

Jackie Gonzalez is the Policy Director for Immigrant Defense Advocates (IDA), a policy project focused on the abolition of immigrant detention facilities in California. Combining years of experience working in direct services, Jackie has advocated for cutting edge policy related to immigration detention and legal services. As an expert on the issue of immigration detention policy before the California legislature, Jackie has led strategic initiatives designed to shut down detention facilities and secure much needed legal support to under resourced immigrant communities in the state.

Jackie received her undergraduate degree from Harvard University and her law degree from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law. Jackie began her career as a direct legal services attorney representing detained immigrant youth at Legal Services for Children, and working as a Deportation Defense Fellow at Van Der Hout, Brigagliano & Nightingale LLP.

From 2011 to 2018, Jackie played an instrumental role in building two of the leading removal defense teams at non-profit agencies in the state of California. At Dolores Street Community Services, she coordinated and facilitated legal service provision and outreach efforts as the lead attorney for the San Francisco Immigrant Legal and Education Network (SFILEN), a network of thirteen organizations serving low-income immigrants. As the Immigration Policy Director at Centro Legal de la Raza, she helped grow Centro into one of the largest providers of removal defense services in the state. In the wake of the Trump presidency, she helped spearhead the formation of the Alameda County Immigration Legal and Education Partnership (ACILEP), a network that provides legal and support services to Alameda County families targeted by ICE enforcement.

Prior to co-founding IDA in 2020, she served as policy director for the California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice (CCIJ). During her tenure, she designed and successfully advocated for the establishment of the California Immigrant Justice Fellowship, the first state sponsored program to expand access to counsel in the most underserved regions of the state and defend California's residents against family separation. The program, which will place and train deportation defense legal fellows in the Central Coast and Central Valley, is set to launch this winter.

Jackie's commitment to immigrant rights includes advocacy and leadership that pushes past legal representation, and challenges systematic attempts to criminalize and dehumanize immigrant communities. In response to the Trump administration's relentless attack on immigrant communities, she played a pivotal role in recent legislation aimed at countering ICE's aggressive enforcement and detention apparatus, most notably AB32 which bans for-profit detention centers from operating in California. To date, the law remains the most comprehensive ban on the private prison industry and has inspired other states to follow suit.

In 2020, as COVID-19 ravaged through immigration detention centers in California, IDA sponsored and helped pass AB3228, a groundbreaking bill written to protect the health and safety of individuals in the custody of private detention corporations. The bill, the first of its kind in the nation, requires all private detention operators to adhere to the standards of care in their contracts and allows individuals harmed based on violations of these standards to sue in state court.

As the daughter of immigrants, Jackie believes that solutions to the challenges faced by immigrants should come from those directly impacted by an issue and that sound policymaking must be informed by such connections and experience.