



Each spring, The Daily Journal announces the recipients of the California Lawyer Attorney of the Year (C.L.A.Y.) awards in specialized areas of law. The CLAY award for public interest was awarded to the Valentini v. Shinseki litigation team. Melissa Tyner Inner City Law Center's Director of Homeless Veterans Project, along with other members of the team, was honored for her work representing homeless veterans with mental health disabilities.

Since it was deeded to the federal government in 1888, the West Los Angeles VA Campus served as housing for disabled veterans. In the mid 1970's, the VA leased 30% of federal land out to private companies, including using

portions as parking lots for school buses, a laundry for Marriott hotels and baseball facilities for UCLA.

With mental health and other services now inaccessible to, many homeless veterans suffering from severe Post-Traumatic Stress, Melissa and the team filed a class action suit on behalf of homeless veterans with severe disabilities. The suit against the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs alleged that the modification to the West Los Angeles VA Campus discriminated against class members. The team also argued that the land should be used as it was intended - to provide housing to Southern California's large homeless veteran population.

After more than three years, the team achieved a favorable settlement in February of 2016 that will result in much more housing for disabled homeless veterans. Melissa said, "After three-and-a-half years of litigation, we are now able to stop focusing on the problem and instead focus on the solution."

Congratulations, Melissa! This is an incredible win for veterans!