



2016 NEWSLETTER — 40TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

BLF Welcomes Post-Graduate Fellow Mihal Ansik



We are thrilled to welcome Mihal Rose Ansik, who recently started her “Family Reunification Advocacy Project” at A New Way of Life Reentry Project (ANWOL) in Los Angeles. ANWOL opens up pathways to housing, employment, education, and treatment for women leaving prison.

Mihal will support parents navigating dependency court proceedings after incarceration, and help eligible family caregivers secure exemptions of their conviction histories so that they can keep children in their families out of foster care facilities. Through legal advocacy, community education, and movement support, Mihal will sustain family connections, build access to reunification, and help end multi-generational cycles of incarceration.

Mihal has spent the past ten years working with people in prison and their loved ones as an educator, organizer, and advocate. While in college at the University of Michigan, Mihal facilitated theater and writing workshops in correctional facilities around the state. As a workshop instructor, she used rehearsal time to help workshop members file grievances, connected them to community resources, and drove them home when they were paroled. Before law school, Mihal spent five years working as a court advocate, where she advocated for incarcerated youth to be released into healing and supportive community-based alternatives to detention and developed workshops to equip youth and their families with tools for advocating for themselves as they navigated the delinquency process. At Harvard Law School, Mihal continued to advocate alongside clients entangled in punitive systems as a Student Attorney with Harvard Defenders, the Prison Legal Assistance Project, and the Criminal Justice Institute.

[Update from 2016 fellow Tasha Hill:](#) Tasha accomplished great things with her project, “Reducing LGBTIQ Criminalization and Discriminatory Incarceration in California Counties,” at the ACLU of Southern California. Tasha engaged in policy reform advocacy with law enforcement agencies across the state, developed community know-your-rights materials, and advocated for her clients to receive appropriate housing and medical treatment in jail. She co-authored an appellate amicus brief challenging the criminalization of sex work and discriminatory enforcement of solicitation laws, and she wrote proposed regulations for a police profiling law that will be enacted in January. *“One thing I’m most proud of is that I was able to support marginalized people who thought that no one would hear them or care about their problems. And in addressing their individual difficulties I was, in many cases, able to change a system for the better so that others will experience less discrimination.”*

Two New Phoenix Fellows Arrive at Berkeley Law

BLF is proud to announce our new Phoenix Fellows, Mariam Azhar and Ana Duong, who entered Berkeley Law this fall as part of the Class of 2019. BLF's Phoenix Fellowship provides tuition support to outstanding students of color who are committed to social justice work.



THE PHOENIX FELLOWSHIP



In 2000, **Mariam Azhar** and her family emigrated from Pakistan to resettle in the Bay Area. One year later, they were suddenly subjected to FBI investigation for “national security reasons” simply based on their Pakistani nationality, causing an eight-year delay on their green card applications. Growing up in this delayed immigration process caused by post-9/11 policies motivated Mariam to pursue a legal career.

As a UC Berkeley undergraduate, Mariam focused her political science studies on examining how history and culture influence policy. She published research articles on the expansion of hate crime statutes

and the use of capital punishment. She also worked at the U.S. District Court Pretrial Service Agency, writing criminal history reports and assisting with supervision of defendants pending trial. Knowing the injustice that can result from ostracizing labels, Mariam compiled holistic narratives for each defendant, gathering affidavits from police departments and interviewing family members to provide critical and relevant missing contextual information.

After graduating, Mariam worked as a paralegal at the ACLU, joining the immigrants' rights litigation team, working to challenge ICE detainers and arrest policies. She also documented stories of detained or deported immigrants, which were used in amicus briefs to demonstrate that mandatory detention was widely damaging to immigrant communities.

Mariam looks forward to using her law degree to litigate against discriminatory policies.

Ana Duong is the daughter of refugees from Vietnam, the first in her family to graduate from college, and the first to go to law school. Ana graduated from UC Berkeley with degrees in Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies and Society and Environment. As an undergraduate, Ana interned at the Asian Law Caucus, contacting community organizations about contesting draft redistricting maps that split existing political communities in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood.



The Redistricting Commission accepted the proposed changes, and Ana felt exhilarated to have been part of the community organizing process, experiencing the gratifying work of making a difference firsthand. Ana devoted her senior year to student organizing in the campus Asian Pacific Islander community. She interned at the Asian Pacific American Student Development Office and co-chaired the Asian Pacific Islander Issues Conference, an event designed to foster awareness and to spark dialogue regarding contemporary issues in the API community.

After law school, Ana would like to provide legal services and educational programs to low-income and under-resourced communities. She aspires to pursue a career that will allow her to promote civil rights and social justice, and to increase access to justice, the court system, and free legal resources.