



# OASIS LEGAL SERVICES ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

“  
I finally feel safe and free  
to become a social activist  
in the struggle.”

*Read more of Alexia's  
story on page 6*



# OASIS BY THE NUMBERS



**190**

NEW LGBTQ+  
ASYLUM  
SEEKERS  
REPRESENTED



**205**

LGBTQ+ IMMIGRANTS  
PROVIDED HOLISTIC CASE  
MANAGEMENT AND WRAP  
AROUND SUPPORT



**50**

LGBTQ+ IMMIGRANTS  
BECAME NATURALIZED  
U.S. CITIZENS



**374**

WORK  
AUTHORIZATION  
DOCUMENTS  
SECURED FOR LGBTQ+  
IMMIGRANTS



**111**

GREEN CARDS  
OBTAINED FOR  
LGBTQ+  
IMMIGRANTS



**16**

TRAININGS ON  
TRAUMA-INFORMED  
AND CULTURALLY  
INTELLIGENT  
REPRESENTATION OF  
LGBTQ+ IMMIGRANTS



**752**

OASIS CLIENTS  
CONTINUE TO WAIT  
FOR DECISIONS IN  
THEIR ASYLUM CASES  
DUE TO IMMIGRATION  
BACKLOGS



**\$1,199,728**

IN REVENUE FROM THE  
FOLLOWING SOURCES  
FOUNDATION GRANTS: **41%**  
GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS: **22%**  
CLIENT FEES: **14%**  
INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS: **9%**  
SPECIAL EVENTS: **9%**  
MISC. REVENUE: **4%**  
IN-KIND DONATIONS: **1%**



**\$1,828,260**

SPENT TO FULFILL  
OASIS'S MISSION\*  
PROGRAMS: 91%  
ADMIN: 8%  
FUNDRAISING: 1%

\*OASIS HAD A  
PLANNED BUDGET  
DEFICIT THIS YEAR  
THAT WAS COVERED  
BY PAST REVENUE  
INTENTIONALLY SET  
ASIDE FOR USE IN 2022

# FROM THE BOARD

Oasis continues to be **a beacon of hope** for those fleeing hate crimes and persecution for their sexual orientation and gender identity.

With close to **800 asylum cases pending**, we face the uphill battle of an administration that has done very little to alleviate the backlog of pending applications.

Many of our clients are in a legal limbo with the uncertainty of when their cases will be reviewed and asylum granted.

Thanks to our holistic approach to asylum cases, we are able to provide emotional and mental health supports to our clients. In **2022, over 200 clients** received case management and emotional support from Oasis to overcome the trauma inflicted on them for being LGBTQIA+.

## **Rhina Ramos**

*Board Chair*

Oasis Legal Services

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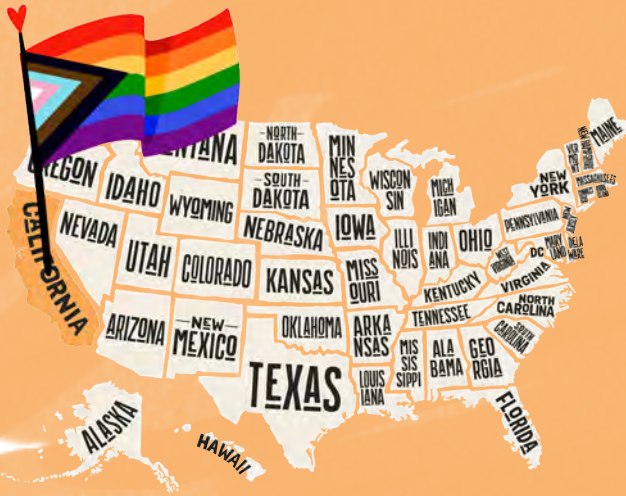
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# CENTRAL VALLEY OFFICE



In March 2022, Oasis opened our office in Fresno to better serve LGBTQ+ immigrants living in the Central Valley. Grants from the California Access to Justice Commission's Infrastructure and Innovation Grant Program and Gilead Sciences INC. allowed us to expand access to our services by opening a new office housed within the Fresno EOC LGBTQ+ Resource Center—a huge step forward for Oasis in reaching **LGBTQ+ immigrants living in underserved and rural areas**. Former Oasis intern **Lizette Rojas** is our Central Valley Legal Advocate and **Juana Echeveste-Davis** is our Central Valley Community Support and Outreach Coordinator.

Both bilingual daughters of immigrant parents, Liz and Juana have formed a strong bond and friendship with each other over the past year as they have worked to provide legal representation and holistic case management support to LGBTQ+ immigrants living in the Central Valley. Thanks to their hard work and dedication, we have made strong connections with community partners and agencies in the Central Valley that are key to replicating our successful service model.



Juana and Liz at Fresno Pride

**Liz:** I feel very fortunate to be able to know and work with Juana. Not only has she proven herself to be an exceptional coworker, but also an amazing friend. I am not native to the Fresno area, but Juana is, and she has been kind enough to welcome me into her family and treat me as one of her own. Her kindness extends further than it would in a normal professional office setting. I consider her my "bestie" in Fresno, even though we tease and laugh at each other. I know that I can count on Juana to help with situations where I need someone to help or talk to. She makes working fun and every day is something new with her. On our lunch breaks, we like exploring new restaurants.

One of the things I am most proud of our work over the past year has been to bring to life one of Juana's ideas, a social cultural night! Juana came up with the idea after hearing clients at Fresno Pride express that they did not feel represented as LGBTQ+ Latinx community members, given that the Central Valley can sometimes be conservative. She helped provide an amazing warm and welcoming space for our clients to listen to their music, eat delicious food, express themselves, and meet new friends. These social cultural nights have proven to be some of our clients' favorites because they get to take part in the planning and execution of the events.



**Juana:** Working with Liz, who always has the best interest of the people she serves, is inspiring and motivating. Despite being from different generations, both of us come from similar backgrounds – our parents immigrated from Mexico and we grew up in rural communities. We are able to relate to each other and our clients in a way that would otherwise not be possible had we not shared some of those similar experiences. We both understand why this work is important and how culture can influence someone's choices. Through our work at Oasis we want to ensure we create a safe, trauma-informed space where our clients feel heard and can be connected to resources that will help them thrive.

Something that has really resonated with me in my work with clients over the past nine months is that at the end of almost every initial client contact, our clients refer to me by my childhood nickname, "Juanita." Every single time, this gesture warms my heart. This is so personal because throughout my life, only my family and friends have referred to me by that name. Hearing that nickname lets me know I am loved and cared for and to hear that from someone I have just met has been very impactful. I do not take for granted this seemingly small gesture. It reminds me that the work I do is important, but so is the manner in which I do it. I am so very grateful to be able to work with the population we serve and with Oasis!

Central Valley  
Pride



Fresno City College  
Volunteer Fair



Noche de Loteria  
Social Cultural Night



Dia de los Muertos  
Social Cultural Night



# CLIENT STORIES

## ALEXIA

In 2022, Oasis represented Alexia in her permanent residency application and helped her win her green card.

Alexia is a trans woman from Mexico. Her family and community assaulted and harassed her from a young age. In Mexico, Alexia was forced to keep her gender identity hidden to protect herself from further harm. As a young woman, she made the difficult journey to the United States. Still, Alexia kept her identity hidden for years after she arrived because she lived with family members and was deeply afraid of being mistreated in the United States. Alexia suffered from the effects of trauma and isolated herself due to fear.

After 20 years of living without legal status in the United States, Alexia finally connected with Oasis when she was referred by a friend who is also transgender. Bolstered by the support of her friend, Alexia was able to trust Oasis with her story, and we were able to help Alexia gain asylum.

After winning asylum, Alexia shared, "There is still work to be done so that trans women are respected, but I finally feel safe and free to become a social activist in the struggle. Oasis was the key to opening that door for me and for so many other trans women."

As an asylee, Alexia was granted the permanent right to live in the United States, but she was unable to get a REAL ID without paying for an expensive and unnecessary federal work permit. As a trans woman and asylee, Alexia could not safely update the name and gender marker on her Mexican passport. Now that Alexia has her green card, she can obtain a California REAL ID in her correct name and safely travel to visit her aunt in the United States.

After being granted permanent residency, Alexia shared her gratitude with the Oasis staff: "I know that Oasis's work is seen by those above and you are all blessed." Since winning asylum, Alexia has been able to access gender-affirming healthcare and pursue medical procedures to help her achieve her transition goals. She is an LGBTQ activist, folk dancer, actress, and singer. In the future, she hopes to record her music and perform on more stages, while continuing to work for her community and help those in need.





## PABLO

Tormented and attacked for being gay, Pablo had to flee his native Mexico because of the terrible abuse he endured. He suffered harm not only from people in his community but from members of his own family. When he first arrived in the United States in 1998, he felt that it was not safe to be openly gay; he married a woman and they have three sons together. After 14 years of living in the shadows, Pablo felt ready and safe enough to reach out for help. In 2012, with Oasis's help, he applied for asylum and it was granted in 2014. A year later, he received his permanent residency status. Finally, in 2022, he was granted U.S. citizenship.



“Un sueño hecho realidad el ser un miembro más de esta gran nación y tener voz y voto.” “It is a dream come true, being one more member of this great nation and having a vote and a voice.”

## EMILLY AND NATHALIA

Emilly suffered throughout her life at the hands of her family, community and church because she is a lesbian. She fled Brazil after being repeatedly harassed, ostracized and attacked. In 2017, Emilly met her wife, Nathalia, who was still in Brazil. They fell in love and found that they could openly share all their joys and hardships without fear. With Emilly's unwavering support, Nathalia was able to flee Brazil and join her in the U.S. in 2018.

With Nathalia by her side, Emilly felt empowered and sought help with her immigration status. Oasis filed asylum applications for both Emilly and Nathalia. Emilly was granted asylum in 2020 and with Oasis's help, petitioned for Nathalia, who had been stuck in the asylum backlog for three years, and Nathalia's 10-year-old son, who was still in Brazil. At the end of 2022, Emilly and Nathalia were reunited with their son and today are living without fear and looking forward to building a stable, safe life in this country as a proud queer family.



# DOJ ACCREDITATION

In 2022, Oasis had four staff members become Department of Justice Accredited Representatives\* and can now represent clients in affirmative immigration applications before the United States Department of Citizenship and Immigration Service. Becoming DOJ accredited is a rigorous application process involving training, demonstrated experience working in immigration legal services, and receiving the recommendation of people already in the field. With the addition of four new accredited representatives to our team, Oasis is ready to serve more clients and expand our reach to underserved LGBTQ+ communities throughout the region.



Becoming DOJ accredited has been a rewarding learning experience for me. Since my accreditation, I have represented clients in their asylum and work permit applications and have gained a lot of confidence in my ability and skills. It's been empowering to realize how much I've learned since I started my legal advocacy journey at Oasis three years ago. I look forward to one day representing clients at their asylum interviews and hope that, with time and more experience, I will also gain the confidence to take on more leadership and mentorship roles at Oasis. Becoming DOJ accredited has also reminded me of my roots and the community that inspired me to work in immigration law. I think about my parents and the farm worker community I grew up with in the Eastern Coachella Valley. I think about how difficult it was for my community to access resources to advocate for their immigration status in this country. Their stories have inspired my advocacy work with clients today.



Becoming a DOJ Accredited Representative has truly been a career- and life-changing experience. Not only has it been a remarkable learning journey, but it has given me the confidence to become the zealous advocate that our clients deserve. A memorable client I worked with is a gay man from Mexico who had not seen his mother in over 20 years. Obtaining U.S. citizenship gave him the peace of mind he needed to travel safely to Mexico to reunite with her. As a daughter and granddaughter of Mexican immigrants, there is no greater satisfaction than helping someone achieve their lifelong dream of becoming a U.S. citizen. I am incredibly grateful to Oasis and my wonderful colleagues and dedicated mentors for this amazing opportunity.







ANUAR ARRIAGA ESQUIVEL

After years of working as a paralegal, I searched for a way to use the skills I developed to help others navigate the U.S. immigration system and change people's lives. I joined the Oasis team with the aspiration of becoming an accredited representative and I am ecstatic to see it now come to fruition. As an accredited representative, I am motivated and committed to providing our clients with the support they need. The asylum and U.S. immigration system is stressful and confusing and I use my personal experiences navigating the system to guide my clients with empathy and reassurance. I strive to be the representative that my undocumented younger self would have loved to run into. This sentiment fuels my passion for the job as well as the recognition that having the correct representation during an immigration interview can make all the difference. I feel fortunate to be part of such a supportive and dynamic team. I am confident that together we at Oasis will continue to support, honor and change our clients' lives.

\*An accredited representative is a non-attorney who has demonstrated to the Department of Justice that they have enough education and experience in immigration law to provide immigration legal services. The purpose of the program is to improve access to justice by increasing the number of representatives serving low-income immigrants. Accredited representatives must work for a nonprofit organization providing immigration legal services to low-income clients.





# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

## INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS

Bigglesworth Family Foundation  
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Becca Williams  
Bill Sherer  
Cynthia Neiman  
Daniel Bui  
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Ximena Ojeda  
Yancy Cruz  
Yuliana Pineda

## SOCIAL WORK INTERNS

Sophia Muston





# ABOUT OASIS



BERKELEY OFFICE TEAM

Oasis Legal Services proudly provides quality, holistic and trauma-informed legal immigration services to under-represented, low-income LGBTQIA+ immigrant communities. We have over 80 years of combined professional experience in immigration legal services, and provide legal assistance with asylum, residency, naturalization, VAWA, and family petitions. In addition to this direct legal representation, Oasis also provides case management and other psychosocial supports to clients. We are an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

## ABOUT THE 2022 IMPACT REPORT

Designed by Raffi Marhaba of The Dream Collective, the 2022 impact report is rooted in Oasis's goal to center the voices and experiences of LGBTQIA+ immigrants. The report's titles appear in the Marsha P. Johnson font (developed by Vocal Type), to pay homage to an important forebearer of the U.S. LGBTQ+ movement. This year's impact report also features paper imagery and iconography. As Raffi explains, "Never in my life have I accumulated so much paper as when I was going through my asylum case. I want to reclaim the idea of paper in a way that feels empowering to people."





oasis<sup>TM</sup>  
LEGAL SERVICES

Oasis Legal Services  
1900 Addison St. Suite 100  
Berkeley, CA 94707  
(510) 666-6687

1252 Fulton St.  
Fresno, CA 93721  
(559) 777-6786

[www.oasislegalservices.org](http://www.oasislegalservices.org)