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## **ASISTA Welcomes New Board Members**

ASISTA Immigration Assistance is pleased to announce the addition of two new members to its Board of Directors: Melissa Desgrottes and Derek Foran.

Kirsten Rambo, Executive Director, notes, “We are delighted to have these two highly accomplished individuals joining the board. With their depth of knowledge and experience, and their strong commitment to the mission of ASISTA, they will both be tremendous assets to our work in pursuit of safety and justice for immigrant survivors of violence.”

Barbara Camacho, Board President, concurs: “Melissa and Derek are joining an extremely dedicated group of leaders who make up ASISTA’s Board of Directors. We are fortunate to have them joining the team as we celebrate ASISTA’s 15-year anniversary, and we look forward to their contributions and their leadership.”

**Melissa Desgrottes** comes to ASISTA as an associate attorney at Bretz & Coven, LLP. Prior to joining Bretz & Coven, Melissa represented individuals in detained removal proceedings as a supervising attorney in the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) at The Bronx Defenders. Previously, Melissa was a staff attorney at Sanctuary for Families in the Immigration Intervention Project, where she represented immigrant survivors of violence. Melissa’s legal career is rooted in removal defense, with a focus on clients who are at imminent risk of removal. She is also dedicated to helping survivors feel safe and secure while navigating the path to residency and citizenship in the United States. She holds a B.A. from Boston College and a J.D. from Rutgers Law



School.

**Derek Foran** is a Partner at the international law firm Steptoe & Johnson, where he represents



public and private companies in complex civil litigation in state and federal courts. Among other awards, Derek has been recognized as a Northern California Super Lawyer on multiple occasions, named as a Top 100 High Stakes Litigator in Northern California, as well as a Recommended Lawyer in the 2022 edition of Legal 500 US. Clients turn to Derek because he is a "stand out" litigator who provides "excellent and strategic litigation advice." Derek also maintains an active pro bono practice. In 2016, he was awarded the Christopher Tietze Humanitarian Award for significant, lifetime contributions in the

field of reproductive rights. Prior winners of this award include Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, the ACLU, and three US Senators. His work has been written about in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. Derek is a member of the Board of Governors of the Association of Business Trial Lawyers, Northern California Chapter. He is also a former member of the Board of Directors of Bay Area Legal Aid and the Executive Committee of the Civil Litigation Section of the San Francisco Bar Association. Derek is originally from Ireland.

Established in 2008, ASISTA is a national leader in the movement for safety and justice for immigrant survivors of gender-based violence. ASISTA's founders helped write the immigration provisions of the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act (TVPA), affording legal status to hundreds of thousands of survivors and their children since 1994. With over 2,500 members nationwide, ASISTA's work is focused on 1) providing expert case consultation, training, and resources to attorneys and advocates navigating the complex immigration system on behalf of survivors of gender-based violence, including intervening in specific cases as needed; 2) pushing for federal, state and local policies that ensure safety and justice for immigrant survivors; and 3) coordinating lawsuits to prevent the government from unfairly deporting survivors of violence. To learn more about ASISTA's work, [click here](#). Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), & [Instagram](#).

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