisco School of Law**

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MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP





Abdiel Lewis



An immigrant from the Caribbean island of Trinidad and Tobago and the first in her family to attend a four-year university and law school, Abdiel Lewis is no stranger to overcoming obstacles. Raised by a single mother who often worked two to three caregiving jobs at a time, Abdiel mirrored her mother's tenacious and resolute spirit. Her public service path became clearer during her 1L summer as a law clerk at the Los Angeles Office of the County Counsel. She assisted the office's Affirmative Litigation and Consumer Protection Division, working on assignments involving companies that took advantage of their customers and employees. After that experience, she concentrated on consumer law opportunities, interning at non-profit organizations, Bay Area Legal Aid and Public Counsel. She also interned at the California Attorney General's Office's Consumer Protection Section and the Federal Trade Commission. Abdiel is a 3L at Santa Clara University School of Law.

**Santa Clara University
School of Law**

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Lilian Lopez



Lilian Lopez was born and raised in Oakland, California, and is the daughter of Mexican immigrants. At fourteen years old, Lilian joined Centro Legal De La Raza's Youth Law Academy (YLA) where she received mentorship and learned about critical issues and injustices in the legal system. This early exposure to the legal field gave her confidence in her ability to make positive contributions to immigrant, low-income, and underrepresented communities by pursuing a career as a public interest attorney. Lilian now serves on the YLA advisory board where she is able to give back to youth of color through the same program that helped her achieve her dreams of attending law school. Lilian believes diversity in the legal field is of utmost importance and intends to use her privilege as an attorney to mentor underrepresented students and uplift marginalized communities. A proud first-generation college graduate from UC Davis, Lillian is a 3L at the UC Davis School of Law.

UC Davis School of Law

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LAWYERS ASSOCIATION



Amanda Mannshahia

After witnessing the injustices of the criminal justice system firsthand, Amanda Kay Mannshahia dedicated her time in law school to re-imagining justice to meet the needs of the people of Los Angeles County. She plans to work as a criminal litigator in the public sector and to continue to challenge the status quo of criminal justice reform. Amanda is a 3L at Loyola Law School.



**Loyola Law School
(Los Angeles)**

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MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Cheyenne Martin

Cheyenne Martin's motivation to attend law school stemmed from the loss of her uncle at the hands of LAPD officers when she was 12 years old. After experiencing that loss, she began to notice the deep divide between her community and the criminal justice system and the need for change. Her goal is to work as a Public Defender and represent indigent members of the community, while advocating from criminal justice reform. She has been, and always will be, willing to fight for the changes she wants to see in the world. Cheyenne Martin is a 3L at McGeorge School of Law.



McGeorge School of Law

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Ashar Philson

Ashar Philson is a woman of color who understands the importance of “breaking the glass ceiling” that often creates a disadvantage for people of color in the legal field. She plans on creating a mentorship program between practicing attorneys and minority youths who aspire to practice law. Her goal is to provide these youth with a supportive network early-on that can guide them in an efficient path towards achieving their successful careers as lawyers. She also hopes that this program will heighten the admission rate of minorities in law schools. After graduation Ashar is very interested in practicing Intellectual Property Law. During her down time, she loves to go on hikes and has a passion for cooking. After having received her Bachelor’s in English at San Diego State University, Ashar is now a 3L at the University of San Francisco School of Law.



University of San Francisco School of Law

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Mirelle Raza

Mirelle Raza believes that prosecutors fighting for the people should look like the communities they represent. She strives to be part of this change. She believes that a fair and just criminal justice system includes ensuring victims are heard, and also that just and thoughtful charging decisions are made. Walking through some of the most challenging moments of survivors life by their side is a privilege and great responsibility, and something that drives Mirelle to become the strongest advocate possible. Mirelle Raza is a 3L at USC Gould School of Law.



USC Gould School of Law

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Varun Sabharwal

Varun Sabharwal came to the U.S. from India, in 2018, with the hope that he could escape the burgeoning theocracy that his country had become. However, he was also exposed to inequities that countless immigrants and asylum seekers have faced over the past few years. He is passionate about pursuing a career in asylum law and aims to be able to work to alleviate the immense burdens the legal system places on immigrant communities of color in San Diego. Varun Sabharwal is a 3L at California Western School of Law.

**California Western
School of Law**

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Bria Saunders



Bria Saunders would like more people that look like her making the decisions for the people that look like her. Blacks currently make up about 12% of the U.S. population. Unfortunately, they only account for about 5% of lawyers. Whereas their white counterparts' makeup about 59% of the U.S. and account for about 75% of lawyers. Bria believes the system cannot effectively create change until the voices in the room represent the communities that they serve. As a lawyer, Bria will represent for those who are not seen and be a voice for those who are not heard. Bria believes that Black Women Lawyers have a legacy of changing the world and she hopes to continue that legacy as an advocate to help increase education, knowledge, and wealth in urban communities; and to support efforts that offer opportunities of higher education and equal opportunities to those impacted by a system that weighs heavily against them. Bria is a 3L at Loyola University College of Law in New Orleans, Louisiana.

**Loyola College of Law
(New Orleans)**

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Asia Thompson

Asia Thompson became motivated to pursue a career as a public defender after seeing those in her community victimized by police and the criminal justice system. Asia plans to work at the Los Angeles Public Defender's Office and will become a mentor to high school students who are a part of the law academies, which exposed her to the field of law. She also plans to become more involved with causes such as the abolition of prisons and laws such as the death penalty and mandatory minimums. Asia is a 3L at the UCLA School of Law.



UCLA School of Law

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Victor Valdez Gonzalez

Despite the challenges he has faced as an undocumented immigrant, Victor Valdez Gonzalez decided to become an attorney to advocate for those in his community who have not had the same opportunities as he did. He is committed to defending the rights and advancing the opportunities of immigrant communities throughout California. He will create a better legal system by advocating for policies that enable immigrants across the state to thrive. Victor is a 3L Santa Clara University Law School.

**Santa Clara University
School of Law**

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2021 FELLOWS

ChangeLawyers has provided \$300,000 in funding to formidable legal non-profits so that they can hire diverse law students, recent law graduates, and early career lawyers. ChangeLawyers Fellows work on a wide range of issues including immigration, criminal justice, civil rights, environmental justice, and more. Mentored by legal trailblazers, our Fellows provide critical legal services to some of the most underinvested communities across the state. We are inspired by our Fellows. They moves us all closer to realizing the original American promise, justice for all.



ChangeLawyers Next Gen Award

Maddie Flood



Maddie joined UnCommon Law in 2020. Prior to joining UnCommon Law, Maddie practiced public benefits law at Homeless Action Center. During law school Maddie was a William H. Gates Public Service Law Scholar. She served on the board of the Incarcerated Mothers Advocacy Project, supporting incarcerated women who were going through the dependency process. She was also a board member of the Black Law Students Association and served as a law student liaison to the Washington Supreme Court's Minority and Justice Commission. Through the Race and Justice Clinic, Maddie supported clients in their post-conviction relief efforts and held workshops in institutions for incarcerated youth. Maddie interned with the Institutions Project at Columbia Legal Services and the Re-Entry and Youth Justice Units at Bay Area Legal Aid. Prior to law school, Maddie worked as the Development Manager at Rockwood Leadership Institute and served as a Jesse M. Unruh Assembly Fellow for Nancy Skinner in the California State Assembly. She was admitted to the California State Bar in December 2019. Maddie holds a B.A. in Politics and African American Studies from the University of San Francisco and a J.D. from the University of Washington School of Law.

Criminal Justice Reform

UNCOMMON LAW



Princess Manasseh

A journalist turned attorney, Princess Manasseh has always had a passion for communication. As a second-generation Los Angeleno, communicating with people from a variety of backgrounds is a skill she learned early on. Princess' experiences range from Staff Writer for the Los Angeles Sentinel Newspaper, to Fellow for the University of Miami Health Rights Clinic, to Editing Research Assistant on a scholarly article examining the Colombian FARC Peace Deal. She brings to this Fellowship honed written and oral advocacy skills, and a deep passion for social justice. As a descendent of the people who built this nation under the force of terrorism, serving populations experiencing human rights violations akin to what her ancestors survived is meaningful community activism Princess feels privileged to take part in. Her work at Al Otro Lado is focused on the Border Right's Project by providing direct representation to detained asylum seekers. Princess attended California State University, Los Angeles on a tennis scholarship where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast Journalism. She holds a Juris Doctor from the University of Miami School of Law.

Deportation Defense

AL OTRO LADO





Kelsey Morales

Kelsey Morales is an immigration attorney with the Alameda County Public Defender's Office. In this fellowship, she has had the privilege to be advocating for the release of detained immigrants before the federal district courts. Her work focuses on habeas petitions, challenging the prolonged detention of our community members by the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Prior to the fellowship with the Alameda County Public Defender's Office, she worked as an associate attorney and research and writing fellow with Van Der Hout LLP, a public interest immigration law firm, representing immigrants and advocating for their rights before the immigration courts, federal agencies, and federal circuit and district courts. In 2016, Kelsey graduated from Northeastern University School of Law, located in Boston, Massachusetts.

Immigration Litigation

ALAMEDA COUNTY PUBLIC
DEFENDOR'S OFFICE





Jessica Valadez

Jessica's two-year fellowship beginning Fall 2020 will support tribal communities and child welfare systems to prevent, identify, and address the commercial sexual exploitation of native youth in California through legal advocacy, education, and collaboration. Centuries of eradication, erasure, and assimilation-based policies sought to separate and destabilize native families. As a result, a deep mistrust between native communities and local, state, and federal governments developed. These policies have resulted in native youth facing higher than average rates of addiction, suicide, health disparities, and low academic achievement. One of the most pernicious remnants of this systematic oppression is the ongoing commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of native youth. Despite legal and policy changes across the state, recognizing that CSE is an issue of child abuse, little has been done to address this issue among native youth. Jessica aims to bridge the gap between local and state governments and tribal communities so youth can receive access to culturally appropriate legal services. Jessica's experiences as a parentified minor and first-generation woman of color drive her to advocate for youth and other vulnerable populations. Jessica is a graduate of UC Hastings College of the Law.

Indigenous People's Rights

EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS FELLOW HOSTED
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