

# **Karen Musalo**

**Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies at UC Hastings College of the Law**

San Francisco, CA, US

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## **Description**

Professor Karen Musalo directs the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies and the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic. She is lead co-author of *Refugee Law and Policy: An International and Comparative Approach* (4th edition), and has contributed to the evolving jurisprudence of asylum law through her scholarship, as well as her litigation of landmark cases.

Professor Musalo was lead attorney in *Matter of Kasinga* (fear of female genital cutting as a basis of asylum), which continues to be cited as authority in gender asylum cases by tribunals from Canada to the United Kingdom to New Zealand. She was co-counsel in the Ninth Circuit en banc decision, *Abebe v. Gonzales*, and attorney of record in *Canas-Segovia v. INS* and *Ramirez-Rivas v. INS*. She represented Rody Alvarado, whose case was a landmark in the struggle for the right to asylum for women fleeing domestic violence. She also represented Ms. L-R-, the asylum seeker from Mexico whose high profile victory broke additional ground on the issue of gender asylum.

Professor Musalo has been quoted extensively in the media, including *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Nation*, and *El Pais*, and has been interviewed on other media, such as *Nightline*, *CNN International*, *The Diane Rehm Show*, and *Talk of the Nation*. She was featured in the PBS documentary *Breaking Free: A Woman's Story*, which focuses on Rody Alvarado's case. Professor Musalo is recognized for her innovative work on refugee issues. She was the first attorney to partner with psychologists in her representation of traumatized asylum seekers – a practice that has since become standard – and she edited the first handbook for practitioners on cross-cultural issues and the impact of culture on credibility in the asylum context.

Professor Musalo has received numerous advocacy awards for her pioneering legal work, including the 2010 California Lawyer of the Year Award, the 2009 *Daily Journal*'s recognition as one of the "Top 100" lawyers in California, and the American Lawyer's 1997 recognition as one of the forty-five outstanding young public interest lawyers. In 2012, she received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Lehman College, the same year she received UC Hastings' William Rutter Award for Excellence in Teaching.

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## **Industry Expertise**

Education/Learning, Legal Services

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## **Topics**

Refugee Law and Policy, Gender Asylum, Women's Rights, Child Migrant's Rights, Gender Justice / Central America, Clinical Education

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## **Affiliations**

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## **Past Talks**

**Refugees: How Nations can Meet their International Obligations to Protect the Persecuted**  
Roundtable at the U.S. Embassy

**Fronteras y barreras: Retos para las refugiadas en España y Estados Unidos (Borders and Barriers: Challenges for Refugee Women in Spain and the United States)**  
Speaker at the XX Coloquio anual sobre la mujer (20th Annual Colloquium on Women)

**Credibility, Documentary Evidence and Expert Witnesses in Asylum Claims**  
Federal Bar Association, Immigration Law Conference

**Domestic Violence and Fear of Gang Cases in the Aftermath of A-R-C-G-**  
Federal Bar Association, Immigration Law Conference

**Fleeing Violence: Finding Prison: The Treatment of Migrant Women in Flight from Domestic Violence in the US Immigration System**  
Presentation

**Child Migration: A Regional Challenge to Human Rights Commitment**  
Ninth Circuit of Appeals

**The Battle for Equality in Refugee Law: The Resistance to Protection of Women and Children**  
Biever Guest Lecture Series

**Excluding Those Worthy of Protection: How US Interpretation of International Refugee Norms have Consistently Narrowed Protection**  
Loyola Law School Faculty Colloquia

**Conceptualizing Children's Asylum Claims**  
Immigration Theory and Practice Workshop

**Child Migrants: A Journey of Desperation and Hope**  
Center for Latin American Studies

**Addressing the Asylum Crisis: Religious Contributions to Rethinking Protection in Global Politics**  
Presentation

**Forensic Psychiatry and Immigration: Cross Cultural Competency (Panelist)**  
Panel Discussion

**Immigration and Its Adversities: Mental Illness, Detention and Deportation (Panelist)**  
American Psychiatric Association

## **Hot Topics in Asylum - Particular Social Group Issues (Panelist)**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

## **Immigration Law Seminar (Panelist)**

Memphis, TN

## **Gender Justice in the Americas (Panelist)**

University of Miami School of Law

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## **Education**

**Boalt Hall School of Law, University of California, Berkeley**

J.D. Law

**Brooklyn College, City University of New York**

B.A. Comparative Literature

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## **Accomplishments**

### **Lawyer of the Year Award**

Awarded by the Immigration Law Section of the Federal Bar Association.

### **Chair in International Law**

Conferred by the Bank of America Foundation.

### **Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters**

Awarded by Lehman College at the City University of New York.

### **Rutter Award**

Awarded by for excellence in teaching.

### **California Lawyer of the Year (CLAY) Award**

Awarded by the monthly legal magazine, California Lawyer.

### **Top 100 Attorneys in California Award**

Awarded by Daily Journal.

### **Human Rights Award**

Awarded by the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant.

### **Carol King Award**

Awarded by the National Immigration Project.

**Human Rights Award**

Awarded by the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

**Annual Award**

Awarded by the New York Central American Refugee Center.

**Outstanding Achievement Award**

Awarded by the Political Asylum Immigration Representation Project.

**Eighth Annual Phillip Burton Immigration and Civil Rights Award**

Awarded by The Immigrant Legal Resource Center.

**Recognition: The American Lawyer**

Conferred in recognition of the publication " The Public Sector: forty-five young lawyers outside the private sector whose vision and commitment are changing lives."

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