

Miller Fellow: Vanessa Rivas-Bernardy

Faculty Sponsor: Professor Katerina Linos

Project: Human Rights Challenges and the Coronavirus



Vanessa Rivas-Bernardy is a 3L at Berkeley Law focused on human rights law and migration. As a student in the International Human Rights Law Clinic, she is helping develop a truth commission in San Francisco to address the city’s history of police violence against the Black community. She has also helped draw attention to the civil and human rights abuses committed by border enforcement authorities by helping the Clinic pass local legislation promoting more humane border policy. In addition to her work in the Clinic, Vanessa is a Notes Editor for the California Law Review and has represented asylum-seekers through the California Asylum Representation Clinic. She received a 2020 UC Berkeley Human Rights Center Fellowship to work at Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center in El Paso, Texas, where she helped represent asylum-seekers waiting in Mexico under the “Remain in Mexico” policy. She has also worked at Bay Area Legal Aid in Richmond, California, where she helped represent survivors of interpersonal violence in their immigration and family law cases.

Vanessa is working on projects related to Covid and human rights, refugees, and international organizations. She is researching how restrictions implemented in response to the pandemic are implemented, and whether organizations can help protect rights in an era of growing authoritarianism. She is also comparing international organization effectiveness, focusing in particular on UNHCR and on the International Organization for Migration.