

Biographies

Michael Caruso, Federal Public Defender, SDFL



MICHAEL CARUSO has been the Federal Public Defender for the Southern District of Florida since 2012. He joined the office in 1997. After graduating from the University of Florida College of Law, Mr. Caruso served as a law clerk to the Honorable William J. Zloch, United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

Andrea Jacoski, Director, Detention Program (AIJ)



Andrea Jacoski is the Director of the Detention Program at Americans for Immigrant Justice where she was formerly a Staff Attorney and Equal Justice Works Fellow. The Detention Program engages in direct services, advocacy, and litigation for individuals detained in ICE custody in Florida.

Andrea also previously managed the Immigration Unit at Legal Aid Service of Broward County where she provided immigration assistance to Broward County residents, particularly those Broward detained by the Broward County Sheriff with an ICE detainer or hold. At Legal Aid, Andrea focused services on mixed-status families to reduce the time Broward families are separated due to immigration issues. She also represented non-citizen children in foster care.

She is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. Andrea has also served as a Committee Member for the Minnesota Women Lawyers (MWL) Association and as Immigration Clinic Student Director for the Binger Center for New Americans. She received her J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School. She also holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science with Spanish Studies from the University of Minnesota.

Dominique Pando Bucci



Dominique Pando Bucci is the principal attorney at Pando Bucci Law, PLLC. She primarily represents foreign nationals in complex business immigration matters. She assists business owners, investors, executives, and individuals of extraordinary ability in the arts, sciences, and business to relocate to the United States. She counsels international clients in obtaining both non-immigrant and immigrant status, including through E, F, H, L, O, P, TN, EB-1, EB-2, EB-3, National Interest Waiver, PERM labor certification, and EB-5 investment petitions.

Dominique speaks on immigration issues at the local and national level, and her articles have been published by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) and by Law360 as Expert Opinions. She is the immediate past Chair of AILA South Florida's Business and Investment Committee. A German Chancellor

Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, her research comparing German and American business immigration laws and policies was patronized by former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the German federal government.

Dominique earned her J.D., *magna cum laude*, from the Florida International University College of Law, where she graduated fifth in her class and served as Editor-in-Chief of the *FIU Law Review*. A first-generation lawyer, Dominique is Argentinian-American of Italian descent and was born and grew up in Germany. She is fluent in English, Spanish, and German, and conversant in Italian. Her family moved to Miami after winning the Green Card lottery.

Linda Osberg Braun



Linda Osberg-Braun is a board certified expert and practices solely immigration law. She provides a wide range of immigration services, taking great care to assure her clients comply with complex immigration codes and regulations. She believes every client is unique and tailors her legal advice and services to fit their individual needs. Her attention to detail and thorough communication help to assure compliance in an often difficult and complex immigration setting. She has built her reputation on the quality of her legal work, focus on sound strategy development, integrity, and commitment to help each of her clients achieve their goals in the United States.

Her past experience includes serving as Deputy District Counsel under the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) where she provided legal advice to all enforcement components and operations, and handled complex federal litigation on behalf of the federal government. She also supervised over 64 attorneys who appeared before the Immigration Court daily. Her knowledge of the inner workings of the federal government and the enforcement branch of immigration operations make her uniquely qualified to develop realistic and efficient strategies for her clients and their families, so that they may pursue freedom and opportunity in the United States and flourish from those pursuits.

Linda Osberg-Braun is known among her peers, judges, and lawyers as a problem solver, and the authority on immigration law. She is a regular speaker at American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) events, and enjoys speaking at the Annual Immigration Law Update, the Florida Bar, Catholic Charities Legal Services educational programs, and other community outreach group events. She has served the University

of Miami School of Law as an Adjunct Professor of advanced immigration courses. She has been recognized by the media for her expertise on immigration law, and is frequently quoted in national and international print. She has made multiple appearances on local and national television, including Ted Koppel's Town Meeting, Nightline, CNN, Burden of Proof, Good Morning America, The Early Show and Today, ABC, NBC and CBS national news, and Geraldo Rivera.

Sean Méndez Catlin



Sean Méndez-Catlin is a Managing Partner with MC & J Law, PLLC located in Orlando Florida. Known as the 1UP Lawyer, Sean started his legal career learning from and working with Arias and Pereira in Miami Florida handling immigration and criminal defense matters. In 2016, Sean began work at the State Attorney's Office (SAO) for the Ninth Judicial Circuit in Orlando Florida. With over three years experience at the SAO, Sean handled thousands of cases from start to completion. Sean prosecuted simple possession, battery, misdemeanor traffic, burglaries, firearm cases, and drug trafficking cases. Sean was awarded the 2017 MADD DUI Prosecutor award of Excellence for Central Florida.

Since starting MC & J Law with Sabrina Jadunandan, Sean continues to focus his practice on Crimmigration handling many requests for post conviction relief as well as the concomitant immigration matters. Additionally, Sean handles Business and Intellectual property matters. More specifically, his representation in the video game, content creation, and esports industry includes indie game developers, console developers, twitch streamers, name image and likeness representation, and representation with various peripheral companies.

Sean has served as a panelist at a variety of immigration and criminal law events throughout the State of Florida instructing on Crimmigration, particularly on the negative consequences of a criminal plea on immigration status.

Sean earned his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 2012 and his Law Degree from the University of Miami School of Law. While completing his J.D., Sean also earned his Masters in Music Business from The University of Miami's Frost School of Music. During his Undergraduate and Legal education, Sean had a large focus on Immigration and criminal issues. Sean also learned about business and intellectual property while he completed his Business and Legal Studies minor through The Wharton School of Business at UPenn. Sean continued his interest during his time at UM, where he participated in the UM immigration clinic.

John Gihon

John is a partner with the law offices of Shorstein, Lasnetski & Gihon and runs the firm's immigration practice. He focuses on removal defense and is Board Certified by the Florida Bar in Immigration and Nationality Law. John is the immediate past chair of the Florida Bar Board Certification Committee and served two terms as the Chapter Chair for the Central Florida Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA).

Prior to going into private practice, John served as a Senior Attorney with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). As an ICE attorney, John handled all forms of immigration cases including those involving international fugitives, national security threats and human rights abusers. John obtained Top Secret Clearance and assisted federal and local law enforcement officers assigned to the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF).

Prior to working for ICE, John started his legal career at the State Attorney's Office in Jacksonville, Florida. For six years, he prosecuted thousands of cases and became a division chief, leading a felony division where he tried murder cases and supervised other prosecutors.

Both with the government and while in private practice John has served as a panelist and guest speaker at many immigration and criminal Law events throughout Florida and has provided training to immigration and criminal attorneys across the state on the subject of "crimmigration." John has appeared as an expert witness in Florida state courts on the topic of immigration and on national and local television shows to talk about immigration issues and criminal cases.

John received his Bachelor of Arts degree in History with a minor in Criminology from the University of Florida in 1999 and graduated with honors. He received his Juris Doctor from the University of Florida, Levin College of Law in 2002, also with honors.

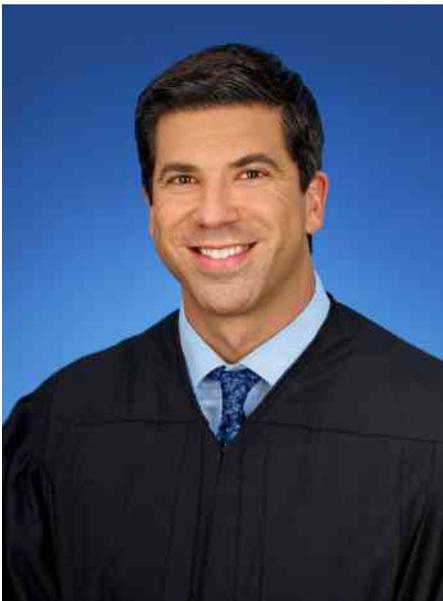
Hon. Roy K. Altman, Federal District Court Judge, SDFL

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On April 4, 2019, Judge Altman was confirmed to a seat on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida. At 36, he became the youngest federal district court judge in the country—and the youngest federal judge ever appointed in the Southern District of Florida.

Judge Altman received a BA from Columbia University, where he played quarterback on the football team and pitched for the baseball team—earning All-Ivy honors. Judge Altman received his JD from the Yale Law School, where he was projects editor of the Yale Law Journal. After law school, the Judge clerked on the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals for the Honorable Stanley Marcus.

Judge Altman then became a federal prosecutor at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Miami, where he twice received the Director of the Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys' Award for Superior Performance by a federal prosecutor. In 2013, Judge Altman was named "Federal Prosecutor of the Year" by the Miami-Dade Chiefs of Police and the Law Enforcement Officers' Charitable Foundation.

In 2014, Judge Altman became a partner at the Miami law firm of Podhurst Orseck, where he represented the victims of airplane crashes and bank fraud conspiracies.

Denise Noonan Slavin

Denise Noonan Slavin is a retired Immigration Judge and President Emerita of the National Association of Immigration Judges (NAIJ). She is an adjunct professor at St. Thomas University College of Law, and has worked as a consultant since April 2019. Slavin served almost 25 years as an Immigration Judge, at the Baltimore and Miami Immigration Courts and the Krome Detention Center. Previous to her tenure as an Immigration Judge, she served as a prosecutor in the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, and at legacy INS.

Slavin has served on the leadership team of the NAIJ from 2001 to the present. NAIJ is the professional association and was the collective bargaining unit for all U.S. Immigration Judges. Since 2017 she has served as President Emerita, representing NAIJ and its membership before EOIR, the press, Congress, and others.

Slavin was the recipient of the 2019 Maryland Pro Bono's Service Member of the Judiciary Award from the Maryland Pro Bono Resource Center/Maryland State Bar Association in appreciation of longstanding commitment to pro bono service and ensuring equal access to justice, and has been honored by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) South Florida Chapter in 2015 and 2012 for compassion and distinguished career of tirelessly working to achieve justice as an immigration judge, and for outstanding reputation, professionalism, knowledge of law, and courtesy to others as an immigration judge. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland School of Law.

Gracie Willis

Gracie began her career at Casa Marianella in Austin, TX as a legal fellow, and has provided detained removal defense with ProBAR in Harlingen, TX, and Proyecto Dilley in Dilley, TX. She helped open the first office of Southern Poverty Law Center's Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative in Lumpkin, GA, in 2017 and has been a Georgia residence since. Briefly shifting away from removal defense, she litigated cases challenging restrictive asylum policies under the Trump administration, including a systemic challenge to the inherent bias in immigration courts and the *Innovation Law Lab* challenge to the Remain in Mexico policy. She now focuses on individual representation, challenges to unlawful detention, professional development for SIFI staff, and supporting organizing led by detained folks. She loves to garden, hike, cook, and FaceTime with her nieces in Texas.

Michael Vastine

Professor Vastine joined the faculty of the St. Thomas University College of Law in 2004. He serves as Director of Clinical Programs and directs the Immigration Clinic. His practice and research focus on immigration litigation, particularly regarding the deportation consequences of criminal convictions and the due process rights of immigrants.

Prof. Vastine has shaped the Immigration Clinic's practice to include zealous defense work before the Immigration Court, in which students argue novel issues of law and present robust factual defenses at trial, in matters ranging from deportability and discretionary relief for crimes, to applications for asylum based on fear

of foreign persecution, and the constitutional and case-specific arguments for clients to be released from immigration (administrative) detention. The docket also includes representation of immigrant victims of crimes and domestic violence, as well as complicated applications for naturalization of former Clinic clients. A long-time devotee to the merits of clinical legal education as the best vehicle for training future attorneys in the “best practices” of law, Professor Vastine also serves as a leader within the College of Law’s Clinical & Externship department, identifying, developing, and supporting “experiential” programming in which law students have their first forays into the practice of law.

Professor Vastine has a significant presence in the immigration advocacy community, in both litigation and public service. He has argued several cases before the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, including *Donawa v. United States Attorney General*, which barred the treatment of Florida drug offenses as the equivalent of federal crimes for the purposes of deportation, and argued before the Florida Supreme Court in *Hernandez v. State*, establishing the procedural rights of Florida immigrant criminal defendants to receive constitutionally sufficient representation of counsel regarding the immigration consequences of their crimes. He has regularly served as amicus curiae counsel in high impact appellate cases, on behalf of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) and numerous non-governmental organizations, in forums including the Board of Immigration Appeals, State supreme courts, various United States Circuit Courts and the United States Supreme Court.

His place in the legal community led to election to ten years of service in AILA, including the 2018-2019 term as President of the South Florida Chapter, during which the Chapter received Platinum recognition for its outstanding and comprehensive training, mentoring, outreach and congressional advocacy, as well as then-novel Diversity and Inclusion initiatives. He has served on various national committees of AILA, including the Amicus Curiae Committee and the steering committees of the Federal Litigation Section and Law Student Division. A sought-after public speaker, Prof. Vastine has presented at some 200 conferences and served as Chair of several others, including the national 2020 AILA Immigration Court Conference (on defense practice) and the 2021 AILA Federal Litigation Conference. In 2013, AILA honored Professor Vastine with its Elmer Fried Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Also a leader in the community of educators, Prof. Vastine has served various roles, including Chair, of the Membership, Outreach and Training Committee of the American Association of Law Schools (AALS) Clinical Section. He is a frequent presenter at local, state, regional and national meetings and conferences of clinical legal educators, including several iterations of the national AALS Conference on Clinical Education.

Professor Vastine holds a B.M. from Oberlin Conservatory of Music, an M.M. from Temple University and a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center.

Ray Bolourtchi



Mr. Bolourtchi has achieved national recognition for his expertise in immigration and criminal defense matters. He represents clients seeking relief from removal and deportation proceedings throughout the country, and practices in state, federal and immigration courts. He has assisted thousands of clients obtain citizenship and naturalization.

Mr. Bolourtchi's passion for immigration issues motivates him to fight zealously for his clients, and he is a true advocate in each and every case.

Mr. Bolourtchi speaks fluent Spanish, French, Catalan, Farsi, and Italian.

Author and lecturer on Immigration Topics, including immigration consequences of criminal convictions; Expert witness and consultant on guilty pleas and immigration law; Quoted in St. Louis Post Dispatch; National Mentor to other attorneys in the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) in areas of removal and deportation and family immigration.

Mark Prada

Mark Prada is the co-founder of Prada Urizar Dominguez, PLLC, a law firm that focuses on resolving complex immigration issues, such as defending persons in removal proceedings, and representing immigrants in federal litigation. He graduated from the University of Miami School of Law, and began his career by representing victims of domestic violence and other crimes as part of a nonprofit organization, and eventually opened his own practice. Notable cases of his are *Guerrero-Lasprilla v. Barr*, 140 S. Ct. 1062 (2020); *Farah v. U. S. Att’y Gen.*, 12 F.4th 1312 (CA11 2021); *Camarena v. Dir., ICE*, 988 F.3d 1268 (CA11 2021); *Point du Jour v. U. S. Att’y Gen.*, 960 F.3d 1348 (CA11 2020); and *Gomez v. Fuenmayor*, 812 F.3d 1005 (CA11 2016). Mr. Prada grew up in Miami, and is the son of Colombian immigrants..

Rebeca Sanchez-Roig

Rebeca Sánchez-Roig is the managing partner of Sánchez-Roig Law, P.A. She is a former Deputy Chief Counsel who spent 17 years as a federal prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Ms. Sánchez-Roig represented the United States government in removal proceedings including political asylum, adjustment of status, cancellation of removal, human smuggling, terrorism, persecutors, Russian organized crime, sexual predators, drug traffickers, and other special interest cases.

Ms. Sánchez-Roig managed federal court cases, including *habeas corpus* litigation, petitions for review, and federal torts actions. She served as liaison between the United States Attorney's Office, Office of Immigration Litigation, Agency programs, and federal operational units. Ms. Sánchez-Roig was also the designated Presidential Pardon attorney responsible for rendering the Agency's position on requests for pardons submitted by criminal non-citizens under the Executive Pardon Program. She was a senior litigator on special interest cases requiring extensive trial preparation, and a member of numerous national committees. During her time in government, Ms. Sánchez-Roig was the recipient of copious awards including the DHS Assistant Secretary's Outstanding Achievement in Diversity Management Award in 2008, for extraordinary performance of duties and achievement of special accomplishments.

Ms. Sánchez-Roig regularly advises criminal defense attorneys in negotiations, motions to vacate, and pre-trial on the immigration consequences of criminal charges and convictions. She is experienced in immigration through international adoptions and has served as a Victim's Rights Advocate for victims of crimes in Florida.

Ms. Sánchez-Roig graduated *magna cum laude* from Syracuse University College of Law with a J.D. in 1990 and was the Managing Editor of the Syracuse Law Review. She holds a Masters in Fine Arts (1984) in lighting design, theatre technology, and Bachelors in Fine Arts (1980) technical theatre and design from Florida Atlantic University.

After law school, Ms. Sánchez-Roig she joined the international law firm of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius as a Business and Finance Associate focusing on securities and banking at a national and international level; international law; public offerings, privatizations, mergers and acquisitions. After MLB, she joined Zuckerman, Spaeder, Taylor & Evans as a Corporate and Real Estate Associate concentrating on multinational business and finance, commercial and residential real estate, and intellectual property.

Ms. Sánchez-Roig is an active member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, a member of the Board of Directors of AILA South Florida, Board of Directors of Catholic Legal Services of Miami, Inc. and a South Florida Board Member of the Selective Service System. She is also a member of AILA National's LGBT Working Group, AILA South Florida's U.S. Immigration Court Committee, AILA South Florida's LGBT Committee, AILA South Florida's USCIS-Miami Liaison Committee (2015-2016), AILA South Florida's Homeland Security Investigations Liaison Committee (2015-2016), AILA South Florida's Unlawful Practice of Law (2014-2015), and AILA South Florida's Miami Office of the Chief Counsel's Liaison Committee (2013-2014).

Ms. Sánchez-Roig was selected as AILA South Florida National Day of Action Delegation Member representing the organization before Congress in both 2016 and 2015. She is admitted to practice in Florida, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, and the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit.

Ms. Sánchez-Roig has served as an expert in federal court on immigration law and is a regular presenter and panelist for Catholic Legal Services of Miami, Inc., AILA South Florida's National Immigration Law Update, AILA South Florida's Practice Management Committee and New Members Division. She enjoys public speaking and frequently speaks before corporate international attorneys and corporations on immigration matters impacting businesses, and presents before other groups and community events on immigration law and policies. Ms. Sánchez-Roig and has been featured in the media providing legal commentary, and has published several Op-Eds in The Miami Herald and Daily Business Review on various immigration topics.

She is admitted to practice in Florida, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

Benjamin “Benji” Waxman

Benjamin Waxman is a near forty-year criminal defense attorney certified by the Florida Bar as a Criminal Appellate Specialist. A partner at the Miami firm Black Srebnick, his practice emphasizes federal and state appeals and postconviction remedies. He has filed numerous motions for postconviction relief for the purpose of clients avoiding the immigration consequences of their convictions. He has lectured around the state on this subject. He has been a director of the Miami Chapter of the ACLU, and a member of its Legal Panel, for over 30 years.

Maggie Arias, Program Chair

Maggie Arias is a founding partner of Arias & Pereira, PLLC—a criminal and immigration defense firm located in Coral Gables, Florida. Maggie began her legal career as a Certified Legal Intern at the Hillsborough & Pinellas County Public Defender Offices. Later, she became an Assistant Public Defender at the Miami-Dade Office of the Public Defender where she practiced for over five years until her move into private practice as a criminal defense and immigration attorney. A recognized trial lawyer, Maggie has handled

thousands of criminal cases and has tried cases ranging from DUI, to armed robbery, drug-trafficking, kidnapping, molestation, false claim to U.S. citizenship, witness tampering and more, in both state and federal courts in South Florida.

Since entering private practice (first at a boutique immigration firm and then as founding partner of Arias & Pereira), Maggie has devoted her practice to criminal defense and immigration and nationality law, with a special focus on cases presenting both criminal and immigration issues. She also handles complex immigration litigation, habeas cases, and civil denaturalization. Maggie has successfully litigated numerous complex asylum petitions and Convention Against Torture claims. She and her colleague and long-time friend Benjamin "Benji" Waxman argued *Leduan Diaz v. State* before the Florida Supreme Court in a case presenting novel issues about the scope and application of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Padilla v. Kentucky*.

Based on her achievements as an APD and in private practice, Maggie was named the "Outstanding Young Lawyer" in 2011 by the Miami Chapter of the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

In 2012, the ABA published an article Maggie co-wrote with Benji Waxman: Arias, M. & Waxman, B. "Practice Tips & Ethics for Criminal Defense Attorneys Representing Noncitizen Clients." ABA Criminal Justice Section Newsletter, Volume 21, Issue 1: Fall 2012, 6-9.

Maggie's volunteer work is also extensive. She has chaired the Eleventh Judicial Circuit's "J" Grievance Committee where she volunteered for the 3-year commitment; she volunteers for Seal & Expungement Workshops with the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office as well as with the Public Defender; she served on the FACDL-Miami Board of Directors for a decade and has served on the Board of the South FL Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association for 8+ consecutive years, having recently presided as Chapter President and served as a voting member of AILA National's Board of Governors from May 2020 to May 2021. In her years volunteering with AILA, she has served as Chair of the Annual CLE Committee, Chair of the Practice Management Committee, Chair of the Bylaws Committee (2 years), Vice Chair of the Customs Border Protection Field Ops Liaison Committee, and has served as Chair and Co-Chair of the UPL Committee for the South Florida Chapter (3 years); she has previously co-chaired the ICE Investigations Committee; and for two consecutive years, she was a member of the AILA National UPL Committee (known as the Consumer Protection Liaison). Maggie is a frequent panelist for AILA National as well as the South FL Chapter of the organization, for Catholic Legal Services, and for the Miami-Dade Public Defender's Office where she trains Assistant Public Defenders on aspects of immigration law relevant to criminal defense. She takes on pro bono work annually and is passionate about keeping the community informed on immigration consequences of criminal activity. In her free time, she enjoys being a mother and wife, practicing and teaching yoga, as well as reading non-fiction.