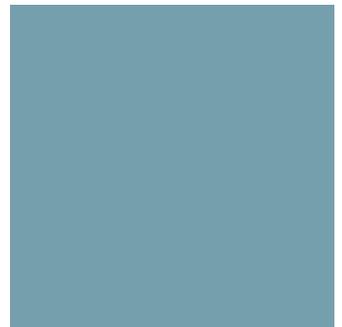


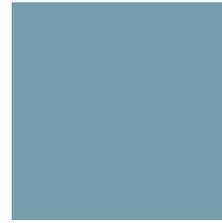
**LEGAL AID  
FOUNDATION**  
OF LOS ANGELES

Justice • Equity • Hope

**2023**

ANNUAL REPORT





Dear Friends and Supporters,

**Making equal justice a reality takes all of us.** The Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles stands at the forefront of change, not only because of our expert advocacy for every client who walks through our doors, but also because of our deep investment in the power of our communities. Through collaboration, capacity-building, and a shared vision, **we're growing the movement for change.** Those we are privileged to serve deserve no less.

In 2023, LAFLA **expanded** access to justice with new programs and partnerships designed to maximize our reach across Los Angeles County by building out our team of onsite advocates already deployed inside courthouses, healthcare facilities, and other resource hubs. [We joined forces with healthcare providers to bring holistic services to Inglewood;](#) launched [legal clinics at three domestic violence shelters](#) in the Greater L.A. area; and allied with local partners to [meet the unique needs of labor trafficking victims from the Philippines](#). We also created the [Unhoused People's Justice Project](#) to drive systemic change in deep partnership with our unhoused neighbors. By serving our communities from within, we bring justice into reach for people who need it most.

This year, LAFLA also **mobilized** a growing network of supporters to help bridge the justice gap. We tapped into the talent of L.A.'s dynamic legal community, connecting skilled volunteers to meaningful opportunities to transform lives. Our advocacy has spurred government agencies in [housing](#) and [healthcare](#) to become better partners to the millions of Californians who rely on their resources.

Like you, we're in this fight for the long term. This year, we **sustained** the movement by cultivating the next generation of public interest advocates. Our growing programs for law students, including our housing justice post-graduate fellowships and [our new practicum for survivor advocacy](#), keep us moving forward on the path to justice.

We're pleased to share our 2023 annual report outlining the ways LAFLA continues to deepen our reach, empower our communities, and create transformative change. In 2024, as we celebrate 95 years, we're excited to continue leading the movement for justice with all of you.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Silvia R. Argueta".

Silvia R. Argueta  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Lerner-Hill".

Amy Lerner-Hill  
Board President 2022-2024



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## STAY HOUSED L.A.



LAFLA proudly leads Stay Housed L.A., a City- and County-funded initiative to prevent homelessness and expand access to justice for renters. **In 2023, Stay Housed grew to 11 legal service providers and 16 community-based organizations that collectively reached out to 418,603 tenants, held 404 educational workshops and clinics, and provided 8,412 low-income households with legal services.** To expand and sustain this crucial work, LAFLA also launched an ambitious initiative mobilizing private attorneys to add their voices to the movement to keep people housed.

*LAFLA Pro Bono Director Phong Wong and Housing Justice Director Barbara Schultz speak to prospective pro bono volunteers at an event hosted by the Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles.*

## RENEWING HOPE FOR 100K CALIFORNIA RENTERS

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, a staggering 1.5 million California households fell behind on rent. Many applied for the state's Emergency Rental Assistance Program, or Housing is Key, hoping to stabilize their families and avoid eviction. But three years into the program, 100,000 families were still waiting for a decision—while others were wrongly denied assistance. With our partners at Public Counsel, Western Center on Law & Poverty, and Covington Burling LLP, LAFLA took action. **In 2023, we reached a landmark settlement with the Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD) that offered a renewed pathway for tenants left in limbo to receive the critical support they were promised.**

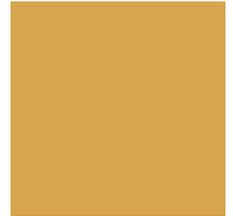
### Los Angeles Times

State reaches settlement over pandemic rent relief: What tenants and landlords need to know



Demonstrators protest against evictions in Valley Village in 2020. (Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times)

By Charlotte Kramon  
June 9, 2023 5 AM PT



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## EXPANDING ACCESS FOR DISABLED SENIORS



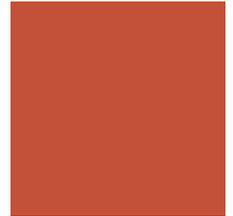
Over 1.4 million Californians, primarily seniors, rely on health benefits from both Medicare and Medi-Cal. When LAFLA discovered that private insurance companies were exploiting a technicality to deny wheelchairs and other critical medical equipment to vulnerable elders, we stepped up to make things right. After successfully appealing a wheelchair denial for a severely disabled senior, LAFLA and our partners at Disability Rights California escalated the issue to the California Department of Health Care Services. **Together, we secured a key policy update that unequivocally banned this unjust tactic—ensuring that millions of low-income seniors can access the tools they need to live independently.**

## PROMOTING COMMUNITY WELLBEING WITH THE BLACK HEALTH INITIATIVE

Basic needs like housing, food, and safety are fundamental to healthy living. **This year, LAFLA and partners launched the Black Health Initiative at the Inglewood Health Center to cultivate health and wellbeing in communities impacted by racism and discrimination.** The newest of our Medical-Legal Partnerships, this collaboration with Planned Parenthood Los Angeles and the UCLA School of Law Center on Reproductive Health, Law, and Policy brings together legal and medical services to empower patients with a holistic approach to a long and healthy life.



*Photo: LAFLA Executive Director Silvia Argueta, former Managing Attorney Ronnette Ramos, and Supervising Attorney Tanya McGary with partners at the launch of the Black Health Initiative.*



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## COMBATING INTERNATIONAL LABOR TRAFFICKING



California is one of the largest hotspots for forced labor in the United States, and a significant number of victims come from the Philippines. **This year, LAFLA launched Southern California’s first legal clinic dedicated to providing comprehensive services and education for the Filipino migrant community** on issues such as wage theft, public benefits claims, and immigration relief. This unique program leverages our deep relationships with community groups to obtain justice for exploited migrants in the region.

*Photo: LAFLA attorney Shawntel Williams conducts a community outreach event with partners from Search to Involve Pilipino Americans.*

## PARTNERING TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Safe families grow safe communities. **This year, LAFLA pioneered new partnerships to expand the network of resources supporting survivors of domestic violence.** To meet people where they are, we launched a shelter-based clinic program at three emergency shelters across Los Angeles County—allowing survivors to obtain Domestic Violence Restraining Orders from a place of safety. We also partnered with UCLA School of Law to train law students with the first ever Domestic Violence Prevention Practicum, positioning them to become strong advocates for survivor justice.

*Top: LAFLA paralegal Teresa Cevallos and attorney Clara Mora with partners from the Women’s & Children’s Crisis Shelter. Bottom: UCLA Practicum students Hannah Kim and Andrew Donoghue with supervisor Professor Ann Sidwell.*



# SERVICES



**CLIENT INTAKE WORKGROUP**



**SUPPORT SERVICES WORKGROUP**



## **ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER (API) COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT**

We ensure that L.A.'s diverse API communities have full access to LAFLA's services by implementing a linguistically accessible, culturally intelligent, and trauma-informed approach across the organization.



## **ECONOMIC STABILITY WORKGROUP**

We empower people to sustain their households with the resources they need to thrive. Our Government Benefits team helps people get, keep, and use public benefits for food, medical care, and more. Our Employment team protects workers by fighting wage theft, denial of unemployment benefits, wrongful terminations and discrimination. Our Student Debt team secures life-changing relief for people who studied at predatory for-profit colleges.

## **EVICITION DEFENSE CENTER**

In 2023, our pioneering Eviction Defense Center celebrated its 40th anniversary. Having laid the groundwork of L.A.'s homelessness prevention programs in 1983, we continue to lead the way with Stay Housed L.A., a regional collaboration to keep tenants housed through legal representation, know-your-rights education, and case management. We fight violations of tenants' rights, preserve Section 8 vouchers and other housing resources, and advocate strong protections for L.A.'s majority renter community.



## **HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES WORKGROUP**

We build strong, vibrant communities by preventing displacement, preserving generational wealth, and supporting self-determination. Through our movement-lawyering approach, we protect and expand affordable housing, build capacity in community-based organizations, and pioneer new economic models for a just distribution of resources.



# SERVICES

## IMMIGRATION ACCESS WORKGROUP

We specialize in assisting survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, political persecution, and other serious harm to gain protected status in the U.S., including visas, asylum, and citizenship. Our Torture Survivors Project is nationally recognized for advancing a trauma-informed, culturally intelligent service model for refugees and other survivors.



## MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS

We cultivate healthy communities by addressing basic needs like stable housing, access to food, and safe families. Through partnerships at six major healthcare providers across L.A. County, our nationally recognized model helps patients and their families overcome the social, legal, and economic problems that can play a major role in health and wellbeing.

## RESTORING COMMUNITIES WORKGROUP

We work to repair the harms of mass incarceration, homelessness, and other systemic causes of displacement and destabilization. We support formerly incarcerated individuals seeking a fresh start by increasing access to good jobs, stable housing, and other life-changing opportunities. Our Preventing and Ending Homelessness Program keeps at-risk tenants in their homes and removes barriers to re-housing for unhoused individuals and families.



## SANTA MONICA COMMUNITY OFFICE

Our Santa Monica office offers the full range of LAFLA's services to the unique Santa Monica community, including housing rights, family law, and public benefits.

# SERVICES

## SELF-HELP LEGAL ACCESS CENTERS

With locations inside four L.A.-area courthouses, we support individuals representing themselves in legal matters—regardless of income or immigration status. We provide legal information, assistance preparing court forms, and guidance on navigating the complex legal system. We also offer referrals to private attorneys and legal services.



## SURVIVOR AND FAMILY JUSTICE WORKGROUP

We empower survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault to leave abusive relationships and rebuild their lives. Our assistance with emergency restraining orders, custody and visitation orders, child support, and more helps survivors overcome core obstacles on the journey to safety, such as protection for children and financial freedom.

## UNHOUSED PEOPLE'S JUSTICE PROJECT

In 2023, LAFLA formally created this new workgroup reflecting our longstanding commitment to defending unhoused people's civil and human rights. Guided by deep partnerships with impacted communities, we support individuals and families on the path to rehousing at our Skid Row legal clinic, and challenge unjust government practices through groundbreaking impact litigation.



## VETERANS JUSTICE CENTER

We help Veterans rebuild their lives with access to a steady income, a stable home, and the healthcare they need to thrive. For Veterans who have tickets, criminal convictions, or less-than-honorable discharges, we advocate for a fresh start.



# 2023 IMPACT

# 100,000+

 L.A. County residents benefited from LAFLA's services

## Clients served in 26+ languages

26% of clients use a language other than English

American Sign Language, Amharic (Ethiopia), Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Cantonese, Creole, English, Farsi, French, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer (Cambodia), Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Tigrinya (Eritrea), Ukranian, Vietnamese, Zapotec, and more



**30%**  
of clients have  
a disability



**1.2%**  
of clients are  
transgender



**978 volunteers**  
donated



**24,314**

Hours of service  
valued at

**\$13 million**

**Veterans served**



**813**

**1,317**

cases closed through  
Medical-Legal Partnerships

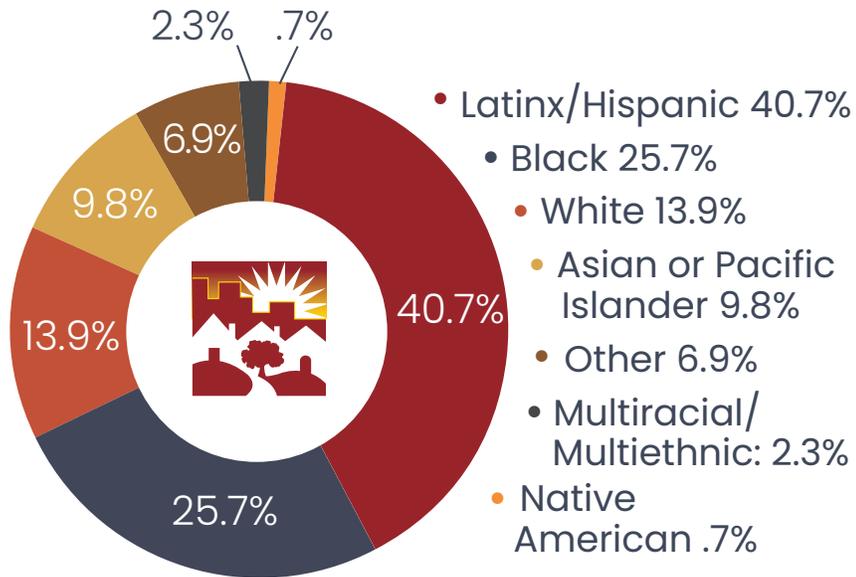


**28,162**

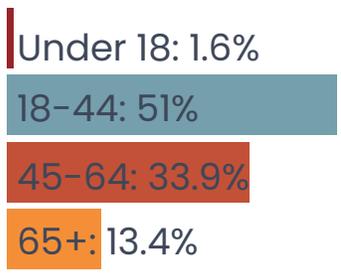
litigant  
engagements  
through Self-Help  
Legal Access  
Centers

# WHO WE HELP

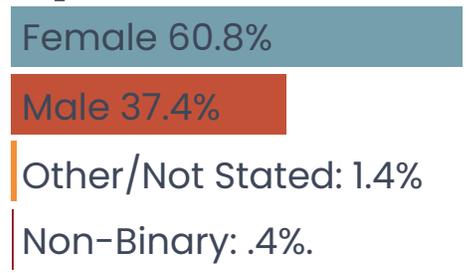
## By Race/Ethnicity\*



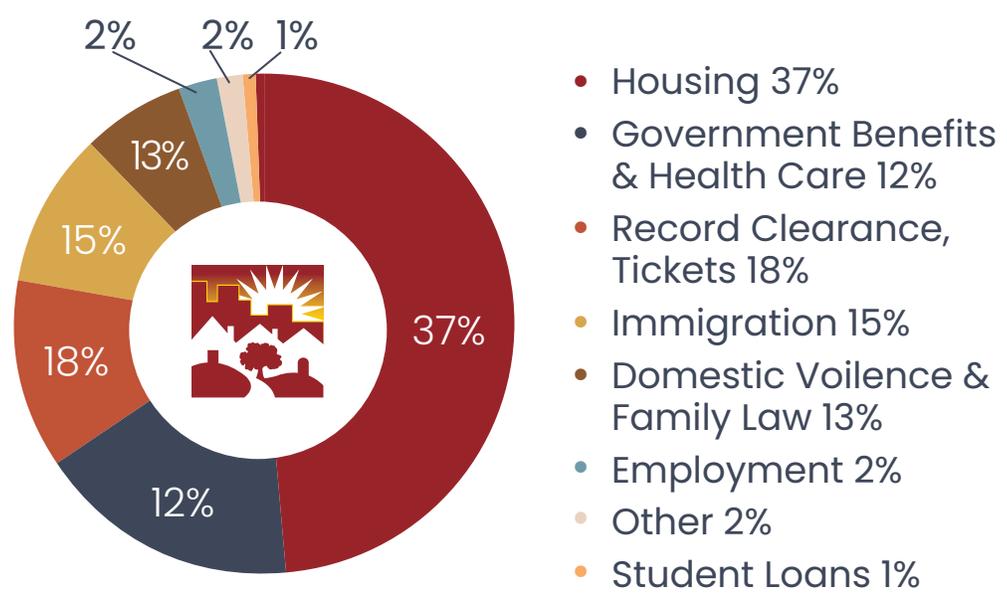
## By Age\*



## By Gender\*



## By Legal Issue\*



\* This information is based on our clients with cases open in 2023

# TRANSFORMING LIVES



## Community Leader Clears Record to Pursue a Career Giving Back

**Walter went to jail for the first time at just 13 years old, when he was drawn into his neighborhood gang. He spent his teens in and out of juvenile hall until, at 19, he was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison.**

In prison, Walter worked hard to “recreate himself.” He completed Alcoholics Anonymous, which he said changed his life, and enrolled in college courses, studying child development in hopes of becoming a better parent to his three young daughters.

When Walter was released in 2018, he came home to a different world than the one he had left in 1999. But in his own neighborhood, many things had stayed the same. Years of systemic disinvestment continued to limit the resources and opportunities available to young people. Walter saw the cycle of trauma and incarceration repeating in the next generation—and he decided to do something about it.

First, he started volunteering with a reentry nonprofit, overseeing community education and tattoo removal programs. He quickly built a reputation as a community leader, receiving recognition from his City Councilmember and State Assemblymember. Soon, even his own former parole officers came to him seeking resources for current parolees.

Through this work, Walter discovered a passion for helping others overcome substance abuse and change their lives, as he had. But despite his achievements, his criminal record still held him back; for some jobs, even his juvenile convictions were disqualifying. Then, Walter was referred to the **L.A. County D.O.O.R.S. Community Reentry Center**—an innovative partnership among LAFLA, county departments, and other resources for justice-impacted people.

At D.O.O.R.S., LAFLA paralegal **Madison** worked with Walter to file three felony expungement petitions, and attorneys **Marvel** and **Ian** represented Walter at each of his hearings—even meeting with the same prosecutor who had sent him to prison decades before. Walter’s expungements were granted, and his past convictions will no longer overshadow his qualifications and achievements. Today, Walter is on his way to completing a certification in substance abuse counseling so he can continue making an impact on his community.

# TRANSFORMING LIVES



## Street Vending Household Impacted by COVID-19 Achieves Financial Stability

**Felipe\* and his wife Maricela\* worked together as mechanics for decades after immigrating to the U.S. from Mexico.**

Early in the pandemic, they caught COVID-19—and it changed their lives forever. Both suffered damage to their lungs and kidneys, but Felipe, who had diabetes, was hit especially hard. After two surgeries, he was left blind in one eye and requiring dialysis for the rest of his life. He would not be able to work.

Maricela became Felipe's caretaker, administering his dialysis at home. When she could, she went to work as a street vendor selling fruit and nopales. The cash she made was their only income. For a time, they found ways to barely scrape by—borrowing from relatives, selling Felipe's truck, and putting the rent on credit cards to avoid eviction. But they needed stability.

Felipe got treatment at Los Angeles County's **Martin Luther King, Jr. Outpatient Center** in Willowbrook, and he knew that LAFLA attorneys worked onsite as part of a **Medical-Legal Partnership** to help patients stabilize their lives. At first, he had worked with a county program designed to help people apply for

benefits. But LAFLA soon learned that major missteps by the program were preventing Felipe from getting the support he was eligible for. His application for the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI) was wrongly denied; he should have been receiving greater coverage from Medi-Cal; and official notices were sent to him only in English, which he could not understand.

For months, a team of LAFLA advocates—including paralegals **Rodrigo** and **Alejandra**, law clerk **Dizbeth**, and attorneys **Sheyda**, **Andrew**, and **Tanya**—advocated on Felipe's behalf to the Countywide Benefits Entitlement Services Team (CBEST) and Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). Thanks to their extensive intervention, Felipe's applications for disability benefits and full-scope Medi-Cal were finally approved. Now, Felipe and Maricela have a regular source of income to keep their household afloat and put their minds at ease.

# FINANCIALS

## REVENUE & SUPPORT

Income Total: \$57,454,858

Government Contracts: \$48,189,473

Grants & Contributions: \$5,225,171

Special Events: \$501,147

Misc.: \$3,539,067

## TOTAL EXPENSES

Expenses Total: \$52,799,777

Program: \$46,621,584

Support: \$6,071,843

Fundraising: \$106,350

## DONATED SERVICES

Expenses, Revenue, & Support  
\$13,676,709

# THANK YOU

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Los Angeles, CA 90017

**East Los Angeles**

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Los Angeles, CA 90022  
(Temporary Location)

**Long Beach**

601 Pacific Ave.  
Long Beach, CA 90802

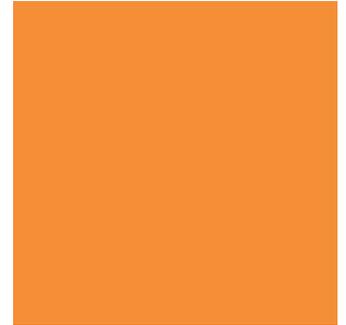
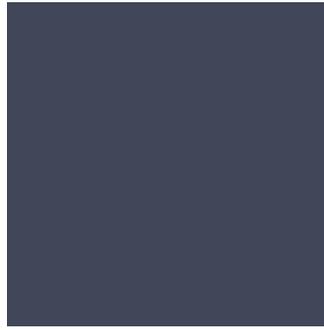
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