

# Guild Notes

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## # Black Lives Matter

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**Cover:** Protesters march in Downtown Boston last December at a (Photo: Tim Plenk).

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**Note:** The views expressed in *Guild Notes* are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NLG as a whole.

# Terrorism in Chapel Hill Exposes Double Standard

By Azadeh Shahshahani, NLG President

On February 10, three Muslim students, Razan Abu-Salha (19), Yusor Abu-Salha (21), and Deah Barakat (23), were tragically murdered, shot at point-blank range in their home by their neighbor, Craig Stephen Hicks, a 46-year-old white man. Describing himself as an “anti-theist” on social media, Hicks had previously harassed Yusor and Deah while wearing a gun on his waist. The police initially branded the murders as the unfortunate outcome of a dispute over parking—as Hicks had described—rather than a hate crime. Many in the Muslim community have pointed out the hypocrisy and double standards inherent in this. Would the characterization of this crime have been the same if the victims had been Caucasian and the assailants Muslim or African-American?

The mainstream media initially ignored the murders until the story exploded on Twitter. Once they did, the story was overwhelmingly framed in the way it had been by the police—as a dispute between neighbors rather than a terrorist act targeting three Muslim-Americans because of their religion—leading Muslim communities to believe that their lives are valued less than others in this country.

This, of course, is symptomatic of the larger patterns of Islamophobia and governmental targeting of Arab and Muslim communities which provide the necessary backdrop for, and legitimize, hate crimes. From religious discrimination to systematic surveillance to FBI harassment, Muslim-Americans have been under attack, and more intensively so since 9/11.

The case of the Chapel Hill murders hit particularly close to home for me as I lived in North Carolina, working with Muslim-American and Arab-American communities from 2004 to 2007. When I first got to the state after law school, I noticed a large Muslim-American population and assumed that there were projects or legal organizations addressing the needs of the community, especially in light of the post-9/11 crackdown. But no one could point me to anything. So I decided to start one. I approached the ACLU of North Carolina with an idea for a project to help increase awareness among Muslim-American and Arab-American communities about their rights. I also aimed to create a network of attorneys to help represent individuals approached by the FBI for “voluntary” interviews and other governmental intrusions.



[Left to right] Deah Barakat, Yusor Abu-Salha, and Razan Abu-Salha. (Photo: Abbas Sarsour)

I got the go-ahead. In the course of doing this work, I visited many mosques and community centers and interacted with Muslim-Americans from across the state. I learned about systematic civil liberties violations and witnessed a community living under a state of siege. I interacted with many NLG attorneys who were zealously defending their Muslim-American clients against the powerful machinery of the US government.

After all these years, it is extremely upsetting to see that it is still open season on Muslims in North Carolina—and across the country.

The NLG will continue our work in exposing and battling Islamophobia in all its forms. Our “Know Your Rights” booklets are available in five languages including Arabic, Bengali and Urdu, and have been disseminated widely. Our members around the country continue to defend Muslim-American and Arab-American communities under attack. We’ve also signed on to a letter initiated by Muslim Advocates to Attorney General Eric Holder demanding the government initiate a federal investigation into the Chapel Hill murders. We shall not retreat until Muslim-Americans in this country are afforded their human dignity and human rights. ■



# Meet the New NLG Executive Director, Pooja Gehi!

Dear Guild Members,

I am honored and humbled to join you as Executive Director of the National Lawyers Guild. In fact, watching NLG members offer legal support at protests is what inspired me to go to law school. As a student, I was the President of my NLG chapter at American University's Washington College of Law. There, I developed relationships with mentors who helped me through those years and deepened my commitment to social justice. I am excited to lead an organization so fundamental to my legal career, and the career of so many other movement lawyers and legal workers. I am looking forward to working in a thriving social justice movement with all of you!

For the past eight years, I worked as a staff attorney and the Director of Immigrant Justice at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project. I provided direct legal services for hundreds of low-income transgender and gender nonconforming clients in administrative hearings, immigration proceedings, and civil rights litigation. Most recently, I was a part of the team that litigated and successfully settled *I.H. v Zucker*, securing access to transition-related healthcare for New York Medicaid recipients. I collaborated closely with progressive organizations to build an analysis of gender and racial justice among poverty and queer advocates across the nation. I also had organizational development responsibilities, including training, budgeting, fundraising, and strategic planning. I am excited to bring these skills to the NLG, while also learning from all of you.

Even as I write, people across the country and the world are fighting against state violence, subordination, and injustice. The lack of indictment of the police officers who killed Mike Brown and Eric Garner—among countless other injustices—has sparked extraordinary resistance that I believe is the beginning of a much larger struggle. The Black Lives Matter movement and uprisings against police violence have great significance for us, as lawyers, law students, and legal workers fighting for justice.

In this important political moment, the NLG can and must help build a sustainable social justice movement that centers people of color, queer and trans people, immigrants, people living with HIV/AIDS, disabled people, homeless people, prisoners, and those living at the intersections.

Given our chapters nationwide, and that NLG's committees, task forces, and projects, already represent a cross-movement political analysis, we are well-equipped to support collabora-



tions among movements linked in a larger struggle for sustainable social change and true justice.

My vision is that, as the National Lawyers Guild, we can offer a safe, accessible space that movement leaders trust as a coordinated center to connect with resistance on the ground, find or become a radical legal worker, share skills, and build a political home as they engage in organized resistance.

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work with all of you to make our visions for justice real.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pooja Gehi'.

Pooja Gehi  
Executive Director

# “We Want \$15 an Hour and Full-Time Work”

By Edmundo Saballos, Mid-Atlantic Co-RVP

“It’s not just about Walmart workers, but about all of us... We’re in the struggle for all workers in the US,” Cynthia Murray, a worker organizer with OUR Walmart told 40 participants at the January 19th panel discussion, “What’s next in the fight to organize Walmart and in the struggle for a living wage?” DC-NLG Labor & Employment Committee and the NLG chapter of the University of the District of Columbia’s David A. Clarke School of Law organized the event. Murray was joined by Silvia Fabela and attorney Joey Hipolito, both with the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), and Ari Schwartz, with DC Jobs with Justice.

Hosted at the only publicly funded university in Washington DC, the event took place in a period of renewed resistance by working people to the decline in their working and living conditions. Last November, workers organized by OUR Walmart, with the support of the UFCW, carried out [sit-down strikes](#) in Walmart stores in Washington DC. Previously, in 2014, the DC City Council, under pressure from community groups and the labor movement, passed legislation requiring Walmart to pay its employees [\\$12.50 per hour](#). The “Large Retailer Accountability Act”, as the legislation was called, was later vetoed by then Democratic Mayor Vincent Grey. The Mayor’s veto came after Walmart [threatened to cancel plans](#) for the stores under construction at that time.

The fight for higher wages at Walmart also comes in response to the growing income inequality in the city and the displacement of minority residents. According to DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [the average income](#) of the top fifth of households in the city is 29 times the income of the bottom fifth. This has [led to an exodus](#) of working class residents, most of them Blacks and Latinos, who can no longer afford to live in the city. Glova Scott, a stock worker at Walmart, exemplifies the growing class polarization in the city: working the night shift, she makes [\\$10.90 an hour](#) (roughly \$1500 a month after taxes). A one-bedroom apartment in Washington, DC now costs [more than \\$1700](#).

## About Respect

However, the fight by workers at Walmart is not limited to a raise in their hourly wages. In her presentation, Murray explained that workers are also organizing to gain respect. She described how OUR Walmart began with 100 members after

workers realized that management “didn’t care about how they treated us” and how now, after going through the recent sit-down strikes, workers are stronger and in a better position to wrest concessions from management. OUR Walmart has been able to get Walmart to create a database for part-time workers to pick up hours, while still demanding \$15 an hour with a full-time schedule, and light-duty assignment for [pregnant employees](#).



OUR Walmart members holding a hold a rally in Washington, DC last Fall. (Photo: facebook.com/OURWMT)

## Impact of “OUR Walmart”

Silvia Fabela explained how these victories at Walmart have changed the conversation of how a responsible corporation should act. She also said that recent actions have sparked important discussions of what city “development” should look like as alternatives to the current gentrification model in Washington DC.

Joey Hipolito explained the role of the legal department of the UFCW in supporting the workers. Lawyers have been crucial in demanding that Walmart respect the right of workers to raise demands on the job.

Finally, Ari Schwartz told participants in the forum about ways they could support the workers at Walmart. Schwartz invited participants to join Respect DC and other community organizations in pressuring Walmart to sign a “community-based agreement” that would require further concessions from the corporation. ■

For more about OUR Walmart, visit their website at [forrespect.org](#).

UPDATE: On February 19, Walmart announced that they will raise its minimum wage to \$10 an hour!

# Kenneth Reams: Opening the Art Event on Capital Punishment from Death Row

By Ann Schneider, NLG-NYC

As a young Guild attorney, I got my chance to work with the NAACP LDF in my first job at a union legal service in 1997. A few co-workers and I volunteered our evenings working on a post-conviction review petition in the case of Kenneth Reams.

Kenny was a borderline mentally retarded young man who'd gotten involved in a scheme to rob money to pay for high school graduation. Although he killed no one, Kenny received the death penalty, while the accomplice who actually shot and killed the robbery victim took a plea deal to instead receive a life sentence. His assigned attorney called no witnesses and impugned Kenny in his opening statement. The jury had been death-qualified (i.e. required to swear they were capable of imposing the death sentence). Kenny's jury took no more than three hours in the sentence phase, including lunch, to reject all mitigating circumstances. They would never know about his artistic ability.

Kenny has just turned 40 and has now spent fully half of his life on death row—the majority of it within solitary confinement—on a felony murder conviction. Under the guidance of George Kendall, the first motion succeeded in staying issuance of a warrant for more than 15 years. With the unwavering support of Arkansans against the Death Penalty, Kenneth produced the first Art Event on Capital Punishment. In a Little Rock library one evening last November, amidst finger food, wine, and the strains of Nina Simone wishing she could feel free, family members and guests admired the works of Kenneth and Isabelle Watson, his French fiancée who'd contacted him after seeing a foreign documentary on his case.

Together, they had begun researching the enormity of the injustice of the death penalty, which would later inspire their art. Their works feature victims of capital, including the 14-year-old African-American boy George Stinney, youngest person ever executed in the US (exonerated posthumously last December); a mass execution of Indians in 1862; and "Bloody Babs," whose last words in 1955 were, "Good people are always so sure they're right."

Key to Kenny's new determination was Wilbert Rideau, who spent 44 years at the Angola Penitentiary in Louisiana and managed to walk out free. Rideau personally visited Kenny, at a time when he was particularly despondent about ever leaving death row. Rideau's 2010 book, *In the Place of Justice*, shows how as the editor of "The Angolite," he transformed the prison newspaper

into an investigative organ. Earning a "must-read" designation from the *New York Times*, Rideau showed the country "A peaceful prison owes its success to the consent of its prisoners, a consent that comes from mutual understanding and reasonable common-sense accommodations at almost every level of interaction."



Original painting by Kenneth Reams.

No small dreamer, Kenny is now working on establishing the first-of-its-kind Museum on Capital Punishment. Judith Elane, a retired attorney and murder victim family member, was asked by Kenny to help incorporate the organization and to serve on its board, whose mission is to educate the public on the practice and the history of the use of the death penalty in the United States.

The LDF has won an evidentiary hearing for Kenny. Their star witness is Gene McKissic, the first Black prosecutor to serve in southern Arkansas, beginning in 1976. In testimony to be continued, he spoke of endemic racism in the prosecutor's office, echoing the defense's claims of exclusion of Blacks from the Kenny's jury; a claim rejected by the Judge in Kenny's first appeal. His legal team presently consists of Christina Swarns and Vincent Southerland.

Kenneth Reams's art is even more striking considering it is all produced within a small, 6-by-7-foot cell in the Varner "Super Max" prison in Grady, Arkansas.

The organizers of the exhibit have received inquiries from Europe and other US states. Contributions so that future exhibits can travel can be made payable to "Who Decides, Inc." and mailed to PO Box 13572, Maumelle, AR 72113-0572. ■

Each year, NLG students all over the country come together to celebrate Student Week Against the Death Penalty. By hosting events and planning actions, students raise awareness of the unjust capital punishment system in the United States. This year's SWADP took place March 2-6. Learn more at [nlg.org/SWADP](http://nlg.org/SWADP).



# Providing Relief to Kurdish Refugees

**By: Atticus Gannaway, NYU Law Senior Editor**

*Reprinted with permission from the author*

*In November 2014, NLG National Vice President Camilo Romero traveled to Iraq to deliver humanitarian aid to refugees of the current unrest in the area. One of the fruits of the mission is a proposed NLG delegation to Kurdistan in fall 2015. To participate in planning the delegation, please contact [nvp1@nlg.org](mailto:nvp1@nlg.org).*

Camilo Romero speaks matter-of-factly about his final day in the autonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq, when his scheduled meeting with a local attorney was canceled due to a nearby suicide bombing that killed at least four people and wounded more than two dozen. Among those injured in the explosion, attributed to the Islamic State (aka ISIS or ISIL), was the local attorney's cousin.

"It wasn't until that explosion that we realized we never quite know who's exposed," says Romero.

Romero was on a grassroots humanitarian mission with Medya Shikhagaie, a Kurd who had fled Iran with her family when she was young. After flying into Erbil, Romero and Shikhagaie loaded their supplies into a Peugeot with Iranian plates (not the most inconspicuous vehicle, Romero acknowledges) and began a 600-mile circuit of northern Iraq, visiting Taqtaq, Duhok, Zakho, Dayrabun, Amedi, and Barzan before returning to Kurdistan's capital.

With the help of local hosts, Romero and Shikhagaie distributed clothing, shoes, and blankets to more than 600 people, and bags of food to about 120 families. The crowds that greeted them represented a mélange of ethnicities, nationalities, and religious backgrounds. Many had fled Syria after the onset of its civil war; many more had arrived from elsewhere to escape encroaching ISIS forces.

"The interviews we did with families were often the first time they were able to express what has happened to them," says Romero. "They weren't damning anyone or pointing fingers. Most of the time it was simply, 'This is what's happening to us, and we're doing the best we can.'"

Despite their attempts to maintain low profiles, Romero and Shikhagaie found themselves in both a major Kurdish newspaper and local television news. The media's interest in their mission was shared by the government minister recently appointed to address the refugee crisis; Romero and Shikhagaie visited with the official and discussed future collaboration and the dire need for non-commercial lawyers in Iraq. The conversation prompted Romero to consider organizing a delegation to travel to Iraq in the next year, aiming to establish a dialogue about the rule of law and how to kick-start the teaching of law. The ultimate objective, he says, is to build an infrastructure for meaningful civil and criminal legal representation.

Romero has previously focused on addressing alleged abuses of union organizers in Coca-Cola facilities in Colombia, and the problems of gang violence in Los Angeles. He's currently living



Camilo Romero works with volunteers to distribute food and other relief items to refugees. (Photo: Mara Shikhagaie)



Child refugees met through the project. (Photo: Mara Shikhagaie)

in Colombia's Chocó department, working with a national farm-workers' association.

"I hope to bring some more attention to what's happening there," Romero says of Iraq. He remains undaunted by a suicide bomb or the kidnapping of a general by guerrillas near Romero's own Chocó quarters: "I rarely feel scared or in danger. I'm going to places where we humans forget to be humans to each other." ■

# NLG Stands with #BlackLivesMatter Movement

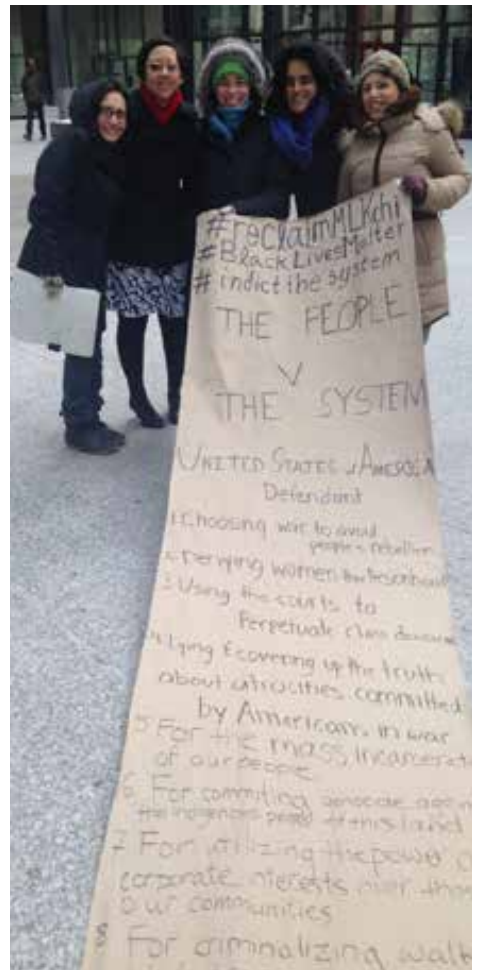
From Oakland to NYC, NLG takes to the streets and the courts to support the movement against racism and police brutality

## TUPOCC Indicts the System in Chicago

By Iveliz Orellano, TUPOCC-Chicago

On January 15, TUPOCC Chicago heeded the call from youth of color for solidarity actions that reclaim the radical legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. That day, the radical legal community of color and its allies indicted the system for systematically controlling, devaluing, and breaking up communities of color and all other marginalized communities - women, immigrants, the disability community, the queer, trans, intersex, and HIV positive communities, and religious minorities - to name a few.

TUPOCC members unfurled a large scroll that stated the people's indictment against the United States of America. Members took turns reading out dozens of counts and then the People's Judge, Chicago Chapter Administrator Remigio Torres, found the United States guilty of all crimes. The group ended the action with a demand for reparations for communities of color, for all marginalized communities, and specifically for police torture survivors in Chicago. ▪



Left: Guild member Christian Williams addresses legal professionals demonstrating at a solidarity action in Boston organized by NLG-Massachusetts last December. (Photo: Marilyn Humphries)

TUPOCC-Chicago, brings the people's indictment against the United States. (Photo: TUPOCC-Chicago)



NLG Legal Observers and Boston police watch as protesters stage a die-in during a #BlackLivesMatter demonstration mid-December of last year. (Photo: Tim Plenk)



New England School of Law NLG chapter leader Tifanei Nikol Ressler-Moyer with fellow students Medya Ansari and Sheevani Patel outside the Edward Brooke Courthouse for the Massachusetts day of action February 25 (Photo: Tifanei Nikol Ressler-Moyer)



# NLG-St. Louis Files Lawsuit to Oust Ferguson Prosecutor

By Maggie Ellinger-Locke, NLG-St. Louis President

After the grand jury failed to indict Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson over his killing of Michael Brown, many emotions came to the fore within our community, including anger and sadness. Perhaps most importantly, we felt the continuity of a grave injustice. But what to do? Like all Guild attorneys, we turned to action. On January 15, we filed a case designed both to obtain some semblance of justice and send a warning shot to other prosecutors—one meant to convey that there are consequences when a prosecutor treats police officers as above the law.

In Missouri, “any person” may file an affidavit with the clerk of court asserting that an elected public officer has “knowingly or willfully” failed to fulfill her duties of office. Normally, the court clerk would refer the affidavit to the prosecuting attorney for investigation; if the investigation found that the official failed to fulfill her office’s duties, the prosecutor could file a writ of quo warranto action in circuit court seeking her ouster from office. When the elected official is a prosecuting attorney, however, a Missouri court may appoint a special prosecutor to subsume those responsibilities normally attributed to the prosecuting attorney, including investigation and the bringing of an ouster suit.

In January, Guild lawyers filed four affidavits, along with an accompanying memorandum of law and proposed order, on behalf of community activists alleging that St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Bob McCulloch failed to fulfill his duties

of office by acting arbitrarily and in bad faith during the grand jury proceedings investigating Officer Wilson.

We have alleged that McCulloch acted arbitrarily by providing the grand jury with all the available evidence, not just evidence of probable cause for Darren Wilson’s indictment. This is contrary to how Missouri prosecutors act in other cases, resulting in widespread media condemnation of the grand jury process as “unusual.”

We also alleged that McCulloch acted in bad faith by allowing the grand jury to hear testimony he knew was perjured; treating witnesses favoring a probable-cause finding hostilely, and those favoring Officer Wilson’s story favorably; failing to address inconsistencies between Officer Wilson’s prior statements and physical evidence with his grand jury testimony; using an unconstitutional instruction on Officer Wilson’s defense for the entirety of the grand jury proceedings (prosecutors changed the instruction upon the close of evidence, but has not been disclosed to the public); focusing on Mr. Brown’s marijuana use with speculative questions, while failing to mention Officer Wilson’s toxicology report found evidence of steroid use; and evincing a bias in favor of police in other police shootings and private life.

The court has set a hearing date of March 27. Importantly, all we can do is ask the court to appoint a special prosecutor; once done, the special prosecutor will investigate our allegations and then determine whether filing an ouster suit is appropriate. Stay tuned! ■



Protesters hold a mass sit-in during December’s #BlackLivesMatter action in downtown Boston. (Photo: Tim Plenk)

# Marissa Alexander: A Miscarriage of Justice

By Kerry McLean, Anti-Sexism Committee Chair

A miscarriage of justice has occurred in Florida. You might be wondering which instance I am referring to. From hanging chads to the murder of Trayvon Martin, Florida has developed a reputation in the US and abroad as a place where injustice goes unchecked.

At the moment I refer to the case of Marissa Alexander. In Marissa's case the person that was abused is the person that was punished. Marissa, an African American mother of three from Jacksonville, had been married to a man that has a record of abusing her and other women. In 2010, after firing one warning shot in self-defense, Marissa was arrested, convicted of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and sentenced to 20 years in prison. No one had been injured by her warning shot. After an international advocacy campaign was launched, led primarily by the group Free Marissa Now, Marissa Alexander was granted a new trial. Bizarrely, Florida prosecutor Angela Corey threatened to put Marissa behind bars for 60 years if she was found guilty after her second trial. Under the helm of new counsel, Marissa was granted a new trial.

Marissa eventually pleaded guilty in November 2014, which she had refused to do during her first trial. From the time of her arrest to her release into house arrest, Marissa spent almost 1,100 days behind bars. She missed the first two years of her newborn's life. She is under house arrest for the next two years. She now has a criminal record. Marissa was not only abused by her ex-husband; she was abused again by a racist and sexist system.

According to US Department of Justice statistics, African American women experience intimate partner violence at a rate 35% higher than white women, and 25% higher than women of other races. Black women who survive intimate partner violence also experience criminalization in connection with their abuse at a higher rate than white women. A study of mandatory arrests for domestic violence conducted in New York by the Urban Justice Center included situations where female survivors of domestic violence were arrested along with their abusive partner because of actions the women took in self defense (dual arrest), or arrested because of a false or exaggerated complaint made by their abuser (retaliatory arrest). For dual and retaliatory arrests, the study found that nearly 70% of the female survivors of violence arrested were African American or Latina, a significant percentage of whom were low-income. It is as if law enforcement and the courts do not regard Battered Women's Syndrome or basic principles of self-defense as applicable to these women. In her 1991 essay, *Rethinking Battered Women's Syndrome: A Black Feminist Perspective*, Sharon Allard offers an explanation: racial and gendered stereotyping of white women as "good," "passive" and "gentle" affords them sympathy from the public and courts, whereas Black women, stereotyped as angry and aggressive, do not receive sympathy.

I worked with Free Marissa Now, a coalition which comprises over 100 organizations, and proposed to the NLG that we join the coalition. In my capacity as Chair of the NLG's Anti-Sexism Committee I served as the Guild representative to the coalition

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*"Nearly 70% of the female survivors of violence arrested were African American or Latina."*

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for about two years, traveling to Jacksonville twice to connect with community leaders and to do work with the media. Free Marissa Now intends to continue working on policy to address the criminalization of survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Marissa Alexander's case is yet another reminder that there is still so much to do to reform our legal system. Mandatory minimum sentencing must end. There must be a zero tolerance policy for any hint of racial and gender bias in the prosecution and adjudication of cases. In addition, laws such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) must be strengthened. Moreover, the United States ratification and implementation of the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a treaty that offers powerful protection of the rights of women, is decades overdue. ■



Marissa Alexander supporters have connected her case to the #BlackLivesMatter movement; specifically, #BlackWomensLivesMatter, which seeks to bring awareness to police violence against Black cisgender and transgender women and their oppression by a racist, sexist legal system. (Photo: facebook.com/FreeMarissaNow)



# Mass. Legal Community Holds Black Lives Matter Day of Action

By Benjamin Evans, Northeast Regional Co-RVP



Legal workers, law students, and attorneys outside the Edward Brooke Courthouse in Boston. (Photo: Carlton Williams)

On February 25, lawyers and law students—many of them Guild members—spoke out in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in a day of action coordinated by the NLG Massachusetts Chapter. The statewide day of action held outside courthouses across Massachusetts was a show of solidarity in response to the Black youth-led movement that emerged following the police murder of Mike Brown last August in Ferguson, Missouri.

Across our Commonwealth, from Springfield, to Lowell, to Somerville, to Roxbury, to Worcester, to Fall River to the Brooke courthouse in Boston, NLG members—especially law students—played a key role in the day's success. Students from Suffolk and Northeastern came to demonstrate at the District Court in Roxbury. Tifanei Nikol Ressler-Moyer, a student at New England School of Law, where she is reviving the NLG student chapter, brought a large contingent to the Boston event. NLG law students Tasha Marshall and Tyler Ingraham organized a large group of law students from Western New England University School of Law, who demonstrated in front of the Hampden County Courthouses in Springfield. The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law and the Black Law Students Association at Northeastern University both endorsed the event.

The demonstrations also gave us an opportunity to work with other progressive legal organizations in our state. The ACLU of Massachusetts and the Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders also endorsed.

That day, the Guild was uniquely positioned to take a leading role.

The oldest racially integrated national bar association in the country, the NLG has stood firm against racism and white supremacy when other legal professionals were less visible. We recognize that the notion that “Black lives matter” contradicts a founding assumption of the U.S. empire—that Black lives don’t matter, and that the aspirations and even the identities of African people are inconsequential.

the federal government or other bar associations became involved. Guild members challenged the seating of the all-white Mississippi delegation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. The Guild represented many Black and New Afrikan activists targeted by COINTELPRO, and today we continue to advocate for political prisoners like Sundiata Acoli, Mutulu Shakur and Janine Africa.



The American Friends Service Committee of Western Mass. turn out in Springfield on Feb. 25.

A unique organization, the NLG welcomes members representing diverse swaths of the legal profession—including not just attorneys, but also law students, legal workers, and jailhouse lawyers. We are well positioned and in a sense, responsible, to organize those who work with the law in solidarity with progressive struggles.

Another reason we were successful is that we were able to organize lawyers, law students and legal workers not just in Boston, but also beyond Route 128, in the Pioneer Valley and the South Coast and throughout Massachusetts.

Hopefully we can build on these same strengths throughout the northeast region, and across North America.

Let's continue to fight racism! Let's continue moving forward! ■

## national lawyers guild

*"An organization of lawyers, law students, legal workers, and jailhouse lawyers... in the service of the people, to the end that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests."* Preamble to the NLG Constitution

February 4, 2015

Sandra H. Johnson  
Bloomington City Attorney  
1800 West Old Shakopee Road  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55431-3027

Dear Ms. Johnson:

The National Lawyers Guild calls for the immediate dismissal of all criminal charges and other retributive actions against the ten activists arrested for exercising their right of free speech on December 20, 2014 at the Mall of America during a peaceful event.

The failure of the grand juries in Ferguson, Missouri and New York City to bring any criminal charges against the police officers involved in the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner have understandably spurred widespread protests around the country. The demonstration at the Mall of America organized by "Black Lives Matter" was an attempt to call attention to the epidemic of young African-American men being shot and killed by police officers and the failure of the criminal justice system to respond in any meaningful way to these police-involved shootings. Rather than protecting the First Amendment rights of demonstrators, Government agencies encourage abuses by their inaction and use repressive tactics against people engaged in free speech, fighting for social change.

Throughout history, the law has often been used to oppress people with dissenting views. We are reminded of governmental surveillance, infiltration, and counterintelligence programs aimed at lawful activities of civil rights and antiwar protesters. It is particularly outrageous and frightening that Bloomington police infiltrated this peaceful group, participated in their planning meetings and events, and then singled out those they deemed organizers for arrest. By making enemies of those who speak out, law-enforcement agencies engage in unnecessary, costly, and dangerous practices.

The National Lawyers Guild has worked for nearly 80 years to challenge governmental infringement of the rights of individuals. We stand in solidarity with those arrested for their participation in organizing and staging the demonstration and condemn the abusive tactics employed, calculated to stifle dissent and silence voices crying out for change. Such governmental intrusions are contrary to the basic principles upon which this country was founded. We are all less free today for these politically repressive measures.

Sincerely,



Azadeh Shahshahani  
President

75 Years of Law for the People

132 Nassau Street, Room 922, New York, NY 10038 212-679-5100 Fax 212-679-2811 [nlg.org](http://nlg.org) [@nlgnews](https://twitter.com/nlgnews)

On February 4, 2015, the NLG sent this letter to Bloomington, MN City Attorney Sandra H Johnson, calling for the "immediate dismissal of all criminal charges and other retributive actions" against the 10 activists arrested on December 20, 2014 at a peaceful #BlackLivesMatter event at the Mall of America.

As of the time of this writing, 11 protesters, known online as the #MOA11, have plead not guilty to six misdemeanor charges including trespass, disorderly conduct, and aiding and abetting trespass. They face up to two years in prison.

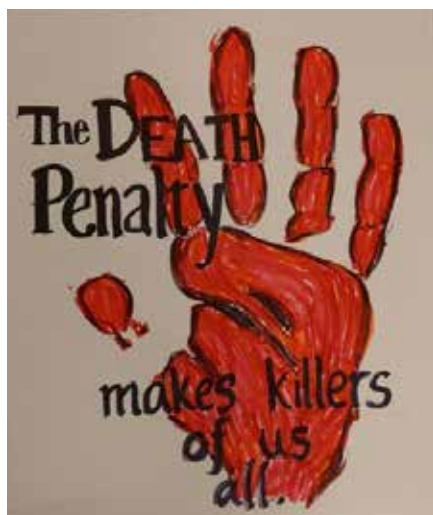
#BlackLivesMatter protesters continue to support and demonstrate on behalf of the #MOA11, with hundreds gathering outside the courthouse during the protesters' pre-trial court date on March 10, as well as calling calling for a national Mall of America boycott.

Longtime NLG Minnesota member Bruce Nestor is one of the attorneys representing the protesters pro bono.

Their next court date is set for May 1, 2015.



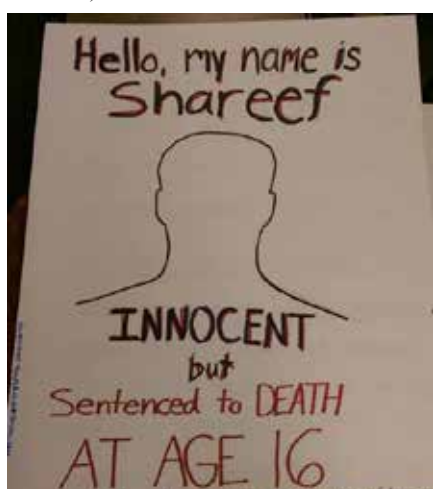
# NLG STUDENTS IN ACTION!



Above and below: Posters from Temple NLG's art making party for the 2015 NLG Student Week Against the Death Penalty. (Photos via Temple NLG Facebook)



Members of the NLG Temple Law chapter march at the demonstration at the MLK march in Philadelphia on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 19. (Photo via Temple NLG Facebook)



Left: eliza qualls perez Facio [center] presents Kathleen Garbacz [left] and Meredith Osborne [right] with the NLG Detroit and Michigan Chapter's Outstanding Law Student Award. (Photo: Kate Levy)



NLG students gathered for the first annual NLG Student caucus at the 2015 Rebellious Lawyering Conference held in February at Yale University. (Photo: Traci Yoder)



# NLG National Office Releases New *Radical Law Student Manual*

By Traci Yoder, NLG Student Organizer

It has become a truism that many are drawn to law school initially to further social justice, only to end up working in areas of the law that have little potential to serve these ideals. The most common reason cited for this is economic: the average law student emerges into practice with well over \$100,000 in debt. However, this is not the only factor. In most universities, the culture and pedagogy of legal education tend to emphasize commercial law over public interest fields and the intellectual pressure of law school undermines student's commitment to their ideals. Very often students feel very little support within the institution, and a subtle pressure to abandon the political and moral values that informed their decision to pursue law in the service of the people.

In order to combat these trends, the National Lawyers Guild has initiated the Radical Law Student Project, which includes

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*"Very often students feel pressure to abandon their decision to pursue law in the service of the people."*

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a collaborative Radical Law Student Manual (RLSM) outlining organizing campaigns undertaken by NLG students as well as a growing faculty network of NLG scholars. The RLSM builds on the NLG *Disorientation Manual*, by presenting an extended analysis of contemporary legal education as well as concrete strategies to change the culture of law school using examples from other students who have successfully fought for improvements in their institutions. Topics covered include the dominant legal career narrative, the psychological effects of law school, teaching and grading practices, barriers to legal education, tuition increases,

law student debt, radical faculty and curriculum, contemplation and the law, starting and reviving NLG chapters, and advice for life as a new lawyer.

Changing the practices, pedagogy, and expectations of law school in order to transform the culture of legal education will not be an easy process. Remember that you are not alone! The NLG offers a nationwide community of lawyers, law students, legal workers, and scholars who can assist you in changing the conditions at your law school. Our experience comes directly from the research and organizing of other NLG law students and faculty, who can support your efforts to make similar changes at your law school.

As of this writing, the RLSM's Foreword, Introduction, and first two chapters, "Understanding the Law School Tuition Crisis" and "Challenging the Law School Tuition Crisis," have been released.

To learn more about the NLG's legal education initiatives, please email NLG Student Organizer Traci Yoder at [traci@nlg.org](mailto:traci@nlg.org). ■



Original painting by Southwestern Law School NLG member Cassady Davidson.

check back for more chapters of the  
**Radical Law Student Manual** at

[\*\*nlg.org/RLSM\*\*](http://nlg.org/RLSM)



# Meet the NLG Haywood Burns Fellows of 2015!

The NLG's Haywood Burns Fellowships are designed to encourage students to work in the NLG's tradition of "people's lawyering."

Join us in congratulating our 2015 fellows, who will be working in the areas of immigration, international law, disability rights, economic justice, and worker's rights!



**Azadeh Erfani** is a 2L at Villanova Law. She majored in Philosophy and Spanish at Bryn Mawr. After obtaining a Masters degree in Philosophy, she coordinated adult education and citizenship workshops through Americorps. Azadeh has provided direct legal services to low-income immigrants at the National Immigrant

Justice Center. She became a Board of Immigration Appeals accredited representative and represented clients before the Department of Homeland Security. Azadeh has been an active board member of her NLG student chapter and the president of the Immigration Law Association. In Philadelphia, she interned with HIAS Pennsylvania and Friends of Farmworkers. This summer, Azadeh will intern at the Legal Action Center of the American Immigration Council.



**Tyler Ingraham** is a 2L at Western New England University Law. He is a co-organizer for the 2015 NLG Northeast Regional Conference and was a writer for the Guild's 2014 report on Zones for Economic Development and Employment in Honduras. Tyler has worked on collaborative projects with the Honduras Solidarity Network, EarthRights International, and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti through Lauren Carasik of the Western New England School of Law's Human Rights Clinic. Tyler supports Springfield No One Leaves / Nadie Se Mue whenever he has a chance. He looks forward to working with the Honduras Solidarity Network in Honduras in the winter of 2016.



**Sochie Nnaemeka** is a 1L at Georgetown University Law Center. Sochie majored in History and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Yale University. She has spent the past five years talking to and organizing hundreds of students, clergy, workers, elected officials and the unemployed around issues of racial, social and economic justice. In Miami, she organized within the casino industry to transform workplaces through unionization. As an organizer with UNITE HERE, and a founding organizer

of New Haven Rising, she trained organizers, ran political campaigns for champions of social change, and built teams of residents committed to collective struggle. Sochie looks forward to interning this summer at the Center for Popular Democracy in New York.



**Casey Shea** is a 2L at the University of Denver Law. Casey interned at the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund and externed at the Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center, where she researched and investigated discrimination against people with disabilities in health care and other services. She is currently an

intern at the Colorado Court of Appeals. Since graduating in Social Policy from Northwestern University, Casey was a fellow at El Pomar Foundation and the Outreach Director for Great Education Colorado, where she helped build coalitions, educate, and organize for better and more equitable education funding. This summer, Casey will work with NY Lawyers for the Public Interest to advance equality and civil rights for people with disabilities.



**Chi-Ser Tran** is a 2L at the Temple University Law. Chi-Ser works with low-wage workers and immigrant youth through Temple's Social Justice Lawyering Clinic. She is involved with the Temple NLG chapter and APALSA. Chi-Ser has been the Voting Rights Organizer at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) and has worked with community leaders and organizations to enforce language access for limited English proficient Asian American voters. Last summer, Chi-Ser worked at the U.S. Department of Labor in the Philadelphia Regional Solicitor's Office, where she assisted with various phases of litigation. Chi-Ser will spend this summer at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia, where she will help enforce the legal rights of low-wage workers.

*Burns Fellowships provoke law students to question traditional notions of how one must practice law and to provide a summer experience that will enrich and challenge them. The program helps students apply their talents and skills to find creative ways to use the law to advance justice.*

*To donate to the Haywood Burns Fellowship, please visit [nlg.org/donate](http://nlg.org/donate).*

*To find out more about the fellowship, the legacy of Haywood Burns, and our current and former fellows, go to [nlg.org/fellowships](http://nlg.org/fellowships).*

and economic justice. In Miami, she organized within the casino industry to transform workplaces through unionization. As an organizer with UNITE HERE, and a founding organizer

## national lawyers guild foundation

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[www.nlg.org](http://www.nlg.org)

### 2015 NLG Regional Conferences | [nlg.org/regionals](http://nlg.org/regionals)

- **Mideast:** March 20-22 - Detroit, MI  
Wayne State Law School
- **Midwest:** March 20-22 - St. Louis, MO  
St. Louis University School of Law
- **Northeast:** April 17-19 - Springfield, MA  
Western New England University School of Law
- **Mid-Atlantic:** April 18 - Baltimore, MD  
University of Maryland School of Law
- **Northwest:** April 18 - Eugene, OR  
University of Oregon School of Law



Find more NLG events near you!  
[nlg.org/calendar](http://nlg.org/calendar)

#### SAVE THE DATE!

#### Law for the People Convention

**October 21-25, 2015  
Oakland, CA**

More info coming soon to [nlg.org/convention](http://nlg.org/convention)



/NLGnational



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