defending.
protecting.
winning.
Over the past decade, the United States' deportation and incarceration system has transformed into an attempt to achieve social reordering through a mass expulsion of immigrants of color. Meanwhile, the traditional approaches to addressing systemic injustices in the U.S. immigration process have failed.

Equal parts lawyers, engineers, and organizers, Innovation Law Lab leverages advocacy, technology and law to fight for immigrant and refugee justice.

Our team responds to emergency situations and develops scalable legal representation programs along the border, in remote immigrant detention centers, and in communities around the country. Innovation Law Lab works closely with national and local organizations to challenge the systemic injustices that have become pervasive throughout the immigrant detention and deportation apparatus.

By bringing technology to the fight for immigrant justice, we enable immigrant rights advocates to increase the impact of their work, collect and analyze more data, and begin constructing permanent systems of change.
Building Power For Immigrants and Refugees At The Border

Innovation Law Lab designs, deploys, and manages systems that build power for immigrants and refugees at the border while creating data structures that allow for secure information exchanges between regional and national legal service providers, impact litigators, and policy advocates.

CajaFuerte: A Digital Locker for Migrants at the Border

When migrants are taken into detention in the United States, their vital records and evidence are taken away. Thousands of migrants report having important belongings damaged or simply never returned to them. Meanwhile, they are expected to attend important immigration court hearings, hire legal representation, and prepare their asylum cases from behind bars.

In an effort to remedy this heartbreaking problem, Innovation Law Lab created a document safety tool specifically designed for and deployed at migrant shelters and legal clinics in Northern Mexico. Using this tool, migrants are able to securely create digital copies of documents such as birth certificates, death certificates, marriage licenses, and police reports for safe storage. These essential documents can then be securely accessed by the individual, their loved ones, or legal representatives.
A National Support Network
For Families Separated Under
“Zero Tolerance”

As a result of the Trump administration’s cruel “zero tolerance” policy, thousands of migrant children were ripped from the arms of their parents. Families struggle to secure legal representation as they try to overcome the trauma, fear, and anxiety created by family separation.

In response to this need, Innovation Law Lab, in collaboration with partner organizations Asylum Seekers Assistance Project (ASAP) and Catholic Legal Immigration Services, Inc. (CLINIC), launched a unique collaborative effort called the National Reunified Family Assistance Project (NRFAP) which has gathered information from nonprofit organizations around the country to locate a total of 1,855 individuals impacted by “zero tolerance”.

Each family added to this national LawLab database was contacted and added to secure online communities where they have access to accurate information about the legal processes before them, as well as opportunities to connect with other reunited families.

By combining large-scale collaboration with technology, legal advocates can better protect vulnerable families. Together, in 2019, the NRFAP coalition was able to triage short-term emergency legal interventions, including pro bono mentorship through 76 cases, change of court venue in 12 cases, filing 3 motions to reopen, and provide 97 rides to court or legal offices as well as placed 101 families with long-term legal representation.

BorderX

BorderX is Innovation Law Lab’s venture to leverage the power of software, data, and remote volunteers so that under-resourced nonprofit legal service providers along the border can provide pro bono legal representation at scale. Once released from detention, the BorderX network of sponsors and advocates activate to provide safe shelter and community to released individuals.

For detained immigrants, crowdsourced legal support creates a bridge to justice by making legal representation possible for those struggling to access justice from behind bars. For thousands of defenders of immigrant rights, BorderX embeds collaboration as a tool for change. For litigators, social scientists, and policy experts, BorderX creates a backdrop of detention and case adjudication data which can inform legal strategies, research, and policy recommendations.

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Disrupting the Mass Deportation Pipeline in West Texas

Launched in August of 2019, the El Paso Immigration Collaborative (EPIC) is being built in response to the human rights crisis unfolding in U.S. detention centers with the objective of advancing pro bono legal representation for detained individuals as well as increasing public oversight of the region’s immigration courts and detention centers.

EPIC is a volunteer-based legal representation project organized by a collaborative of ten immigration services and advocacy organizations. Innovation Law Lab is a founding member. We co-manage daily operations at the site in El Paso, TX.

Using Innovation Law Lab’s technology, the legal collaborative is able to simultaneously manage hundreds of cases of individuals in immigration detention in West Texas and New Mexico. This large-scale gathering of data throughout the EPIC clearinghouse facilitates litigation, advocacy, and onward navigation for individuals as they are released from detention thanks to the efforts of EPIC staff and hundreds of volunteers.

NENA’S STORY
After surviving sexual assault and the kidnapping of her husband by members of a political party, which he openly opposed, Nena embarked on a dangerous journey to seek safety in the United States. Upon arrival, Nena was detained and transferred to West Texas, a region where over 3,500 immigrants and refugees are held in detention camps with little to no access to legal representation.

Fortunately, EPIC volunteers were able to locate Nena, screen her case, and begin working on her release request with the support of remote legal volunteers. During the process, Nena was transferred away from West Texas. Nevertheless, EPIC continued to work diligently on her case. Nena was successfully released from detention and is living safely with her sponsor.

A Catastrophe, Averted

OUR FIGHT TO HALT TRUMP’S HEALTH CARE BAN IN FEDERAL COURT

DOE V. TRUMP
In October 2019, President Trump issued a Proclamation seeking to ban immigration based on a visa applicant’s ability to pay for health insurance or out-of-pocket medical costs, effectively imposing a wealth test on immigrants seeking entry into the United States. If implemented, hundreds of thousands of visa applicants would be unlawfully denied entry into the United States.

In response, Innovation Law Lab and our partners at Justice Action Center, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and Sidley Austin LLP, sued on behalf of impacted families and the nonprofit Latino Network. As of this publication, our lawsuit has resulted in a nationwide injunction that successfully blocks the implementation of the proclamation while the case continues.
Defending The Principle of Asylum

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14

Asylum protections were put in place to prevent the United States from forcefully removing people to countries where they risk serious harm or death. Unfortunately, the international principle of asylum is under attack and the United States is intentionally deporting refugees of color to countries where they risk severe harm, torture, and death.

In multiple jurisdictions, Innovation Law Lab is enlisting the help of lay people to hold U.S. immigration courts accountable and to design scalable volunteer-operated clinics where unrepresented asylum seekers can receive high quality limited legal services.
Free Legal Services for Unrepresented Asylum Seekers

The majority of people who receive final orders of removal in immigration court have no legal representation. Too many lose their cases without the opportunity to explain their claims because they do not understand what the legal process asks of them: what are the relevant elements of their claims, what forms must they fill out, how should they fill those forms, and when and where to file? In order to protect those seeking asylum before hostile immigration courts in “asylum-free zones” around the United States, Innovation Law Lab has started training legal and non-legal volunteers to provide free legal orientations and legal services at monthly Asylum Clinics.

In the Defend Asylum Clinic’s pilot year, we received 238 referrals, largely from bus stations across the US where advocates met asylum seekers en route to Georgia. After triaging for those individuals most vulnerable to deportations, community volunteers in Georgia provided monthly legal orientations and legal services at monthly Asylum Clinics. In addition to providing urgent legal services, the Asylum Clinics serve as community gathering spaces where organizers and representatives of different organizations are invited to present the work they engage in and the services they offer, and invite clinic participants to join movements for social justice and take advantage of existing resources in the community at large, including mental health services, assistance with transportation, and more. In 2019, we facilitated 240 volunteer opportunities for more than 70 volunteers from communities at large and faith-based organizations in Georgia.

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Collecting Data To Hold Immigration Courts Accountable

Community members from around the country are coming together to launch “Court Watch” programs in an effort to increase immigration court accountability. Court observers become first-hand witnesses of the cold, callous treatment towards traumatized asylum-seeking families as they tell their stories of harm.

Community stakeholders have been shocked as parents are reprimanded for their children’s tears during court proceedings and immigration judges force respondents to discuss the details of their sensitive cases in front of public audiences, retraumatizing the respondents and threatening their privacy.

In 2019, Law Lab developed and launched Court Watch, a tool designed to allow court watch projects around the country to collect streamlined, uniform information, and share training resources and materials. The Court Watch tool will allow data on immigration judge conduct to be gathered and stored in both individual and aggregate forms and provide advocates with valuable information to fight systemic patterns of bias and other unlawful court practices. This new backdrop of granular data can also be used to bolster policy recommendations, advocacy and legal strategies in real-time.

70 COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS
238 ASYLUM REFERRALS
65 LEGAL ORIENTATIONS
57 PREVENTED DEPORTATIONS
Innovation Law Lab’s team of lawyers are able to defend some of the most vulnerable members of our society from the Trump administration’s hate-fueled campaign.

**OUR FIGHT TO END TRUMP’S HORRIFIC “REMAIN IN MEXICO” POLICY**

**Innovation Law Lab v. McAleenan**

In February 2019, Innovation Law Lab and its co-plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against Trump’s “Remain in Mexico” policy (also known as “MPP,” or the so-called “Migrant Protection Protocols”), which forces individuals to wait in dangerous conditions in Mexico while they seek asylum in U.S. immigration court. An appellate court has allowed the policy to be implemented while the case is pending, resulting in the forcible return of over 60,000 men, women, and children to Mexico over the past year. These individuals have become targets of murder, rape, torture, and cartel kidnapping – and 96 percent are unable to access counsel in their immigration court proceedings. As we await the latest decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, our litigation continues to challenge the illegality and inhumanity of this policy.

**OUR FIGHT TO END TRUMP’S UNLAWFUL ASYLUM TRANSIT BAN**

**East Bay Sanctuary Covenant v. Barr**

In July 2019, Innovation Law Lab joined East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, Al Otro Lado, and the Central American Resource Center in Los Angeles to challenge the Trump Administration’s asylum transit ban, which makes most individuals traveling through Mexico ineligible for asylum in the United States. This policy continues the Trump Administration’s efforts to restrict the right to asylum in violation of U.S. and international law. After our litigation won an initial injunction of the policy, the Supreme Court allowed the transit ban to continue while the case moves forward in federal court.

**OUR FIGHT TO HALT TRUMP’S ASYLUM BAN**

**Las Americas v. Trump**

In November 2018, Innovation Law Lab and three other non-profit organizations challenged President Trump’s asylum ban, which would make any individual ineligible for asylum if they cross the United States-Mexico border outside a port of entry. This policy fundamentally violates the right to asylum under U.S. and international law – and was enacted by the Trump Administration after months of a “metering” policy that prevented thousands of asylum seekers from presenting themselves at ports of entry. Our litigation has ensured that this unlawful proclamation is temporarily blocked by the courts, with a nationwide injunction upheld by the Supreme Court while our case continues to move forward.

**OUR FIGHT TO HALT TRUMP’S UNLAWFUL ASYLUM TRANSIT BAN**

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**OUR FIGHT TO END THE WEAPONIZATION OF U.S. IMMIGRATION COURTS**

**Las Americas v. Trump**

In December 2019, Innovation Law Lab, Southern Poverty Law Center, and Perkins Coie filed a lawsuit challenging the Trump Administration’s weaponization of the immigration court system to serve an anti-immigrant agenda. Filed on behalf of six legal service providers, the lawsuit challenges systemic bias and dysfunction across the immigration court system: the growth of “asylum-free zones,” where judges deny virtually all asylum claims regardless of the merits of the case; the skyrocketing case backlog of more than one million cases, which forces individuals to wait years for adjudication of their asylum claims; and the implementation of new policies that fundamentally undermine judges’ impartiality.
Creating A More Inclusive Oregon

Unlike in criminal proceedings, immigrants facing deportation are not appointed legal representation, meaning that those who cannot afford a lawyer must find pro bono assistance or fight their cases unrepresented. The system is set up this way by design and maximizes the power imbalance in favor of the government, who is always represented by an experienced attorney, versus an individual facing removal, who is almost never entitled to appointed counsel, even if they are a child.

Originally launched in 2018, Equity Corps of Oregon was created in response to the crisis of mass deportation and incarceration facing immigrant families. With funding from the State of Oregon, the program was able to expand its reach statewide in October 2019. This makes Equity Corps the first statewide universal representation program of its kind in the country.

Though Equity Corps’s six direct service attorneys provide a wide array of advice and legal services related to deportation proceedings, our primary focus is representing immigrants on the merits before the immigration court.

EQUITY CORPS OF OREGON’S FIRST YEAR

We trained almost 150 community navigators, working out of 57 community-based organizations throughout Oregon.

Navigators submitted 464 navigations for review, 85% of which were eligible and accepted into the program.

We provided legal services to over 500 people involved in 300 removal defense cases. Legal services included vigorous defense on the merits in immigration court, along with assistance with other important ancillary legal matters, including requests for work authorization, motions, and advocacy around onerous conditions imposed by ICE, like ankle monitors.

We served clients come from 30 diverse countries, who speak 14 different languages, and who all live in households that earn less than 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

We facilitated 11 asylum workshops, where 188 people involved in 92 cases completed their asylum applications for filing in immigration court.

We represented 22 unaccompanied minors—children who came here seeking safety from danger and who would otherwise be forced to navigate the complex immigration system entirely alone.

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Once in Oregon, a community navigator based at Maria’s church quickly connected her to Equity Corps’ services using Innovation Law Lab’s online navigator portal. Once referred, an Equity Corps attorney was able to complete Maria’s asylum application, provide legal assistance throughout the duration of her case; and, most importantly, represent her at her merits hearing before the Portland Immigration Court. Maria was granted asylum and now hopes to bring her children to live safely with her in the United States.
Making State Courthouses Safe for All Oregonians

In 2017, ICE began using state courts as tools for its enforcement and deportation objectives, tracking individuals on state court dockets, lying in wait in courthouse hallways and parking lots, and making arrests that look more like kidnappings—in plainclothes, without showing a warrant, and often by using physical force. ICE doubled down on that policy in January 2018, after Oregon, among other states, began to publicly decry the arrest practice, noting the impacts that ICE’s arrests were having on immigrant communities and communities of color and the ability of Oregon’s state courts to administer justice.

Innovation Law Lab and the ACLU of Oregon, on behalf of a coalition of several other petitioning organizations, formally petitioned Oregon’s Chief Justice to issue an emergency rule prohibiting ICE arrests at or near our state courthouses, noting that their members and clients have reduced their participation in the justice system as a result, causing individuals to forego remedies, defenses, marriages, divorces, protective orders, and other matters of courthouse and community concern.

In November 2019, Chief Justice Walters issued a rule prohibiting warrantless civil arrests in and around Oregon’s state courthouses, including in public entryways, sidewalks, driveways, and parking areas. The rule is the broadest of its kind in the country and is an important first step in bringing to an end ICE’s destructive arrest practices in Oregon.

Innovation Law Lab Detention in Oregon

In February 2019, a judge in Wasco County determined that two of the practices that NORCOR, the regional jail, undertakes for the purpose of enforcing federal immigration laws are illegal under ORS 181A.820, Oregon’s disentanglement law.

Innovation Law Lab, together with Oregon Law Center, sued NORCOR in 2017, alleging that the jail’s ongoing contract with ICE with to provide custody to individuals in immigrant detention, its practices of notifying ICE when an individual is booked or released, and its practice of holding individuals beyond their release date for immigration enforcement purposes violated state law. The court agreed with respect to NORCOR’s release notifications and extended detention practice, but held that the jail’s remaining practices were lawful. Innovation Law Lab and Oregon Law Center continue to litigate the case on appeal in the Oregon Court of Appeals.
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Asylum Seeker Sponsorship Project
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Atlanta Friends School
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BAASC
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Catholic Charities of Southern New Mexico
Catholic Community Services of Lane County
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Centro de Ayuda
Centro Latinoamericano
Centro Legal de la Raza
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Georgia Immigration Working Group
Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights
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Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)
Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Immigrant Justice Campaign
Immigrant Justice Corps
Immigration Counseling Service (ICS)
Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMIrJ)
Jared Tamler Memorial Fund
Jewish Family Services of San Diego
Justice Action Center
Justice Catalyst
Justice Diversity Center
Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton
La Unidad 11, Atlanta
Lannan Foundation
Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center
Latin American Association
Latino Network (LatNet)
Lewis & Clark Law School
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New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
New Sanctuary Movement
Northern Nevada Immigration Project
Oregon Community Foundation
Oregon Law Center
Perkins Coie
Pueblo Sin Fronteras
Pueblo Unido
Racial Justice Action Center
RAICES
Remote Immigration Assistance Project
Rural Organizing Project of Oregon
Santa Fe Dreamers Project
Sidley Austin
SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)
Stoll Berne
Sueños Sin Fronteras
Tahirih Justice Center, Atlanta
Taylor Levy Law
TRLA
UCB Boalt
UCI Law School
Unite Oregon
University of North Carolina School of Law
USD, Beyond Borders
USF Law Clinic
Victim Rights Law Center
Women On The Rise