Berkeley Law Alternative Service Trips (BLAST)

2019-2020 Trip Descriptions

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ATLANTA

Blastlanta students will be working with two Atlanta organizations, the Atlanta Volunteer Legal Foundation’s Safe & Stable Families Project and Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network’s Victims of Violence Program, which serve communities affected by domestic violence and human trafficking. During the trip, students will have the opportunity to do 40 hours of substantive legal work. Leading up to the trip, we will engage with a variety of sources and speakers to better understand the intersecting factors that affect how we confront domestic violence and human trafficking.

While work may vary depending on need, students will assist attorneys offering legal consultation, advice, and direction; help clients with the process of obtaining a temporary protective order against their intimate partner abusers; advocate for clients during Ex Parte hearings; e-file protective order pleadings; and prepare service packets for the Sheriff’s office. Every student will work all week to ensure victims of human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual abuse have access to quality legal representation.

*Time Commitment:* Students should be available to travel to Atlanta on the weekends prior and subsequent to Spring Break. In addition to the entirety of Spring Break 2020, we anticipate trip participants will have monthly trainings/meetings during fall semester with more frequent meetings in the spring as well as some social events throughout the school year. Dates and times of meetings are to be determined based on availability of participants.

Students will also be expected to participate in fundraising (events and online), but there is no minimum raise requirement.

For more information, please contact the student leaders at blastlanta@berkeley.edu.

CENTRAL VALLEY

We will be continuing our partnerships with organizations providing direct legal services in the Central Valley. Throughout the week, we will develop skills in client contact, document preparation and filing, legal research, and clinical services. In addition to helping provide legal services, we hope to develop a broader and more nuanced understanding of the social, political and other environmental issues in the Central Valley. As of now, organizational commitments will be divided as follows:
Central California Legal Services (CCLS): One group will be paired with CCLS to provide legal services to low-income residents across the Central Valley. Past BLAST/CCLS projects have included housing clinics, trust and estate services, and homelessness education.

Root & Rebound (R&R) and Kids in Need of Defense (KIND): The other group will spend one half of the week with KIND, helping research and file asylum applications for children living in the Central Valley. The second half of the week will be spent with R&R, which provides wraparound post-conviction services and advocacy for women in the Central Valley. Past BLAST/R&R projects have included legal research, post-conviction reentry clinics, and judicial filings.

Time Commitment: Students should be available to travel to the Central Valley on the weekends prior and subsequent to Spring Break. In addition to the Spring Break commitment, we will have general meetings for about 2 hours once per month throughout the year to plan and discuss topics relating to the trip and complete trainings. In addition, members take on a commitment to help in fundraising efforts, but there is no required minimum amount that they have to raise.

For more information, please contact the student leaders at blastcv@berkeley.edu.

HAWAII

This is a newly-established BLAST trip that takes a multidisciplinary approach to community work in the uniquely diverse Hawaiian Islands. Primarily, we will provide legal services ranging from housing clinics to indigenous land rights. But we will also tackle other issues including education outreach, environmental advocacy, and immigration matters. We emphasize cultural competency and human centered lawyering through direct client services and collaboration with a wide variety of nonprofit groups. You will receive training in one-on-one client intake, efficient document drafting, and multidisciplinary problem solving. We look forward to working with you!

Time Commitment: The estimated time commitment over two semesters is about 60 hours: 6 hours for meetings, 8 hours for readings, 40 hours for the trip itself, and about 6 hours of miscellaneous trainings and activities.

We will have two monthly meetings covering trip logistics, facilitated discussions, and guest speakers. Between meetings, there will be assigned reading and various tasks designed to
familiarize participants with the history, current events, and legal issues prevalent in Hawaiian communities. Each assignment should last no more than 2 hours. Additionally, students should be available to travel to Hawaii on the weekends prior and subsequent to Spring Break.

In the spring semester, we will complete any training materials that our partner organizations assign. During the trip itself, expect to work 8-10 hour days. This will include travel, on-site trainings, legal clinics, and any assigned research or administrative work. We will also organize networking events with local attorneys and nonprofit groups, as well as social events for our BLAST group.

For more information, please contact the student leaders at blasttohawaii@berkeley.edu.

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**KENTUCKY**

BLAST-Kentucky students will be split into two teams, both of which will spend spring break in Kentucky working with legal organizations, Appalachian Citizen’s Law Center and AppalReD Legal Aid, to meet different legal needs of local residents. This is the third time BLAST will travel to Kentucky to work with ACLC and AppalReD. In past years, students have made valuable contributions ranging from providing direct services to drafting and filing an amicus brief with the United States Supreme Court on black-lung benefits.

**AppalRed Team:** Group A will work with the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund of Kentucky (AppalReD) to conduct a divorce clinic and assist in their provision of free legal services to low income and vulnerable residents of Kentucky.

**Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center:** Group B will work with the ACLC helping file black-lung benefit claims and on other environmental and natural resources legal issues of Eastern Kentucky.

**Time Commitment:** We plan to have monthly meetings focused either on training or education leading up to Spring Break. Although final meeting times will be determined based on participant availability, we will aim to meet during the lunch hour (12:45-2) on campus. Additionally, students should be available to travel to Kentucky on the weekends prior and subsequent to Spring Break. Students may also be required to fundraise on their own time.

For more information, please contact the student leaders at kentuckyblast@berkeley.edu.
MISSISSIPPI

Despite recent reforms, new criminal procedure rules, and successful litigation, the practice of cash bail for low-level offenses still keeps many individuals who await trial in jail—or in debt.\(^1\) As of May 2019, more than 5,700 people were incarcerated in local jails in Mississippi, with 2,750 of those detainees having been in jail longer than 90 days, and 800 of those detainees having been in jail for a year or longer.

To investigate this issue, BLAST-Mississippi students will have the rare opportunity to work with the Mississippi Office of State Public Defender to observe hearings in courts that set release conditions and bail for those awaiting trial. Students will collect data on issues including individuals’ access to judges following arrests and other due process concerns. Students will then collaborate to analyze data, identify trends, and work after the trip to draft a report synthesizing these findings. Over the course of the trip, students will also have a chance to participate in activities exploring Mississippi’s unique history and culture and to hear from a variety of guest speakers, all with a focus on civil rights.

\textit{Time Commitment:} In addition to the entirety of Spring Break 2020, we anticipate that the trip participants will have monthly trainings/meetings with some social events throughout the school year. Trainings will likely be once a month in the 12:45–2:00 lunch slot. Students will be expected to participate in fundraising (events and online), but there is no required minimum amount that they have to raise.

In addition, students will work on the report summarizing our findings after Spring Break. While the exact timing would depend on participants’ schedules and our client’s needs, we anticipate that work should be completed in the weeks following the end of the Spring semester.

For more information, please contact the student leaders at miss.blast@berkeley.edu.

BLAST-South Texas students will be selected to one of two South Texas trips.

South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR)

BLAST-South Texas will send a group of students to South Texas to work with ProBAR, an organization that provides legal information, pro se assistance, and pro bono representation to thousands of immigrants and asylum-seekers detained in remote South Texas.

Every year, thousands of people are detained by the Department of Homeland Security in South Texas. The children primarily come from Central America, while the adults come from many different countries around the world. Many of them travel to the United States seeking protection from violence and persecution in their home countries. Having language barriers, little understanding of U.S. law and court procedures, and limited financial resources, they face tremendous obstacles to winning immigration relief. ProBAR serves detained adults and unaccompanied children. Services include group legal orientations, pro se assistance, pro bono referrals, and direct representation.

The work law students will have the opportunity to engage in includes; completing client intakes at the detention facility, completing asylum applications, conducting country conditions research, and preparing clients for their interviews.

Time Commitment: Students should be available to travel to South Texas on the weekends prior and subsequent to Spring Break. In addition to the entirety of Spring Break 2020, we anticipate that trip participants will have monthly trainings/meetings with some social events throughout the school year. Trainings will likely be once a month in the 12:45-2:00 lunch slot or in the evenings. The training topics may include asylum law, handling secondary trauma, and working with interpreters.

Karnes Pro Bono Project

As immigrants continue to flee for their lives to the United States, many individuals are asking how they can help. In response, RAICES has organized the Karnes Pro-Bono Project, a program designed to provide free legal services to families detained in Karnes County Residential Center.

The immigrants detained are forced to undergo an interview formally known as the Credible Fear Interview (CFI) or Reasonable Fear Interview (RFI) to determine eligibility of release while
seeking asylum – or other forms of relief. Negative results from the CFI or RFI can lead to deportation. Deported migrants are put at a heightened risk of violence and danger.

Karnes is currently housing single adult women asylum-seekers. To ensure these asylum-seekers have access to legal representation, participants will travel to Karnes during Spring Break. Participants commit to a Monday through Thursday work schedule from 9:00am to 8:00pm, with a potential Friday work day depending on need for that week. There will be five mandatory training modules sent out one month before the trip that must be completed by all participants, and an on-the-ground training session taking place on Monday morning at 9:00am. Currently, the work includes completing client intakes, conducting country conditions research, preparing clients for credible fear and reasonable fear interviews with the asylum office, accompanying clients to their asylum office interviews, and providing representation before the Immigration Judge in negative credible fear reviews and bond hearings. All participants must be Spanish-speakers.

**Time Commitment:** Fall 2019 Semester: 10 hours of training before the trip; Spring 2020 Semester: 10 hours of training before the trip and ~45-50 hours during Spring Break. Students should also be available to travel to South Texas on the weekends prior and subsequent to Spring Break. Before the trip, participants attend a series of training sessions in the fall and spring semesters to learn more about asylum law and immigration law. Meeting times would depend on participants’ schedules but would likely take place during the lunch hour (12:45 p.m. to 2 p.m.).

For more information, please contact the student leaders at blast.southtexas@berkeley.edu.

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**TIJUANA**

BLAST- Tijuana will send a group of students to Tijuana, Mexico to work with Al Otro Lado, a bi-national, direct legal services organization serving indigent deportees, migrants, and refugees.

There is an urgent humanitarian crisis at our U.S.-Mexico border. Migrant caravans arrive in Tijuana and are met with resistance in violation of U.S. immigration laws. Under U.S. asylum law, asylum seekers who present themselves at the border cannot be turned away. However, the realities on the ground are different. Migrants are placed on an illegal list and forced to wait in Mexico until their numbers are called. This is an important reality law students should witness to see first-hand how laws are applied in perverse ways. It is also valuable for students to engage in direct legal work with migrants seeking asylum. There is a shortage of attorneys and law students that can
meet the needs of the thousands of migrants seeking help. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to try and mitigate the shortage of legal help needed.

Law students will have the opportunity to complete client intakes, prepare clients for credible fear and reasonable fear interviews, conduct know your rights presentations, and engage in other services to support migrants in their search for asylum.

**Time Commitment:** Tijuana BLAST is unique in that it is the only BLAST trip over Winter Break. Additionally, students should be available to travel to Tijuana on the weekends prior and subsequent to the trip, and should only apply if they are available to commit to one full week over winter break (approx. Dec. 15-21). We anticipate that trip participants will have monthly trainings/meetings with some social events throughout the school year. Training will likely be once a month in the 12:45-2:00 lunch slot or in the evenings. The training topics may include asylum law, handling secondary trauma, and working with interpreters. Students will be expected to participate in fundraising (events, online, and others) but there is no required minimum amount that they have to raise.

**Note:** Please consider all legal work will be done in Tijuana, Mexico and will involve traveling internationally. If you have any questions or concerns about your ability to travel internationally please contact a member of the Pro Bono Program.

For more information, please contact the student leaders at [tijuanablast@berkeley.edu](mailto:tijuanablast@berkeley.edu).