

Volunteer Spotlight: Humberto Guizar and Stephen A. King



By Alexandra Hamilton

On May 24, 2020, Humberto Guizar of Guizar, Henderson & Carrazco, LLP and Stephen A. King of Kings Justice Law, LLC led an emotional memorial for individuals killed during law enforcement encounters. The memorial, streamed on Facebook, included the reading of over 120 names as well as the recognition of the human beings and personalities behind each name.

One day later, on May 25, 2020, George Floyd died when four Minneapolis police officers pinned Mr. Floyd to the ground for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, adding another name to the growing list of people, and especially Black men, killed during an encounter with police officers. Mr. Floyd's death has sparked ongoing nationwide Black Lives Matter protests as well as the arrests of thousands of protesters.

CAOC members Humberto, Stephen, and Christian Contreras of Guizar, Henderson & Carrazco, LLP, along with Austin Dove, a criminal defense lawyer, saw peaceful protesters arrested and detained – sometimes in unsafe and inadequate facilities without bathrooms or protections against COVID-19 transmission. They jumped into action to organize the Protesters Defense Alliance, a 501(3)(c) nonprofit, with over 100 volunteer lawyers from different legal backgrounds to provide free legal assistance to protesters arrested or charged for demonstrating against police violence. The Alliance is founded on the belief that the true bridge to peace is through justice: “Justice to the people so we can have peace in the community.”

On June 5, 2020, the Protestors Defense Alliance held a protest and press conference at the main precinct of the Los Angeles Police Department to call for the dismissal of all charges against protesters in Los Angeles. On June 8, Los Angeles officials declared that they would not seek criminal charges against about 3,000 protesters arrested for violating curfew or ignoring orders to leave demonstrations. Despite the declaration, there are still many protesters who face charges or arrest records for practicing their First Amendment rights.

During a conversation with Humberto, Stephen, and Christian, they discussed their goals for the Alliance, including using advocacy to restore dignity to those arrested, ensure equity in the criminal courts, harness the community's voice, demonstrate that attorneys care, and begin the healing process. Most importantly, the trio recognized the importance of using litigation to effect change.



Memorial for individuals killed during law enforcement encounters, May 24, 2020.




Humberto Guizar



Stephen A. King





Stephen and Humberto referenced their personal experiences with the police, from ordinary traffic stops peppered with accusations and assumptions of past and present criminal wrongdoing to police brutality as a kid. The three CAOC members understand that litigation provides accountability and can lead to policy changes without the muddying impact of politics. Jury verdicts, judgments, and judicial opinions strengthen the message that police officers will be held accountable for their actions and ensure that the voices of the community are heard.

While the Alliance is currently focused on representing peaceful protesters, Christian stated the organization is looking into the future and how it can empower attorneys to lead the community and effect long lasting change. The trio see the Alliance as one aspect of the current momentum that will hopefully bring about generational change.

The Alliance welcomes all lawyers and provides training, including virtual instruction, handouts, sample motions, and live role-playing, to prepare attorneys to represent protesters in criminal court and in civil rights actions. The Alliance is also setting up a Northern California chapter to ensure that protesters across California receive representation.

If you know of protesters who need legal representation or if you are interested in volunteering with Protesters Defense Alliance, visit www.justice-x.com or call 1 (877) 71-JUSTICE.

If you would like to see a volunteer featured, please send an email to alexandra@theFAfirm.com. 