



# MALDEF

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

*MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund) has filed a motion on behalf of recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) seeking to intervene in a lawsuit filed by seven states against the federal government seeking to force an end to the 2012 initiative. Here are brief biographies of the DACA recipients named in the motion:*

### **Nancy Adossi, Houston, TX**

Adossi, 28, was born in Lomé, Togo, brought to the United States by her parents at age 9. A sixth-grade social studies teacher at Paul Revere Middle School in Houston, she is a three-time graduate of the University of Houston. She was valedictorian and keynote graduation speaker when she earned her Bachelor's degree in political science and international relations before going on to earn her Master's in public administration and a Doctorate of Education in Health Sciences Technology. She also works as a research consultant with Lift A Village and the UndocuBlack Network, and was previously a research consultant with the Black Alliance for Just Immigration.

### **Carlos Aguilar, Cambridge, MA**

Aguilar, 27, was born in Mexico and brought by his mother to the United States when he was 14. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in education at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. Aguilar earned his Bachelor's degree in psychology from Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas, and his Master's degree in sociology from the University of Texas at San Antonio, where he volunteered as the coordinator of Immigrant Youth Leadership. He also worked as a legal assistant at an immigration law firm in San Antonio.

### **Oscar Alvarez, Los Angeles, CA**

Alvarez, 23, was born in Mexico and brought to the United States by his parents as a 2-year-old. He is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in American studies with a focus in public policy and education at the University of California, Berkeley. Alvarez was a 2016 Fellow with the Public Policy and International Affairs Program at the Goldman School of Public Policy, which promotes the inclusion of students from underserved communities in the public sector and helps prepare those students for graduate level programs and careers in public service. He previously co-lead a student group, *Casa Sin Fronteras*, that helps connect undocumented students to housing or assistance while at school and raises awareness about undocumented students and homelessness. Alvarez previously interned in Congress through the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, working with Rep. Linda Sánchez of California's 38th Congressional District.

### **Moses Kamau Chege, Spokane, WA**

Born in Kenya, Chege, 23, was brought by his mother to the United States as a 6-year-old. He graduated from Stadium High School in Tacoma, where he was a cadet commander of the Navy JROTC. He is pursuing a Bachelor's of business administration in accounting at Whitworth University, where he works as a cultural events coordinator. He is the recipient of the Act Six Scholarship, a full-tuition scholarship from the Northwest Leadership Foundation. Chege also co-founded and volunteers at Spokane Dream Project, an organization advocating for undocumented students in the Spokane community.

### **Elizabeth Diaz, McAllen, TX**

Diaz, 23, was brought by her parents to the United States when she was 6 years old. She earned an Associate's Degree in early education from South Texas College. While in school, she participated in Valley Scholars, a community service organization, and volunteered with Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Diaz earned nursing assistant and a physical therapy technician certifications from the New Start School. She is married and works as a relocation manager for a security company in McAllen.

### **Maria Diaz Sanchez, Mission, TX**

Diaz Sanchez, 29, was born in Mexico and brought by her parents to the United States when she was 12. She graduated from the South Texas High School for Health Professions, and went on to earn her nursing degree from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. She is employed as a nurse in Edinburg, Texas.

### **Elly Marisol Estrada Cruz Atlanta, GA**

Estrada, 24, was born in Mexico and came to the United States with her family when she was 5. Currently employed as a legal assistant at an immigration law firm in the Atlanta area, she is a 2016 *magna cum laude* graduate of Armstrong State University (now Georgia Southern University—Armstrong Campus) in Savannah, where she double majored in political science and government and Spanish. While in college, she was a member of the Savannah Undocumented Youth Alliance, a student-run organization that advocates for access to higher education for undocumented students. After college, she worked as the deputy chief of staff for a state representative in Georgia.

### **Blanca Gonzalez, Mission, TX**

Gonzalez, 27, was born in Mexico and was brought by her parents to the United States when she was 9. She earned her Associates degree in criminal justice and education from South Texas College, where she participated in the student criminal justice society. Gonzalez is married and has a 6-year old daughter who is a U.S. citizen. Gonzalez currently works as an assistant manager at a restaurant in Palmhurst, Texas.

### **Hyo-Won Jeon, Chicago, IL**

Jeon, 23, was born in South Korea and came with her parents to the United States at age 3. She is pursuing a degree in social studies from Harvard College. She is currently taking a one-year leave of absence from Harvard to work at the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium as an Immigrant Rights Fellow in Chicago. At Harvard, she volunteers as senior advisor for the Asian American Women's Association and is a leader at the First Year Urban Program, a mentorship program for freshmen students who are interested in public interest careers. Jeon was the recipient of the Harvard Foundation Award for Race Relations her sophomore and junior years at the university.

### **Pratishtha Khanna, Burtonsville, MD**

Khanna, 26, was born in India and came to the United States at age 10. She earned a Bachelor's degree in biological sciences from University of Maryland Baltimore County in 2014. This fall, she will attend Western University of Health Sciences, Graduate College of Biomedical Sciences to pursue a Master's degree in biomedical sciences. Khanna currently works full-time at a hospital in Baltimore as a clinical technician in medical ICU and previously worked part-time at the University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center. She also participates in Pre-Health Dreamers, a community of undocumented students pursuing careers in health.

### **Jung Woo Kim, Los Angeles, CA**

Born in South Korea, Kim, 33, came to the United States when he was 15. He is a *cum laude* graduate of California State University, Fullerton with a Bachelor's degree in kinesiology. Kim works as a membership development manager at the Korean Resource Center in Los Angeles and is the national campaign director of the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium, a grassroots organization focused on social, economic and racial justice.

### **Karla Lopez, Mableton, GA**

Lopez, 23, was born in Mexico and was brought by her mother to the United States when she was at age 8. She is pursuing her Bachelor's degree in biology at Perimeter College in Atlanta. Lopez works full-time at a combination of two jobs and is an active participant in student government at Perimeter, where she has served as a student senator and secretary. In addition to working towards her bachelor's degree, Ms. Lopez works full-time at a combination of two jobs. Lopez volunteers at a number of community organizations, including Hosea Feed the Hungry and the American Red Cross.

### **Jose Magaña-Salgado, Washington, D.C.**

Born in Mexico and brought to the United States when as a 2-year-old, Magaña-Salgado, 31, is an attorney who lives in Washington D.C. He provides consulting services to local, state, and national immigration nonprofit organizations. He earned his Bachelor's degree from Arizona State University and his law degree from Baylor School of Law. During law school, Magaña-Salgado assisted attorneys and non-profit organizations in providing legal services to crime

victims, trafficking survivors, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients, and immigrants seeking asylum and fleeing persecution. He co-founded the Dream Bar Association, a professional bar association led by and for undocumented immigrants. Previously, Magaña-Salgado was managing policy attorney at the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, where he developed education materials for attorneys and community members and advocated in Congress for comprehensive immigration reform.

### **Nanci Judith Palacios Godinez, Seffner, FL**

Palacios, 29, was born in Mexico and brought by her parents to the United States when she was 6. She is currently pursuing her Bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in anthropology at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Palacios holds an Associate's degree in health science from Hillsborough Community College, where she co-founded United We Dream-Tampa Bay and volunteered and served on the steering committee of the Florida Immigrant Youth Network, a statewide coalition of organizations focused on immigrant rights. She also works as a congregation organizer for the nonprofit community group Faith in Florida and is an active member of her church.

### **Jin Park, Cambridge, MA**

Born in South Korea and brought by his parents to the United States when he was a 7-year-old, Park, 22, is an undergraduate student at Harvard College studying molecular and cellular biology with a minor in government. He is currently employed at a university cancer research institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Park previously worked at the New York City Mayor's Office, where he helped implement a care coordination program for undocumented immigrants. He served as director of naturalization assistance programs at Harvard, which provides services to low-income immigrants, primarily from Boston's Chinatown, and incorporated his own nonprofit organization, Higher Dreams, which provides training and direct services to undocumented high school students in Boston. He was named a White House Asian-American and Pacific Islander Initiative spokesperson during President Obama's tenure.

### **Karla Perez Ramirez, Houston, TX**

A May 2018 graduate of the University of Houston Law Center, Perez was born in Mexico City and immigrated to Houston with her parents when she was 2 years old. She is a 2015 graduate of the Bauer College of Business and the Honors College at the University of Houston. She worked on immigration issues at UH in her roles as president of the Youth Empowerment Alliance, an organization for undocumented students; chair of the Mexican American Studies Student Organization; and at internships with the UHLC Immigration Clinic, MALDEF, Tahirih Justice Center, and Baker Ripley, a community development organization serving the Houston area. Perez is an Equal Justice Works Fellow sponsored by Greenberg Traurig, LLP and The Texas Access to Justice Foundation, and hosted by the Tahirih Justice Center in Houston, where she will represent immigrant women and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence. Perez serves on the national board of United We Dream.

### **Luis A. Rafael, Chicago, IL**

Rafael, 23, was born in Mexico and came to the United States with his mother at age 3. He is currently attending Northeastern University's STEM Pathway Initiative to teach robotics in low income communities. Rafael previously worked as a campaign manager for Chicago-area elections in a paid and volunteer capacity. He volunteers with various Chicago-based organizations, including New Generation of Leadership, a group of Latinos organizing to seek social justice in the suburb of Cicero, and Increase the Peace, a youth led initiative to decrease gun violence in the Chicago neighborhood of Englewood.

### **Maria Rocha, San Antonio, TX**

Rocha, 30, was born in Mexico and came to the United States when she was 3. She teaches third grade students in San Antonio and is pursuing her Master's degree through the Urban School Leader Collaborative program at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Rocha worked as a teacher through the Teach for America program from 2015 to 2017, and volunteers with the Cesar Chavez Legacy and Educational Foundation to organize food drives and community events.

### **Denise Guadalupe Romero Gonzalez, New York, NY**

Born in Mexico, Romero, 26, came to the United States in 2001 when she was 9. She is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in journalism from Lehman College of The City University of New York. In addition to school, Romero works as a paralegal and organizer at Mobilization for Justice, a nonprofit organization that provides free legal assistance to low-income tenants in New York. She also volunteers with the New York State Youth Leadership Council, the first undocumented youth-led organization in New York.

### **Karina Ruiz De Diaz, Phoenix, AZ**

Ruiz De Diaz, 33, was born in Mexico City and came with her parents to the United States when she was 15. A graduate of Arizona State University, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biochemistry in 2015 and currently serves as executive director of the Arizona Dream Act Coalition, an immigrant youth-led organization focused on higher education and immigrant rights. A wife and mother of three U.S.-citizen children, Ruiz De Diaz is an active member of her church, a parent volunteer and president at the elementary school attended by two of her children, and a volunteer at HonorHealth John C. Lincoln Medical Center and at One Arizona Table, an organization that promotes civic engagement among Latino and immigrant communities.

### **Angel Silva, Silver Spring, MD**

Born in Mexico, Silva, 25, was brought by his parents to the United States as a 1-yearold. He is a scholarship and administration specialist for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute in Washington, D.C., responsible for managing its Scholar-Intern Programs, which provide students with scholarships and paid internships at community based

health organizations. Silva holds a Bachelor's degree in journalism with a minor in political science from California State University, Northridge. While in college, Silva helped develop the DREAM Center, a resource center to help undocumented students access in-state tuition and learn about services available to them. He volunteers with the Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center in Montgomery County, Maryland.

**Darwin Velasquez, Colma, CA**

Velasquez, 23, was born in El Salvador and came to the United States when he was 12. In 2017, he earned a Bachelor's degree in international studies and global politics with a minor in European studies from the University of San Francisco. Velasquez currently works as the national Dream coordinator for College Track, a college access program, where he counsels more than 250 Dreamers. He previously served as outreach ambassador with Educators for Fair Consideration, where he advocated for higher education for undocumented youth. Velasquez also volunteered with the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department and was the recipient of the San Francisco Youth Commission's 2013 Youth of the Year Award.