

DePaul University
Asylum & Immigration Clinic

Vanessa Esparza-Lopez

Managing Attorney at National Immigrant Justice Center

*Clinic Participation:
2007-2008*

*Graduated:
2009*

Vanessa Esparza-López is a managing attorney with the Immigrant Legal Defense Project of the National Immigrant Justice Center, where she represents individuals before the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of State, and U.S. Department of Justice. As well, she is the lead of NIJC's DACA Pro Bono Project. Vanessa is a current member and has previously served on several committees of the Chicago Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). She has been recognized as an "Emerging Lawyer" by the Law Bulletin Media's Leading Lawyers division from 2017 to the present. Vanessa obtained her J.D. from DePaul University College of Law in 2009 and her Bachelor of Arts with honors in International Studies from DePaul University in 2006. During law school, Vanessa was the cofounder of the Society for Asylum & Immigration Law.

What do you remember most about your time in the Clinic?

My first exposure to the clinic was as a 1L when I served as an interpreter. After that experience, I knew that I wanted to be a student participant the following year. It was great to have the hands on, practical experience while still in law school. My participation in the clinic further confirmed that I wanted to practice immigration law after graduation.

What lessons from the clinic do you still use today or have used in your professional career?

There are very few days in my practice that I am not going directly to the INA and regulations to remind myself of the law and requirements.

How did your involvement with the clinic help you connect with other professionals in the field?

The immigration field is a pretty small world and participating in the clinic was a great way to build my network. It helped me develop strong relationships with local legal professionals.

Is there a message you would like to share with your fellow Clinic alums, faculty, or staff?

Congratulations on 25 years! We have all worked towards establishing a strong program that benefits community members and partners. It is an honor to be a small part of this legacy.