



2014 ANNUAL UPDATE

BLF Welcomes New Fellow

María Sofía Corona Gómez begins fellowship at the ACLU



We welcome our newest BLF fellow, María Sofía Corona Gómez, who recently started her work at the ACLU of San Diego & Imperial Counties. Sofía's project, "Access to Freedom and Justice for Immigrants in Isolated Detention Centers," will provide legal outreach

to the Imperial Regional Detention Facility (formerly the El Centro facility) and promote the rights of indigent detainees to have publicly appointed counsel. The Project will provide extremely underserved immigrant detainees with legal rights presentations (Know Your Rights),

individual screenings for immigration relief from detention and deportation (removal), and pro se support and representation, with a focus on bond hearings. Sofía seeks to advance the rights of detainees to have meaningful bond hearings as a means to obtain freedom from detention and to access legal representation. Sofía brings years of experience working with community-based groups and non-profits to empower immigrant communities and people of color through popular education, mobilizing, advocacy, and litigation. She is a 2014 Berkeley Law graduate and former recipient of BLF's Phoenix Fellowship, and holds a Master's from the University of Texas at Austin in History. Sofía is the proud daughter of farmworkers who immigrated from Guanajuato, México to California's Central Valley. Sofía is also an alumna of Fresno State.

SAVE THE DATE!

BLF Annual Auction
November 14, 2014
7:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.
HS Lordships, Berkeley



Proceeds from the Auction support the Phoenix Fellowship, a scholarship that provides support to first-year Berkeley Law students from diverse backgrounds who are committed to pursuing careers in social justice.

HOW TO DONATE:

BLF welcomes donations of items for auction, as well as financial contributions to the Phoenix Fellowship. Email us at berkeleylawfoundation@gmail.com

Cory Isaacson Wraps Up a Year of Success

Cory Isaacson recently completed her first year of a special joint fellowship funded by the Berkeley Law Foundation and the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC). Cory's project aims to break the school to prison pipeline. We asked Cory to fill us in on what she's accomplished so far. Here's what she had to say:

"I've now been working in the Youth Defender Clinic (YDC) at EBCLC as the BLF-EBCLC Fellow for a little over a year. I can't believe it's only been that long. In my position, I've represented dozens of clients facing expulsion and I also represent young people who are in delinquency court, as well as supervise law students



working in our Clinic. I have argued at my clients' expulsion hearings and court appearances, have attended their IEP meetings, have negotiated with their school districts, and have gotten to know them and their families and their individual needs.

Fourteen months ago, I started with very little knowledge of the school discipline system and how it operates; now, I know it (unfortunately) very well. It is a heavily bureaucratic, counterproductive, and harmful system, and I'm making my way through it with an eye toward long-term change. Luckily, YDC has been very successful in our school discipline cases and few of our clients have ultimately been expelled. But they've still been harmed by the process.

As my work continues over the next year, I hope to use holistic practices more often in order to do more to make the process less painful for our clients. My ability to screen and address peripheral life and legal issues gets better everyday, and it's exciting to be able to do this work with a holistic focus. A social work program is also just getting off the ground in YDC, which will be a crucial resource to ease some of the collateral damage created by the school discipline and court systems.

With most of the foundational knowledge and experience under me, I'm looking forward to the final year of my fellowship. There's a lot to be done, and a lot I hope I can do. Thanks to BLF and EBCLC for giving me that opportunity."

Cory graduated from Berkeley Law in 2013, where she focused her energy on indigent criminal defense. She worked as a law clerk in the Contra Costa Public Defender's Office, and was a BLF summer fellow while working at the Southern Center for Human Rights in Atlanta. She also spent a semester in the Clean Slate Clinic at the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) and two semesters as a clinical student in Berkeley Law's Death Penalty Clinic.

We look forward to hearing about Sofia and Cory's coming accomplishments in 2015.