

Yale Law Alums Join in Honoring Fellow Alum in Receiving the Prestigious Crystal Eagle Award

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Press Release



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At a recent award ceremony held in Palm Springs, California, Yale Law School graduates Dana Berliner (Class 1991), Randall Smith (Class 1982) and Dwight Merriam (Class 1978) joined in honoring fellow alum Efrén C. Olivares with the presentation of the Crystal Eagle Award. The Crystal Eagle is given annually by [Owners' Counsel of America](https://www.ownerscounsel.com), a national network of leading eminent domain lawyers, to an individual who has demonstrated a deep and abiding commitment to the protection and defense of private property rights. Mr. Olivares, YLS Class of 2008, is the director of the Texas Civil Rights Project's Racial and Economic Justice Program. Efrén works on behalf of private landowners living along the U.S. and Mexico border facing the loss of their property by eminent domain for the development of border security measures.

The Texas Civil Rights Project educates landowners about their constitutional rights in taking situations, provides legal representation to those that would not otherwise be able to afford a lawyer to defend their property rights, collaborates with non-profits and private law firms who are assisting in these efforts on a pro bono basis and interacts with local and national media outlets to make sure property owners have a public voice and that their stories are told.

Efrén's own story is one of inspiration. He first immigrated from Mexico to Texas at the age of 13. After years of hard work and perseverance, in 2005 he graduated summa cum laude from the University of Pennsylvania and in 2008, he received his law degree from Yale Law School. Efrén started his career at the firm of Fulbright & Jaworski (now Norton, Rose, Fulbright), but after

four years, he realized he had a different calling. Leaving the money and status behind, he became a passionate advocate for the constitutional and human rights of the poor and disadvantaged, a path which eventually landed him with the non-profit Texas Civil Rights Project. The TCRP was founded in 1990 by James C. Harrington, a community activist turned attorney, who worked tirelessly on behalf of migrant farmworkers in the Rio Grande Valley.

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