

ERICA FLORES BALTODANO, ESQ.:

20 Years of Legal and Policy Advocacy, Coalition-Building, Leadership, and Results

- Committed myself to a career in public interest law and public service after 13 years as a member of the Girl Scouts of USA, including a 2-year term as a girl representative on the Board of Directors of the San Fernando Valley Girl Scout Council (now part of the Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles), and participation as a high school student in the National Young Leader's Conference in Washington D.C.
- Graduated with honors from UCLA with a B.A. in Sociology and a minor in Public Policy in 1998 and spent a year working as the legal assistant for a blind lawyer at a prestigious Los Angeles-based law firm that specialized in civil appeals, where I developed excellent legal research and writing skills before starting law school.
- Graduated with honors from UC Berkeley School of Law in 2002, earning the prestigious Francine Diaz Memorial Award for my steadfast commitment to public interest law.
- At Berkeley Law, I was a founding student member of the Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice and a contributing writer and editor with the Berkeley Women's Law Journal, now called Gender, Law & Justice. After my first semester I was hired as a teacher assistant by my Legal Research & Writing Professor to coach my classmates.
- During law school I spent two summers as an intern with the Center for Law in the Public Interest (CLIPi), one of the nation's first public interest law firms. As an intern I had the opportunity to work with the ACLU, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Western Center for Law and Poverty, and other civil rights organizations and private law firms on two significant cases with statewide implications:
 - *Katie A. v. Bonita*, which resulted in several reforms and improved mental health services for foster care children in Los Angeles County; and
 - The *Williams* lawsuit, which established new standards and accountability mechanisms to ensure that all California public school students have access to basic educational materials like textbooks and clean, safe, and functional schools, with additional funding and oversight for the state's lowest performing schools.
- Upon graduating from law school, I returned to CLIPi as a fellow, where I was promoted to Staff Attorney, and quickly became Assistant Director and Counsel. At CLIPi, I helped develop, shape, guide, and manage the legal and policy work of The City Project, which soon became a stand-alone legal non-profit civil rights organization.
 - In addition to conducting legal and policy advocacy and client representation, I hired and managed staff, developed office policies and procedures, and helped raise money through foundations and donors.
 - I supplemented my legal training and extensive undergraduate and law school training in conflict mediation with training from the Midwest Academy for Social

Change to better collaborate with grassroots organizations and clients and support active participation in the democratic process.

- I was with The City Project 2002-2011 and continued in an advisory role after relocating to the Central Coast of California in 2011, including testimony before the California Coast Commission in Morro Bay in 2016 and submission of extensive public comments to SLO County Board of Supervisors regarding the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary in 2017.
- At The City Project I influenced the investment of billions of dollars in public resources to enhance human health and the environment and promote equality and economic vitality for all communities. I used cutting edge legal, policy, demographic, and historical analysis, organized diverse community coalitions, conducted strategic media campaigns, and initiated impact litigation as a last result to reshape the environmental justice movement from one focused on the unfair distribution of environmental burdens to a more inclusive vision for the fair distribution of environmental benefits, including parks, school fields, rivers, beaches, and forest.
- I served as lead counsel or worked side-by-side with lead counsel representing predominantly Black and Latino community-based organizations at The City Project in the following high-profile matters, all of which required careful negotiation with city, county, state, and federal stakeholders and significant public testimony, newspaper, radio, and television interviews to achieve success:
 - Stopped the development of warehouses in the last vast open space in Downtown Los Angeles to create the 32-acre Los Angeles State Historic Park. The warehouses violated civil rights, fair housing, and environmental laws, and would have exacerbated the legacy of discriminatory land use, housing, and economic policies that have long deprived people of color and low income people of equal access to quality parks, recreation, schools, jobs, and housing. My clients included a Mexican-American Youth Soccer Association and other youth and community-based environmental justice organizations.
 - Utilized lessons from the Los Angeles State Historic Park victory to create the 40-acre Rio de Los Angeles State Park on an abandoned railyard along the Los Angeles River, jumpstarting an era of revitalization along the 52-mile L.A. River. Today a progressive vision promotes healthy living, parks, schools, jobs, and affordable housing along the river.
 - Stopped the siting of a power plant in the Baldwin Hills Park, located in the heart of African American Los Angeles. The Baldwin Hills park is bigger than Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and Central Park in New York and it is a cherished oasis in the middle of urban L.A. Later, I was the lead attorney representing community organizations that stopped the siting of a trash dump in the park and stopped efforts by Governor Schwarzenegger to eliminate the state Commission charged with managing the park for public use and enjoyment.
 - Developed policy and legal arguments that beaches, like parks, are compelling civil rights, environmental justice, and health equity issues. Through public testimony and publication of the seminal article Free the Beach! in the Stanford

Journal of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, I worked to change the public conversation about coastal access. My testimony and advocacy before the Coastal Commission ultimately led to a strengthening of the Coastal Act and state law on equal access to beach and other publicly funded resources.

- In a cutting-edge lawsuit on behalf of Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles—one of the first black environmental justice groups in the nation—and other African-American homeowner groups, The City Project, US Environmental Protection Agency and others sued the City of Los Angeles for violating the Clean Water Act through noxious odors and sewer spills that disproportionately harmed them for decades. This was the first time that attorneys used sewer odors as a clean water justice issue under the Act. After years of litigation we reached a \$2 billion settlement agreement that, amongst significant infrastructure improvements, created a community-based Advisory Board that I was tapped to facilitate.
- Relocated to San Luis Obispo County to be centrally located between family in Northern and Southern California and to plant roots in a smaller community with the opportunity for improved quality of life and family-work balance.
- Used my law firm management experience to build a successful employment law practice with offices in San Luis Obispo and Pasadena and a mission focused on access to justice for a diverse array of clients facing discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination, and wage theft. The law firm, established in 2011, has recovered tens of millions of dollars on behalf of clients and received the Access to Justice Advocate award from San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation in 2017.
- Established a business sponsorship program in 2015 to engage local businesses in the annual fundraising efforts of a local elementary school PTA to provide art, music, and cultural programming and other academic resources for teachers and students. The program significantly increased the PTA's fundraising capacity and is still going strong.
- Authored an award-winning series of essays for the SLO County Bar Association Bulletin in 2015-2017 called Mommy Esquire. Mommy Esquire merges lessons in the law with lessons in parenting and explores issues of race, gender, and inequity. The series creatively draws upon my experience as a parent, attorney, business owner, and woman of color.
- Frequent guest speaker in K-12, university, and law school classrooms on topics that include the urban park movement, environmental justice, and persuasive speech/argument. Recently, I have presented on topics related to employment law and voting rights and served as a panelist at community-based forums focused on law and justice, racial justice, and the impeachment process. I frequently serve as a mentor to young women considering legal careers and I have conducted several civics-oriented field trips for local elementary school children to learn about city and county government and the state judiciary. A comprehensive list of speaking engagements and publications can be found at <https://baltodanofirm.com/about/>.

- Recipient of the 2018 Outstanding Woman Lawyer Award from the Women Lawyers Association of San Luis Obispo County for my active promotion of the advancement of women in the legal profession and in the community.
- Honored by the SLO County Commission on the Status of Women in 2018 for my exemplary contributions toward bettering the lives of others through hours of invaluable service to the community.
- Delivered Keynote Address at the First Annual Women’s March in San Luis Obispo to an audience of 10,000 people in 2017.
- Served as Campaign Manager for the county-wide campaign to Elect Judge Baltodano 2018, ensuring a landslide 65-35 victory for SLO County Superior Court Judge Baltodano, my husband and former business partner, who was appointed by Governor Brown in 2017 and now serves as the only local Superior Court Judge to be both appointed and campaign-elected. I have since served as an advisor to other local and statewide campaigns.
- Scaled back my law practice beginning in 2018 to increase access to pro bono legal services in San Luis Obispo County, impact local education policy, and dedicate more time to public service.
- Joined the Board of Directors of San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation (SLOLAF) in 2017 and have served as President of the Board since 2019. SLOLAF provides free legal services to SLO County seniors, veterans, and individuals in need. Under my leadership, SLOLAF has increased its staff, budget, and clientele and made substantial infrastructure and management improvements necessary to sustain a growing non-profit organization.
- Appointed by Supervisor Adam Hill and approved by the Board of Supervisors to serve as the District 3 Civil Service Commissioner in 2019, overseeing the administration of the County’s Civil Service system, helping to proscribe, interpret, and enforce the Civil Service Rules that impact approximately 2800 County employees. I have developed an excellent working relationship with my fellow Commissioners, Department of Human Resources staff, and Commission counsel.
- As a member of the Common Ground Advisory Task Force since 2017, I advise the Superintendent of San Luis Coastal Unified School District (SLCUSD) regarding school district programs, policies, and practices related to social equity, discrimination, and diversity. As a result of this work, the school district has implemented changes in its hiring practices and professional training that directly impact all students.
- As a founding board member with San Luis Coastal Education Foundation I have worked to support creative and innovative programs to enrich and provide equitable opportunities for San Luis Coastal students across SLCUSD since 2018.
 - I took the lead in establishing the Education Foundation’s School Closure Impact Fund, which has raised \$100,000 to date from community members to support the School District’s most vulnerable students impacted by COVID-19 to meet basic needs so that they can continue to learn through distance learning.
 - My advocacy for equity and inclusivity also led to the distribution of monthly Innovation Boxes for every elementary school student in San Luis Coastal

Unified School District with materials and instructions for completing science, technology, engineering, and art projects at home during distance learning in the 20-21 school year. When students return to in-person learning, they will be welcomed back with new Innovation Labs on every campus.

- I joined the faculty at San Luis Obispo College of Law in 2019 where I teach Constitutional Law II with a focus on individual rights, including voting rights, reproductive rights, and the First Amendment. I am regarded as an engaging and highly prepared professor who delivers articulate lectures and facilitates thoughtful discussions that puts constitutional case law in historical and present-day political context.