

Women's Policy Institute-State
Class of 2019

Table of Contents

Criminal Justice Team	2
Amika Mota	2
Dominique Nong	2
Michaé Pulido	3
Jayda Raspberry.....	3
Danica Rodarmel.....	4
Economic Justice Team	5
Cecilia Castro Diaz.....	5
Sabina Crocette	5
Donna Cullinan	6
Esperanza Fonseca.....	6
Jessica Guerra.....	7
Environmental Justice Team	8
Sylvia Arredondo	8
Lucia Marquez.....	8
Ameé Raval.....	9
Paulina Torres	9
Shina Robinson	10
LGBTQIA Justice Team.....	11
Ezak Perez.....	11
Mandy Taylor	11
Tracy Zhao	12
Reproductive Justice Team.....	13
Lorena Garcia Zermeño	13
Martha Gonzalez	13
Karen Scott.....	14
Trauma Justice Team.....	15
Wendy Lau-Ozawa	15
Julie McCormick	15
Tavae Samuelu.....	16
Payal Sinha.....	16
Jess Torres.....	17

Criminal Justice Team



Amika Mota

Prison Reentry Director

[Young Women's Freedom Center](#)

she/her

Amika Mota is the Prison Reentry Director at the Young Women's Freedom Center. She began organizing for Reproductive Justice and young mothers' rights over twenty years ago, as a teen mama and midwife. Her passion for criminal justice reform is rooted in her own experience. She began advocating for women in prison during her seven-year incarceration in the California Department of Corrections, where she served time at both CIW and CCWF. During her time inside, she was a jailhouse lawyer, paralegal, firefighter, and mentor to many youth on the yard.

The sisterhood and resiliency of the women on the inside are what motivate her to revolutionize the criminal justice system, transform what true rehabilitation and reentry look like, and promote a culture of healing and restorative justice to those most impacted by the system. She is committed to lifting up the voices, visibility, and leadership of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women.



Dominique Nong

Senior Policy Associate

[Children's Defense Fund-CA](#)

she/her

Dominique D. Nong is a Senior Policy Associate for Children's Defense Fund – California. She focuses on state-level efforts to downsize the juvenile justice system, invest and reinvest state funds into communities, improve conditions within juvenile facilities, protect youth's due process rights, and increase accountability over state agencies. Her priority is to promote the engagement of community members—particularly system impacted individuals and their families—in legislative and administrative processes. Previously, Dominique was a juvenile public defender in Baltimore, MD and creator of Northwestern Law School's Pretrial Representation and Corrections Policy Project dedicated to reducing Illinois' over-reliance on incarceration. Dominique also worked at the Southern Poverty Law Center where she engaged in litigation, legislative and community mobilization strategies to reform juvenile facility conditions and challenge the role and actions of school police officers. Dominique earned her law degree from the University of Chicago and Bachelor of Arts degree from Harvard College.



Michaé Pulido

Policy Strategist and Organizer

[The TransLatin@ Coalition](#)

she/her/they/them

Michaé is a queer, trans, Latinx community organizer, artist, and trans rights activist born and raised in Los Angeles. She is completing her degree in Communication Studies with a minor in Queer Studies at California State University, Northridge, where she has produced her capstone project:

Decolonizing Transgender: A QTPOC Perspective on the Attempted Universalization of Trans Identity, which focuses on how transgender identity still reflects and functions under a western, colonial gender system that disenfranchises trans womxn, femmes of color, and non-binary individuals. Navigating this world post-gender, Michaé sees the direct impact of a corrupt social, economic, and political system that hurts those that choose to not live abiding by the norm. She believes in collective liberation, rather than individualized success, and utilizes her experience in grassroots community organizing, national policy advocacy, and previous access to Capitol Hill to bring information back to her community and improve conditions for future generations of black, brown, queer, and trans people.



Jayda Rasberry

[Time For Change Foundation](#)

she/her

Jayda Rasberry is a formerly incarcerated activist and social commentator from Los Angeles. In 2006 Jayda was sentenced to Valley State Prison for Women where she would spend 6 years of her life. Since her release in 2012 she has been to Sacramento to speak on many topics including medical negligence and reducing the prison population with community-based alternatives. In 2014 she

became an organizer with Dignity and Power Now where she held the position of Deputy Director of External Relations and led leadership workshops, fought against jail construction, was featured in several viral videos including #MeToo For Incarcerated Women, and hosted her own web series Grassroots with Jayda. In 2018 Jayda premiered her first performance art piece at the Main Museum in downtown L.A. which focuses on her personal story of resilience called Healing the Wound of Incarceration. As a formerly incarcerated person and a queer woman of color Jayda believes that it is important to be a voice of change in directly impacted communities. She has lived the harsh realities of what happens behind the walls of prison and strongly believes that it is her duty to fight and to be a voice for people who are incarcerated.



Danica Rodarmel

Legal Fellow

[Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of The San Francisco Bay Area](#)

she/her

Danica Rodarmel graduated from Berkeley Law in 2017, and is currently an Equal Justice Works Fellow at Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, sponsored by Fenwick & West. She is from the Bay Area, but has spent half of her life in The Black Hills of South Dakota. Her work centers on ending the criminalization of poverty and mass incarceration. She also coordinates the Restorative Justice program in San Quentin State Prison. Danica's family has been deeply impacted by crime and the criminal legal system, which has led her to devote her life to personal and collective healing, as well as transformative forms of justice. She also writes non-fiction, poetry, sings in a punk band and dabbles in point-and-shoot photography.

Economic Justice Team



Cecilia Castro Diaz

Education Policy Director
[Dolores Huerta Foundation](#)
she/her

Cecilia Castro was born in Mexico and grew up in Bakersfield, California. She attended the University of California, Santa Barbara and received a Bachelor of Arts in Chican@ Studies and Spanish. Shortly after, Cecilia returned to the Central Valley to begin her career as an educator. However, after witnessing the startling educational inequalities in the surrounding disenfranchised communities, she felt inspired to organize and create systemic change in her own community. Now, as the Education Policy Director for the Dolores Huerta Foundation, Cecilia works to organize, train, and educate community members to advocate for progressive policies to achieve educational goals that promote health and equity in schools across California. This includes advocacy for lower suspensions, expulsions, and involuntary transfers, which are currently perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline. First and foremost, Cecilia works to carry out the foundation's mission to inspire and organize community members to build volunteer organizations empowered to pursue social justice.



Sabina Crocette

Policy Manager
[Legal Services for Prisoners with Children \(LSPC\)](#)
she/her

Sabina Crocette is the Policy Manager at Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC), where she heads the legislative and policy programs. Sabina has a diverse work background in federal, state and local government and in private practice and is a part-time professor at Contra Costa College in the Business, Real Estate and Administration of Justice Programs. Sabina is a passionate advocate and fighter for the rights of some of society's most underserved citizens. Prior to joining LSPC, Sabina spent 9 years as a parole defense attorney, representing California life inmates and Youthful Offenders seeking parole. Sabina assisted over 100 men and women to obtain their freedom through the Board of Parole and by filing legal appeals to the courts. Sabina is also the daughter of a formerly incarcerated person in California. Sabina holds a degree in Law and a Masters in Taxation from Golden Gate University School of Law and School of Taxation as well as an MBA from Brandman University. Sabina is a member of **All of Us or None** (AOUON), a grassroots organizing and advocacy group for currently and formerly incarcerated people.



Donna Cullinan

Campaign Director

[MomsRising](#)

she/her

Donna Hoffman Cullinan is a Campaign Director for MomsRising, where she leads a movement for affordable, high-quality early learning, like childcare and preschool, in her home state of California. With MomsRising, she organizes inclusive, effective statewide grassroots campaigns ensuring that all of California's kids have the strongest start possible. She has worked the past decade in nonprofit advocacy, previously with the California WIC Association where she served as Policy and Program Coordinator focusing on child nutrition and breastfeeding advocacy. She is passionate about improving outcomes for moms and kids across the country, and making sure all families have the tools they need to thrive. Donna has a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations from the University of California, Davis and has completed her Certified Lactation Educator training. When she's not at work, Donna is raising two feminist boys (4 and 1), at her home in Sacramento with her husband Kevin and dog Fiona. In her spare time, if there ever is any, she enjoys photography, yoga, cooking, and spending time outdoors.



Esperanza Fonseca

Southern California Organizer

[Restaurant Opportunities Centers United](#)

Esperanza Fonseca is a community organizer, published writer, and educator who focuses on building justice among working-class communities. As the Southern California Organizer with Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, she focuses on advancing statewide legislative campaigns to raise wages for restaurant workers, address sexual harassment, and eradicate occupational segregation in the restaurant industry; as well as operate a local workforce development program. She has taught courses on economic systems and LGBT movements to groups of international activists as well as lectured on trauma and trans communities to graduate students in social work. She received the Ziegler Young Religious Leaders Organizing Fellowship where she trained to organize faith leader to advance the rights of workers and immigrants in California with Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice, which she later joined as a member of their board of directors. Esperanza graduated from Whittier College under the Whittier Scholars Program where she studied feminist theory and theology.



Jessica Guerra

Public Policy & Communications Associate

[Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles](#)

she/her

A daughter of immigrants and raised by a beautiful, poderosa single-mother, Jessica dedicates her life to uplifting marginalized communities and supporting them in reaching a life of quality and equity. As the Public Policy & Communications Associate for the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, she focuses on strengthening the organizational capacity of the agency and its ten member agencies to advance key local, state and federal policies that will sustain a child care and education system responsive to the needs of vulnerable children, families and the child care workforce. She is a board member for Plaza de la Raza Child Development Services, Inc., an organization that prioritizes high-quality early education and provides supportive services for children and families. Jessica is a lifelong learner and holds a MPA from CSU, Long Beach and a B.S. with academic distinction in Criminal Justice Administration from San Diego State University.

Environmental Justice Team



Sylvia Arredondo

Civic Engagement Coordinator

[Communities For A Better Environment](#)

she/her

Sylvia is the Civic Engagement Coordinator at CBE. She brings deep community connection to her role, as she was raised and currently resides in Wilmington, neighborhood of Los Angeles, that is home to the third-largest oil field in the United States. She leads voter registration, voter education, voter mobilization, and develops and facilitates civic leadership skills building trainings. Prior to her current role, she was CBE's Development Associate managing individual donors and fundraising events. Before joining CBE, Sylvia was a Field Organizer with GroundWorks Campaigns, she talked with voters in communities throughout Los Angeles. She was able to hear directly from community on needs and issues. Since then, she has been motivated to affect change. She's currently elected as President of the Wilmington Neighborhood Council where she uplifts community voices. She holds a BA in Political Science and a minor in Women and Gender Studies from San Francisco State University.



Lucia Marquez

Community Organizer

[Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy](#)

she/her

Lucia Marquez is a community organizer with the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE) in the city of Ventura, CA. CAUSE is a grassroots organization that engages leaders in disadvantaged communities on issues they are most affected by. Lucia organizes youth leaders where they work on local policy implementation, advocacy and direct action. Lucia attended the University of California, Santa Cruz and majored in Community Studies, where her work was focused on environmental justice.



Ameer Raval
Policy and Research Associate
[Asian Pacific Environmental Network](#)
she/her

Ameer Raval is a Policy and Research Associate at the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), an environmental justice organization that empowers Asian American immigrant and refugee communities across California through grassroots organizing, voter engagement, and policy advocacy. Through her role at APEN, she offers an environmental justice and health equity lens to climate and energy policy in California. She previously worked with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) on research and advocacy focused on the environmental and occupational health impacts of extreme heat and rising temperatures due to climate change on vulnerable communities. Ameer graduated with an MS in Environmental Health Sciences from UC Berkeley School of Public Health.



Paulina Torres
Staff Attorney
[Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment](#)
she/her

Paulina is an attorney at the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment ("CRPE"). In 2017, she graduated from UC Hastings College of the Law with the hopes to advocate on behalf of our marginalized communities who continuously suffer from social and economic inequalities. Paulina's experience includes direct legal services, capital representation, city attorney work, and environmental law. Paulina is currently working at the intersection of the things she cares so deeply about: the environment, racial injustice, and economic inequality. Having grown up in Los Angeles, she has a deep understanding of how our environmental laws and decision disproportionately affect certain communities, often low income and communities of color. Paulina works primarily on CRPE's pesticide and climate justice campaigns and enjoys working alongside the fierce organizers and community residents in the southern San Joaquin Valley.



Shina Robinson

Local Policy Associate

[Asian Pacific Environmental Network](#)

she/her

Shina has a deep commitment to environmental justice as the intersection of human rights, health, and building a new economy that works for everyone. She has experienced the link between environmental health and poverty at a young age between visiting family in Philippines and growing up in the shadow of a Los Angeles area oil refinery. Shina began work with human rights campaigns while pursuing undergraduate degrees in International Studies and Political Science at Long Beach State, focused on climate disaster relief and food justice. At APEN, Shina has served as Executive Assistant, building and supporting sustainable infrastructure for the organization. Currently as Local Policy Associate, she is now growing the capacity of our member leaders to pass and implement policies for community resistance and resilience in Oakland, Richmond, and in partnerships statewide.

LGBTQIA Justice Team



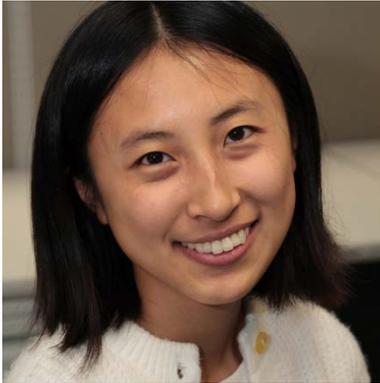
Ezak Perez
Executive Director
[Gender Justice LA](#)
they/them/he/him

Ezak Perez was born and raised in and around Tongva Territory, LA, CA. They are two spirit of center and of Indigenous Hopi & Paaekila (Pecos) Puebloan people. He also identifies as a Xicanx and Latinx trans organizer. He is always remembering & reclaiming his roots. Ezak has been facilitating and organizing locally in Los Angeles as well as nationally for the past 15+ years. He is currently the Executive Director of [Gender Justice LA](#) which is a grassroots social justice organization led by and for non-binary, two spirit and trans people of color. We (GJLA) organize, hold space, provide resources, and collaborate with others so that our communities can: resist oppression, develop community responses to violence, heal from present & historical trauma, and come together in ways that feel brave & affirming. They work at the intersections of racial, economic and gender justice while uplifting disability, sexual and reproductive health justice issues.



Mandy Taylor
Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator
[Health Access Foundation - California LGBTQ Health & Human Services Network](#)
she/her

Mandy Taylor is the Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator at the CA LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network, a program of Health Access. Prior to joining Health Access, she provided mental health case management services, helped develop an Anti-Trafficking Program for minors, supported foster youth with clinical therapy, and was the first Director of Programs at her local LGBT Center. With ten years of experience providing mental health and community services, Mandy looks forward to using her expertise to advocate for policy equity. Ms. Taylor uses social justice and strengths based approaches to empower community involvement, addressing challenges through a lens of intersectionality. Mandy eagerly collaborates with stakeholders in marginalized LGBTQ communities to develop culturally supportive interventions, training, and policy. She believes that queer and trans people, people of color, the economically disadvantaged, and folks living with disabilities deserve comprehensive care that addresses all aspects of their experience.



Tracy Zhao

Executive Director

[API Equality-LA \(fiscally sponsored by Asian Americans Advancing Justice-LA\)](#)

she/her/they/them

Tracy Zhao is a passionate advocate for LGBTQ communities of color. She is the Executive Director of API Equality-LA, an Asian and Pacific Islander (API) LGBTQ rights and racial justice organization in Los Angeles. Tracy has worked with many progressive coalitions and community groups in Los Angeles on issues ranging from trans and queer immigrants rights, decolonizing Western science, and training young API organizers in direct action organizing. Tracy graduated from Pomona College with a degree in Asian American Studies and Psychology.

Reproductive Justice Team



Lorena Garcia Zermeño

Program Coordinator

[California Latinas for Reproductive Justice](#)

she/her

Lorena García Zermeño is the Program Coordinator for California Latinas for Reproductive Justice working as part of our Community Engagement team to connect with voters and community members at the doors and over the phone regarding critical policy issues affecting their communities. Lorena spearheads CLRJ's Justice for Young Families (J4YF) initiative where she works closely with amazing young parent leaders participating in the Young Parents Leadership Council, providing them with training and spokesperson opportunities to uplift their voices and stories to shift culture and effect policy change that improves the lives of all young parents in California. She graduated in 2014 from UC Santa Cruz and double majored in Anthropology and Feminist Studies with a concentration in Law, Politics and Social Change.



Martha Gonzalez

Outreach Coordinator

[Christie's Place](#)

she/her

Martha Gonzalez is a passionate, community-focused, social advocate with over seven years of diverse public health and social service experience. Due to her various past roles, Martha believes that effective community outcomes are achieved through collective impact and is adept at building and growing relationships between multi-sectoral stakeholders and community members. Martha is committed to creating long-term, sustainable change, through a cultural competency and trauma informed lens. Currently, Martha Gonzalez is the Outreach Coordinator at Christie's Place. She utilizes outreach efforts as a tool to diminish HIV stigma in the community. Martha coordinates monthly educational workshops to decrease isolation and develop social support networks amongst women living with HIV and helps coordinate several empowerment and leadership events and trainings throughout the year. Martha is the chair of the Wellness Committee and participates in the Culturally Competent/Trauma Informed Committee at Christie's Place, developing and facilitating trainings for staff.



Karen Scott

Assistant Adjunct Professor, School of Nursing
[University of California, San Francisco](#)

she/her

Karen A. Scott, MD, MPH identifies as a RJ informed dissident and decolonizing obstetric epidemiologist, public health scholar, and obstetric hospitalist. For 20 years, she has persistently challenged the hierarchy of power, knowledge and decision making that both sustains the medical industrial complex and perpetuates social and economic inequities at the intersection sexual and reproductive (S&R) rights, health, and justice. In 2013, she disrupted her medical career to pursue public health as a strategy to bridge the social sciences and provision of clinical services through the integration of reproductive justice (RJ) theory and values. Her clinical and research interests include the analysis of individual, institutional, and structural factors that inform S&R health care experiences, satisfaction, quality, accessibility, and utilization, focusing on equitable patient-provider, and community-hospital engagement and shared decision making. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor in the Public Health and Health Equity Program, Department of Biology at Mills College and a member of the Black Women Birthing Justice Collective.

Trauma Justice Team



Wendy Lau-Ozawa

Senior Project Manager

[Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence](#)

she/her

Wendy Lau currently manages the Interpretation Technical Assistance and Resource Center (ITARC) at the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence. She is responsible for providing technical assistance and training on implementing strategies and initiatives to ensure Title VI compliance, accessibility and culturally responsiveness for law enforcement, courts, and domestic violence programs. Ms. Lau is also a member of the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence Advisory Committee. She was awarded the 2009 Asian Pacific American Bar Association Education Fund's Robert Wone Fellowship for her commitment to community, making a difference in public policies, and improving the circumstances of those around her. In 2017, Ms. Lau was awarded Committee of 100's Next Gen Leadership Fellowship.



Julie McCormick

Policy Associate

[Children's Law Center of California](#)

she/her

Julie McCormick, J.D., CWLS is a Policy Associate at Children's Law Center of California (CLC). Julie came to CLC after practicing family law for over a decade, both in the private and non-profit sectors. Frustrated that children did not participate in family court proceedings, Julie joined CLC in 2011 to advocate for children to have a voice in their lives and futures. She spent over six years as dependency trial counsel, where she provided direct legal representation for hundreds of foster children and non-minor dependents. In 2017, she transitioned to CLC's Policy Team and began actively working on systemic issues facing children and youth in the foster care system. Julie has also worked on policy and legislation impacting Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) in California, including participating on the statewide CSEC Action Team and working closely with an advisory board of survivors of child sex trafficking. Julie graduated from Washington & Jefferson College in 1992, earned a JD from Pepperdine University School of Law in 1998, and was certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist by the National Association of Counsel for Children in August 2017.



Tavae Samuelu

Executive Director

[Empowering Pacific Islander Communities](#)

she/her

Tavae Samuelu is the daughter of a pastor from Leulumoega and a nurse from Saleimoa in Sāmoa. As the Executive Director of Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC), she's a passionate advocate for Native Hawaiians & Pacific Islanders and is committed to liberation for all. Tavae was born and raised in Long Beach and moved to the Bay to attend UC Berkeley where she majored in Ethnic Studies. Before joining EPIC, she served as the Development Director for the RYSE Youth Center in Richmond and has since become a member of RYSE's Board of Directors.



Payal Sinha

Staff Attorney/Program Manager

[Peace Over Violence](#)

she/her

Payal Sinha is a Program Manager for the Legal Advocacy Project at Peace Over Violence. Her practice focuses on providing immigration representations and civil legal assistance for survivors of interpersonal violence. She maintains the pro bono project and legal clinics project and frequently collaborates with other service providers, to serve these vulnerable communities. Payal is passionate about strongly advocating for survivors on campus, mostly international students, who are most susceptible to these forms of violence. Payal also serves as the Director of Community Outreach and Public Affairs at the South Asian Bar Association-Public Interest Foundation Board and serves as the outreach editor of the California International Law Journal. Additionally, Payal engages in community education for the South Asian community on the issues of sexual and domestic violence. Payal is an attorney and in India as well as in California. Payal is an immigrant women of color that would like to bring changes internationally in the societies perspective towards survivors



Jess Torres

Survivor Leadership Coordinator & NSN Co-Chair
[Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking](#)
they/them

Jess Torres is an Organizer, Writer, Speaker, Consultant, Small Business Owner and CSEC survivor who has fiercely impacted the anti-trafficking movement with activism and leadership; through their work with the NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, the California Department of Social Services, and Nola Brantley Speaks. Jess has also served as the Keynote Speaker for various national conferences and symposiums and was recently recognized by the City of Los Angeles with a 'Change Maker Award' at the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking 20th anniversary gala. Presently, Jess is proudly serving as the Survivor Coordinator for CAST's Survivor Leadership program, co-overseeing and co-developing projects related to survivor empowerment including the Resilient Voices group (local Survivor Advisory Caucus) and as the Co-Chair of The National Survivor Network.