

# Create Change

## Feathers Named New Levin Center Executive Director

Nationally Recognized Public Interest Educator to Lead Expansion of Public Interest and Pro Bono Programs

As the new executive director of the John and Terry Levin Center for Public Service and Public Interest Law, Susan J. Feathers has an ambitious vision for the center and is thrilled to be at the helm.

She states, "I can't imagine a more exciting position for someone in my field. Stanford is unique in its abiding commitment to clinical legal education and public service, both of which are central to its mission."

### EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE ENABLES QUICK START

As a 14-year veteran of public interest education administration who also practiced public interest law for eight years, Feathers has already begun to launch new programs and identify ways to enhance existing ones.

Prior to joining Stanford, Feathers served as assistant dean of public service at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. She achieved national

acclaim for leading the first mandatory law school pro bono program, which became the first recipient of the ABA's Pro Bono Publico Award.

Feathers placed 800-900 students each year in pro bono projects at hundreds of public interest organizations in Philadelphia and worldwide—77% of students exceeded the minimum requirement of 70 hours.

In addition, she launched award-winning student-run projects, including the Animal Rights Project, the Immigration Project, the Marshall Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project, the Prisoners' Rights Project, and the Reproductive Rights Project. Feathers also created the first student-run LGBT pro bono project for which she won the Advocate for Justice Award from the Philadelphia Bar Association's Committee on the Legal Rights of Lesbians and Gay Men.



PHOTO: JOE NETO

Susan J. Feathers was appointed executive director of the John and Terry Levin Center for Public Service & Public Interest Law.

Each year, she and supervising attorneys from the nonprofits trained and supervised as many as 300 students, who in turn provided legal assistance to thousands of indigent clients.

Moreover, Feathers played a significant role in expanding Penn's international presence, including planning several delegations to Cuba and El Salvador and creating the Public International Fellows programs.

With her Public Interest Scholars, Feathers also planned a wide range of conferences, many of which were published in leading law journals, focusing on Civil Gideon, Terrorism and the Constitution, *(Continued on page 7)*

## Executive Director's Note

I am deeply honored to join Stanford Law School as the Executive Director of the John and Terry Levin Center for Public Service and Public Interest Law. Stanford's deep and abiding philosophical and financial commitment to clinical legal education, pro bono, and public interest careers make it a new frontier for legal education. I eagerly look forward to working with Stanford students, faculty, and graduates in building your already impressive public interest program.

As lawyers we can play a vital role in working to create a more just and humane society. We have the potential to raise, sharpen, and resolve many of the pressing legal issues of the day: the plight of the homeless, the treatment of detainees, the hazards of toxic waste. Nonetheless, the challenges facing public interest and pro bono attorneys are formidable: uncertain and often diminishing funding, a lack of centralized resources, and an undefined job market often deter students from pursuing full-time careers in the public sector. In my role as the Executive Director of the Levin Center, I hope to ease some of the challenges of launching public service careers while also encouraging students pursuing careers in the private sector to do pro bono work.

In the coming year, we plan to increase the depth and breadth of our pro bono opportunities to include national and international field placements; to offer rigorous and ongoing individualized counseling and mentoring programs; and to more fully integrate the academic, pro bono, and field placement experiences that form the foundation for your careers.

Through all of our programs and initiatives, the Center strives to nurture your vision, creativity, energy, gifts, and passion and allow them to inform your professional choices. To be effective public interest and pro bono attorneys we need not only to critique and judge the current systems of inequity, but also to envision systems of power and offer credible solutions and visions for sustainable change. By honoring your vision of justice you have the power to transform the debate, recast the discussion, alter the context in which our most pressing legal issues are resolved, and fulfill your own greatest potential.

Susan J. Feathers

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## News Briefs

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### **Save the date! Public Interest Welcome Dinner for Students, Alumni, Faculty**

The Levin Center will host a welcome reception for first-year students and returning students on Wednesday, September 5 in Crocker Garden at 5:30 p.m. Alumni and faculty are encouraged to join us. Please RSVP to [nasun@stanford.edu](mailto:nasun@stanford.edu).

### **New Initiatives Will Be Launched to Engage Public Interest Alumni**

With an eye towards increasing the involvement of public interest alumni, the Levin Center is pleased to announce several new initiatives targeting public interest alumni.

The first program of the year will be the Alumni Mentors-in-Residence program, which will bring mid-level public interest alumni (3-10 years out) back to campus to provide one-on-one student counseling and present a substantive lecture to the larger community.

The Levin Center will also host receptions in several major metropolitan areas for public interest alumni to meet Levin Center staff and learn more about our current programs. The first one will be in the Bay Area in September, followed by one in Washington, DC in early October and one in New York City in January. More details will follow shortly.

Plans are also in the works for building an on-line community for alumni to interact with one another and with students. Stay tuned!

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Chance made the decision for him when John Whitelaw '86 found himself faced with two equally attractive career paths at the beginning of his legal career.

Whitelaw was finishing his clerkship with Judge John Ferren of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals when he found himself pondering his next career move. His wife was in medical school and he had to go wherever she matched for her residency. Whitelaw was interested in both direct civil and criminal work and did not have a preference.

He explains, "It was going to be with either a public defender or a legal aid because I knew I wanted client work. When my wife matched in Minneapolis, it turned out that Legal Aid was hiring and the PD wasn't."

#### DIRECT SERVICES THE RIGHT FIT FOR WHITELAW

Fortuitous circumstances led to a very fulfilling career in legal services. Twenty-one years later, Whitelaw is still working in direct legal services and currently serves as the supervising attorney of the Public Benefits Unit at Community Legal Services in Philadelphia.

He observes, "It turns out that this is what I was meant to do. I think many people don't understand that what you are ultimately happy at doing on a day-to-day basis has less to do with what your beliefs are than what your temperament is. I am very temperamentally suited to direct legal services. In retrospect, I know that I'm not suited to doing PD work. It has nothing to do with my belief in the value of the work, but it's about what makes me happy on a gut level on a day-to-day basis. What suits me is having lots of cases, as I like juggling lots of clients and the hustle and bustle of lots of things going on at once."

Over the course of his career, Whitelaw has worked primarily in civil legal programs providing direct



John Whitelaw '86

### Alumni Spotlight

# Lifelong Legal Services Advocate Thrives in Trenches

services, including Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis, Appalachian Research and Defense Fund in West Virginia, and Community Legal Aid Society in Delaware. He also spent a year with the Federal Defender Association in Philadelphia doing capital habeas work but decided he was better suited to direct legal services.

When Whitelaw reflects on this work, he says, "The work is challenging and intellectually interesting. I have never been bored. Something new is happening every day. And they couldn't pay me enough to do any other work. That's the real truth." He adds, "My passion is representing lots of clients

and trying to fit in policy work as I can. I have other colleagues who are less suited to volume work and much better at coordinating and managing significant policy campaigns such as legislative and administrative advocacy—areas where I have less talent and inclination. Again, it has nothing to do with political beliefs, as I totally believe in my colleagues' work, and sometimes wish that I were more suited to it. Luckily I work for an organization that allows many different types of advocates to flourish."

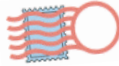
#### SOCIAL JUSTICE DREW WHITELAW TO LAW SCHOOL

Whitelaw decided to go to law school after having what he calls "a lightbulb moment." As an undergraduate student, he took a semester off to work as a resident tutor for a program called "A Better Chance." [See [www.abetterchance.org](http://www.abetterchance.org)] ABC seeks to identify highly motivated students of color who are at or above grade level with demonstrated leadership potential and refer them to some of the nation's top private and public schools. As a resident tutor living in Connecticut, Whitelaw attended a conference on racism when the "lightbulb" went off.

He says, "I realized that one, the revolution was not happening and two, it was not going to happen in my lifetime. For me, in order to try to accomplish social reform work, I needed to become a public interest lawyer. It was literally that sort of revelation. I knew I wanted to try and do some type of social reform work, but it was at this conference when I was away from school for a semester that I decided I wanted to be a lawyer."

He chose Stanford because of its reputation and because he had never been to California. "I wanted to go have an adventure. Plus, I liked the apocryphal story of looking up an assignment in a book and finding that someone has already marked where you're supposed (Continued on page 6)

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN WHITELAW '86

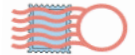


My first weekend in Washington DC coincided with the 20th anniversary of Rolling Thunder's first Run for the Wall. Every Memorial Day, hundreds of thousands of bikers ride into DC from across the country to call attention to veterans' issues. Much of the emotionally charged weekend was centered on the Vietnam War Memorial, and the ghosts of the past were manifest. I saw men speak to names on the wall as if the people they represent were present; one man stood in the same place for more than six hours to mourn the only friend he lost in Vietnam. The fact that these people—and I—came from across the country to be in DC underscores the special significance Americans see in our nation's Capitol, in the way it evokes both the American Dream, and, sometimes, our nightmares.

- Geoffrey King '09  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
Washington, D.C.



PHOTO BY GEOFFREY KING

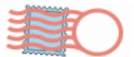


New Delhi isn't an easy place to live. The power goes out about every hour, there are lizards, peacocks (the national bird), cows, deer, and monkeys everywhere. And this is the capital. Despite the lack of infrastructure, this place is truly incredible simply because of the people. I visited a rural village (where more than 70% of Indians still live) last weekend and the family (which was so large that their houses took up an entire street) insisted on giving me a present before I left to ensure my return. Since they didn't have any sweets, they gave me 10 rupees (about 25 cents). Although this doesn't sound like much, it's about how much these villagers make in a day. That's the kind of generosity that makes India a pleasure to visit, despite the difficulties involved.

A modification of Samuel Johnson's famous quote comes to mind, "When a man is tired of Delhi, he's tired of life."

- Scott Shackelford '09  
U.N. Development Program Access to Justice initiative  
New Delhi, India

PHOTO COURTESY OF EMILY MAGLIO



This summer has been a pleasant combination of the expected and the unexpected. As anticipated, most of my work has been litigation-related. However, I have also had an inside look into the reproductive justice movement, ranging from legislative advocacy to grassroots mobilization and public education campaigns. Law Students For Choice organized events throughout the summer, including a day of advocacy training and intimate lunches with leaders in the movement. Plus, we have fun! This photo is from the ACLU's First Annual Summer Olympics, where Team "Feministas," comprised of interns, attorneys, and staff in the Reproductive Freedom and Women's Rights Projects took a third place victory (out of 6 teams), even though we had to leave early with two events to go.

- Emily Maglio '09  
ACLU, Reproductive Freedom Project  
New York, NY

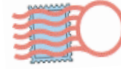


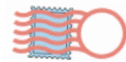
PHOTO COURTESY OF YARA LOMELI-LOIBL

The border is a strange place. Strands of barbed wire in some places, a sheet metal fence in others, holes and fence posts where it soon will be. Desperation and hope permeate the place, as the border winds its way through cities and deserts. It is summertime, and in Arizona that means temperatures hitting 120 degrees and migrants suffering and dying. They lie still during the day, and then walk through the desert at night, trying to stay one step ahead of la migra, the Border Patrol. For me the border is a check point that I can cross on foot, waving my driver's license and answering "U.S. citizen" to the agent. But for the detained children that I am working with this summer through the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project, the border constitutes the final hurdle to cross after they have come on their own all the way from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador or Ecuador, riding on top of trains, in trailers, buses and boats, finally making it to Mexico to walk for days in the desert before getting caught. They come from extreme poverty, in search of a better chance at survival. Working with the kids, I am learning compassionate lawyering: listening to each child's heartbreaking story, confronting harsh immigration laws, and trying to reconcile the two in the most humane way possible. And as I spend time on the border this summer, I am witnessing the suffering caused by this artificial line and the immigration policies that accompany it, as well as the determination and resilience of the migrants who will risk everything to get across.

- Yara Lomeli-Loibl '09  
 Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project  
 Florence, AZ



# POSTCARDS FROM THE FIELD



It's tough to pick a single highlight from my internship at the Justice Department. As an intern in the office that handles all federal political corruption cases, I chose the right time to spend a summer in Washington, D.C. I've been assigned to a variety of interesting cases: an army official who stole money from the Iraq reconstruction efforts, a federal prosecutor who intentionally withheld exculpatory evidence during a terrorism trial, a deputy cabinet secretary who helped his girlfriend raise money from lobbyists, and a handful of matters relating to the Jack Abramoff investigation.

There's a lot of legal research and writing, but so much more. I sat with two DOJ attorneys and an FBI case agent as they discussed how to convince a recently arrested suspect to "flip" and agree to wear a wire in an upcoming undercover investigation. I traveled to Virginia with two other attorneys to convince a federal magistrate judge to sign off on an arrest warrant. I was invited to multiple meetings of the Section's "Indictment Review Committee," where we reviewed the evidence collected in a grand jury investigation and decided whether to indict the suspects. And I sat about 25 feet from Scooter Libby when a federal judge sentenced him to 30 months in prison. (My memories of the event, it turns out, have lasted longer than the sentence itself...) All in all, it's been an amazing experience, one that I wouldn't trade for any amount of Big Firm summer associate money.

- Andrew Bruck '08  
 Department of Justice, Criminal Division  
 Washington, D.C.

# Alum Continues to Find Fulfillment Helping Clients Overcome Poverty

*(Continued from page 3)*

to look, as opposed to at another law school where the page would be torn out. I had the sense that Stanford would be a much more cooperative environment since it was so small.”

Whitelaw reflects that he had a great time in law school in significant part because he knew why he was there. “It’s much more difficult if you don’t know why you’re there. I was in law school because to become a lawyer, to do what I wanted to do, I needed to go to law school. Knowing that makes it easier to deal with things that are not so pleasant like the On-Campus Interview program where others are dressing up in suits and you’re trying to not to get sucked into the law firm bandwagon.”

As a law student, Whitelaw spent both his summers back east because his wife-to-be was in medical school in Virginia. His first summer he went to Charlottesville, Virginia to work for Legal Aid. His second summer, Whitelaw worked for Bredhoff Kaiser, a labor-side law firm in Washington, D.C. that represents clients like the United Steelworkers of America and the National Education Association.

## PROVIDING INSIDER ADVICE TO LAW STUDENTS

To students who want to work in public interest law, he advises, “The single most important thing that top public interest organizations are looking for is evidence of past public interest work on applicants’ resumes. You have got to have something on your resume that shows you’re interested in doing public interest work. We’re really not going to look at someone—no matter where they go to school—if there is not the slightest hint of why they want to do public interest work.”

He also adds that clinical work can greatly enhance a student’s application. Whitelaw states, “I’m much more impressed with clinical options now

available to law students. [Taking traditional law school classes] didn’t teach me how to do this work. I learned mostly theoretical concepts, which are not very useful on a practical level of how to do poverty work. But I am not sure that law school is necessarily

“Poverty is not going to come to an end because of the work I do. But, am I making a real difference on an individual and policy level? Yes, there’s no question about it.”

designed to teach you how to be a lawyer on a day-to-day basis. Most of my day is negotiating with the welfare office to fix problems for my clients or doing trial level hearing.”

## CLIENTS MOTIVATE AND INSPIRE COMMITMENT

Whitelaw is passionate about the importance of this work. “You do poverty work because you believe in the cause. It sounds pretentious, but it’s true. One of my colleagues at another legal aid program is a nun and has done social justice work for years. Her belief in the work is religious. Some people’s belief in the work is political. There are all sorts of reasons you believe in this work.”

Currently, Whitelaw helps clients secure public benefits as a supervising attorney at Community Legal Services in Philadelphia. “My clients on welfare live on \$205 per month. If I help them get disability benefits, they receive \$650

per month. Getting benefits for people changes their lives. You go from hell to something somewhat more tolerable.”

Whitelaw also does advocacy work alongside traditional lawyering. “I train a lot of social workers and teach them how to get and maintain welfare benefits for their clients. It’s an important part of what I do and I usually do a training every week.”

While many of his cases are straightforward, Whitelaw says that he gets unusual cases all the time and considers those his specialty. For example, he had a client with mental illness who sought help after he was denied disability benefits.

“Getting him benefits based on his current claim was routine, as he had good medical records. What was weird was that he used to get these benefits and couldn’t tell us why he lost them. In fact, he only mentioned it in passing during our intake. So I went digging and it turns out [the administrators] totally screwed up [by withdrawing his disability benefits] and he had been too mentally ill to deal with it.”

Whitelaw adds, “When he came to us, he had not received disability benefits in four years and was living on welfare at \$205 per month. When we finished, he started getting \$650 per month and they owed him \$40,000 in back benefits.”

Success stories like this reinforce Whitelaw’s passion for the job. “I love my job even though it drives me crazy. What I worry about is not having done enough. The waiting room is just as full now as it was twenty years ago when I started. Yet my expectations of what I can accomplish have changed. I am not going to end poverty. You get out of law school very idealistic and arrogant. Poverty is not going to come to an end because of the work I do. But, am I making a real difference on an individual and policy level? Yes, there’s no question about it.”

# Advocate's Expertise Will Play Critical Role in Levin Center Expansion

*Continued from page 1*

and Suing the Government: *Velasquez* and Beyond.

Professor Louis Rulli, the chair of Penn's faculty-student Public Service Committee, which oversees their public service program, praises Feathers, "Susan does the work of at least three professionals and is able to do it all superbly. . . . Susan has built an extraordinary program that is a national model. I am confident that you will find Susan a passionate, visionary leader."

In the Philadelphia and national public interest legal communities, Feathers has served on the executive boards of the ACLU, Community Legal Services, and Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, as well as the AALS Pro Bono Section and the Equal Justice Works Board of Advisors.

Prior to joining Penn, Feathers was the Director of Public Service Counseling and Programs at Yale and before that, she served as the founding Director of the Public Service Program at Brooklyn Law School.

## LEGAL PRACTICE ALSO INFORMS HER WORK

While pursuing a master's degree in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, Feathers worked for David Ferleger on the precedent-setting landmark case *Halderman v. Pennhurst School* (holding that proper habilitation for the retarded cannot be provided in a long-term institution). She says, "He inspired me to go to law school to pursue disability rights and awarded me the Edward V. Sparer Fellowship."

At Northeastern Law School, she worked with the Law Project for Multi-Handicapped Children, Prisoners' Legal Assistance Project, Jamaica Plain Legal Services, and the Committee for Public Counsel Service.

Her most rewarding experience while at Northeastern was working with one

of her mentors, Larry Daves, assistant counsel in *Plyler v. Doe*, at his civil rights firm Daves Hahn & Levy in Tyler, TX. She says, "He's a true people's lawyer who taught me the importance of combining community organizing with litigation to be an effective advocate."

Upon graduating, Feathers spent almost five years as an appellate counsel with the Legal Aid Society, Criminal Appeals Bureau in New York City. Following her experience at Legal Aid, she served as a supervising staff attorney for Hofstra Law School's Criminal Defense, Constitutional Litigation, Disability, and Housing Rights Clinics. While at Hofstra, Feathers worked with Alan H. Levine on *CARECEN v. Glen Cove*, for which the two received an advocacy award for their work on behalf of El Salvadoran day workers in a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of an ordinance prohibiting day workers from soliciting work.

Feathers reflects, "It was at Hofstra that I developed a profound respect for the work of clinicians and became steeped in clinical pedagogy."

## OUTLINING HER VISION FOR LEVIN CENTER

With the support of staff, Feathers has instituted several new programs that will bolster existing efforts to serve public interest students and expand outreach to alumni.

She announces, "The Levin Center's initiatives for the upcoming year include expanding programming to include our first in-house pro bono project, the SLS Social Security Disability Project supervised by experienced attorney and Levin Center staff member, Lisa Douglass. We will also build upon our already robust public interest programs to include the first annual SLS Public Interest Fellows Retreat and Bay Area Alumni Reception, the first annual SLS Public Interest Awareness Week, a

Faculty Public Service Speaker Series, and a Pro Bono Supervisors' Training. On February 2, 2008, we will co-sponsor a symposium titled 'Education as a Civil Right' with the *Stanford Journal of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*."

She concludes, "Working synergistically with SLS' Legal Clinics, the Levin Center hopes to provide a fertile training ground for the future leaders of the profession as well as to promote student and faculty scholarship informed by the needs of the public interest legal community."

## OUTSIDE INTERESTS BRING BALANCE TO WORK

Feathers has a broad range of interests beyond law school administration, including writing, teaching, and litigation. Her most recent publication, "The Iroquois Influence on American Democracy," co-authored with her sister, Cynthia Feathers (also a public interest attorney), was inspired by their grandfather who was born on a reservation.

Feathers' writing is not confined to the law. In fact, she is the author of a book on yoga, as she is a certified Sivananda yoga instructor and has taught in Costa Rica, Canada, Bahamas, and Mexico in the past ten years.

She has also served as co-counsel on *Saleh v. Titan*, the first class action lawsuit filed on behalf of Abu Ghraib detainees, and taught courses in human rights, appellate advocacy, and legal writing.

But still, among her many interests, her greatest passion is inspiring the next generation of attorneys.

As Jessica Alms, one of Feathers' students at Penn who worked closely with her, says, "Susan not only has a creative legal mind, but also amazing intuition. . . . She is the perfect embodiment of a mentor to a new, innovative generation of public interest lawyers."

# Clinical News Update

*Editor's note: This is a summary of e-mail announcements sent by Professor Larry Marshall, Associate Dean for Public Interest and Clinical Education.*

## Environmental Law Clinic

In early July, the Environmental Law Clinic received an order granting its motion for preliminary injunction to halt all construction for the so-called Sunrise Douglas development projects east of Sacramento, covering thousands of acres of vernal pool habitat. The virtually wall-to-wall residential developments would have destroyed a large swath of the last remaining high-quality vernal pool habitat in an area the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concluded is critical to the survival and recovery of vernal pool species.

The court enjoined further activity pending compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. This is a key victory for our clients because it allows them to participate in proposing potential design and offset measures to mitigate the destruction, as the law intended.

Kudos to the ELC student team – to Craig Segall '07, who spent untold hours mastering the science, gathering expert declarations, drafting legal arguments, and arguing the case in a grueling hearing before the court, and to Sam Woodworth '08 and Jessica Townsend '08, who worked into the wee hours of the night drafting and editing legal arguments and helping Craig prepare for oral argument. Clinic Director Debbie Sivas, fellow Holly Gordon, and Legal Assistant Lynda Johnston supervised and supported the students' extraordinary work.

## Community Law Clinic

Katie Burghardt '08 and Alexis Rickher '08 recently received great news from an expungement client they successfully represented this past spring. Their client had been struggling for

the last several years to get her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) license from the state of California, but was precluded because licensing boards review criminal convictions, even expunged ones. After representing her in the expungement proceedings, Katie and Alexis helped their client prepare a comprehensive application to the licensing board documenting her rehabilitation. The clinic has just learned that the client was granted her license by the state.

Perry Grossman '08 and Matt Rubin '08 were happy to learn that their hard work on behalf of two dishwashers whose final wages were unpaid was rewarded when the employer acquiesced to their claims at a Labor Commissioner settlement conference. The employer had fought very hard and refused to produce legally-required employment documents. Yet the workers, who kept scrupulous records and had correctly calculated their unpaid wages and overtime, received the full amount they were owed with the help of the students.

Margaret Cohen '08 prevailed on behalf of a client seeking expungement of a minor criminal record. This client was an immigrant who was facing significant difficulty in securing employment due to one old conviction. Thanks to Margaret's hard work on this case, including taking time off from her summer job to represent this client at his court hearing, her client's record was cleared and he will no longer face this barrier to employment.

Sara Chin '08 and Alexis Rickher '08 won a significant victory for their client whose Section 8 housing subsidy was threatened with termination. Their client was a single father who had turned his life around after the birth of his son and is now the boy's primary caretaker.

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## About *Create Change*

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*Create Change* is designed and produced by the staff of the John and Terry Levin Center for Public Service and Public Interest Law. Unless specifically noted, all articles are written by staff:

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*Create Change*

c/o Levin Center

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Mr. A. faced eviction and loss of his Section 8 voucher after the Housing Authority alleged that his child's mother was living at his residence in violation of Housing Authority policy. As a result of Sara and Alexis's tenacious advocacy, including researching court files, countless witness interviews, and defending the termination at an administrative hearing (held during their exam period!), Mr. A.'s voucher was reinstated, ensuring stable, safe housing for him and his son.

Thanks for all of these victories also go to CLC Director Juliet Brodie, Danielle Jones, Severa Keith, Lupe Buenrostro and Adelina Arroyo.