

# Guild Notes

Published by the NLG Foundation

Volume 44, No. 1/2, Spring/Summer 2019



## ***NLG STUDENTS TAKE OVER!***

AND:

- Poetry by NLG Jailhouse Lawyers
- NLG Delegation to Tijuana Issues Report on Humanitarian Crisis at the Border
- Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative Law School Tour
- NLG Students Challenge Mass Incarceration

**This October:  
2019 #Law4thePeople Convention in Durham, NC!**

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Previous and current issues of *Guild Notes* are available for download online at [nlg.org/guild-notes](http://nlg.org/guild-notes)

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.

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*Cover: Law students in their Legal Observer hats during the 2nd Annual Liberation Lawyering Conference, organized by NLG UCLA law students.*

We want to hear about your NLG work—NLG members are welcome to submit to the next issue of *Guild Notes*!

NOTE: Due to budget constraints, *Guild Notes* is now a biannual publication.

Deadline for the next issue is:  
**Monday, November 4, 2019**

See [nlg.org/submission-guidelines](http://nlg.org/submission-guidelines) to learn more. *Beyond Bars* guidelines available at the URL above and also printed in this issue's *Beyond Bars* column.

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## President's Column



From L to R: NLG legal worker Micah Prussack, NLG President Elena Cohen, Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, NLG Michigan student honoree and NLG Student National Vice President Cait De Mott Grady, filmmaker and activist Michael Moore, and NLG Michigan student honoree Phil Keller.

### By Elena Cohen, NLG President

As we reach the halfway point of 2019, taking time to reflect on the Guild's accomplishments and ongoing work proves necessary. In times of deepening crisis, uncertainty, and wide scale injustice, the Guild and its members have consistently mounted resistance through its vibrant network of those who value human rights and the rights of ecosystems over that of property, as our [recently passed amendment to the Preamble of the Constitution](#) states. By our member-wide vote to explicitly center climate justice, the Guild has again shown how we are on the frontier of recognizing oppression and its many forms. Without care for our planet and resistance against the array of powers aligned against it, our liberation would be for nothing.

The Guild has a lot to be proud of this year. NLG attorney Moira Meltzer-Cohen has been making [headlines in national news](#) through their defense of Chelsea Manning and her refusal to testify before a grand jury about her exposition of U.S. war crimes in Iraq. We stand in solidarity with Chelsea and protect the rights of whistleblowers who bravely expose the injustices of imperialism, war, and capitalism.

In response to the needs of the Central American Migrant Exodus at the U.S.- Mexico border, our collective response to help protect refugees from violence and political crisis was swift. [In solidarity with Al Otro Lado](#), Guild members have been on the front lines of this fight

against the fascist U.S. governmental regime and the humanitarian crisis at the border. The Guild will not shirk on its commitment and responsibility to the people—especially those most vulnerable.

Just a few weeks ago, I traveled to Detroit for the NLG Detroit Chapter's 82<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Dinner, honoring U.S. Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib and law students Cait De Mott Grady and Phil Keller, with guest speaker Michael Moore. I found it heartwarming, and a sign of possible good things to come, that the Dinner committee had to decide [which picture of Rashida](#) getting arrested at a protest with NLG Legal Observers present would be used for the program. Having friends and allies in federal government is something we have never taken for granted. Thank you, Rashida, for your continued commitment to the same justice you fought for as an activist in Detroit.

For nearly a century, the Guild has proven itself to be an invaluable organization and political force for generations of radical lawyers, legal workers, and law students. But now more than ever, the Guild needs your help. It needs your commitment, passion, energy, and perhaps most importantly, it needs funding. With support from all of us, the Guild will continue to flourish and stand as a vanguard in these troubling times.

In solidarity,

Elena L. Cohen



# NLG VT Members Represent Citizens in Lawsuit to Stop Demolition of City Hall Park

By Kira Kelley, Esq., NLG VT Chairperson

*This piece was originally published as an announcement on [nlg.org](http://nlg.org). To view court documents from the case, visit [www.nlg.org/nlg-vt-members-represent-citizens-in-lawsuit-against-city-of-burlington-to-stop-demolition-of-city-hall-park/](http://www.nlg.org/nlg-vt-members-represent-citizens-in-lawsuit-against-city-of-burlington-to-stop-demolition-of-city-hall-park/)*

Eight Burlington residents represented by attorneys with the Vermont Chapter of the NLG filed a lawsuit in late February against the City of Burlington to stop the demolition of City Hall Park. These residents were among over 3,300 signatories of a petition to insert an article on the Town Meeting Day ballot advising the Mayor and City Council to cancel the City Hall Park renovation plan. City Council has since voted to refuse to put this question on the ballot.

“Skimming funding from properly approved purposes in order to privatize a cherished public space, circumventing the required voter approval – this is exactly the type of consolidating power we must guard against vigilantly if we want our government to be accountable to our best interests,” said Kira Kelley, chair of the Vermont NLG and one of the attorneys that drafted the complaint.

The complaint and a supporting motion for a preliminary injunction allege that City officials have violated the Burlington Charter in two ways: (1) pledging City credit without first submitting the purpose of those

bonds to the voters for approval, and (2) refusing to put a validly petitioned article on the Town Meeting Day Ballot that addresses a matter within the voters’ authority to decide.

“The Burlington City Charter requires City Council to seek voter permission before pledging City credit or acquiring bonds,” the complaint reads. “City Council has gone rogue, and is rushing to complete a project that it lacked the authority to approve in the first place. Circumventing its obligation to submit the true purpose for the \$4 million City Park overhaul to a vote, the Council seeks to cheat the Plaintiffs and the entire city out of their rightful role in town governance.”

The lawsuit asks the Chittenden Superior Court to revisit a recent Vermont Supreme Court decision, *Skiff v. South Burlington School District*: “The standard in *Skiff* prohibits a school board or City Council from omitting an article from the ballot unless the petitioned item meets two criteria: the item must be (1) advisory and (2) beyond the authority of the electorate to decide.” The motion argues that since “the matter of bonds and their purpose are fully within the electorate’s authority ... Burlington City Council lacks discretion to omit this petitioned question from the ballot.” ■

Follow the NLG Vermont:

- [www.facebook.com/VT-National-Lawyers-Guild-2044729882426529/](https://www.facebook.com/VT-National-Lawyers-Guild-2044729882426529/)
- Twitter: [@VTGuild](https://twitter.com/VTGuild)

## NLG in Coalition Across Movements

By Traci Yoder, NLG Research & Education Director

Since the election of Donald Trump in 2016, there has been an alarming increase in the level of repression against activists as well as an upsurge in organizing to address these troubling trends. The Guild has joined multiple national coalitions designed to protect the right to protest, including *Protect Dissent*, *Protect the Protest*, and *Challenging Lawfare*. Additionally, NLG works with scholars through the *Academic Solidarity Network* and partners with the bi-national legal organization *Al Otro Lado* in Tijuana to assist the [migrant exodus](#) by training and coordinating Guild volunteers.

The NLG has long worked in cooperation and collaboration with other legal, civil liberties, environmental, labor, anti-racist, abolitionist, and international organizations, and is uniquely positioned to not only take part in coalition work but also to create and strengthen these networks. Our membership of legal professionals spans the country, and Guild members can be found in many progressive nonprofits, law schools, and private law firms. We discovered the broad range of our memberships’ affilia-

tions when the Guild organized national [#LawStrikesBack](#) events in major cities after the election of Trump. Through our organizational ties, the NLG quickly mobilized like-minded groups to support and participate in these actions.

As the latest attack on the right to protest neoliberalism and imperialism gains in strength, the Guild and its members have been instrumental in forming alliances to challenge efforts to quell dissent. In 2017, we began writing about a wave of [anti-protest legislation](#) introduced in state legislatures by conservative Republicans. These bills sought to increase penalties for common protest activities such as picketing, obstructing traffic, wearing masks, [boy-cotts](#), disrupting [hate speech](#), and performing acts of civil disobedience near “[critical infrastructure](#).” The number of these bills continues to grow and the monetary interests behind them have been increasingly [exposed](#). Since 2016, we have seen a total of 100 bills introduced in 35 states.

This trend in legislation designed to criminalize protesting led NLG staff to reach out to other allied groups—including the ACLU, Amnesty International, the International Center for Not for Profit Law, Defending Rights and Dissent, Greenpeace, and many others—to

## Apply for GUILD GRANTS!

Does your NLG Chapter or Committee need support to launch a new campaign or strengthen an existing program?

Apply for a 2019 Guild Grant from the NLG Foundation!

Applications are due by September 15th.

For more information go to:

[nlg.org/nlgf/grants](http://nlg.org/nlgf/grants)

strategize ways to publicize and challenge these attempts from government, corporations, and the increasingly visible far right to challenge or punish demonstrations of dissent. Over the course of two years, the coalition has grown to dozens of organizations that take part in bi-weekly calls, hold annual national convenings, produce educational [webinars](#), and share information, ideas, and resources. This network, which chose the name *Protect Dissent*, continues to monitor and organize at the state and federal level to challenge the ever-growing list of anti-protest

mental activists in an article on the legal attacks on [climate justice movements](#). The coalition produced a strong alliance of organizations bringing attention to SLAPP suits, and has already won key victories.

The NLG is also a proud member of the [Black Extremist Identity Abolition Collective](#) (BIEAC), along with the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the Transformative Justice Coalition, Defending Rights and Dissent, and Stop LAPD Spying. The mission of the BIEAC is to challenge and end covert and overt surveillance practices in the US that target individuals or groups the government identifies as radical extremists based on race, ethnicity, or religion. The NLG is also a coalition partner of the [#ProtectBlackDissent campaign](#), led by the Center for Media Justice, which aims to end the FBI's "Black Identity Extremist" designation.

Most recently, the Guild has agreed to coordinate a coalition of organizations, academics, activists, and movement lawyers dedicated to challenging litigious attacks by Zionist plaintiffs. Lawfare (the self-proclaimed legal arm of the Zionist movement) is bringing cases against organizations and individuals who support BDS and justice for Palestine, in order to drain resources and capacity in an effort to intimidate and dissuade others from joining the movement. The NLG, San Francisco State University, and the American Studies Association have been targets of such litigation. This network—*Challenging Lawfare: Legal Defense of BDS Strategy Working Group*—creates a space to share litigation strategy, develop an analysis around defending these attacks on movements, draw intersections from our work, and recruit more lawyers to take on these cases.

As coalitions of scholars, activists, and legal professionals fight back against state and corporate repression, they also allow the space for organizations that often work in isolation (or even competition) to make strategic alliances around our common missions and goals. The Guild has always been a political space where members, staff, and supporters of various organizations, activist groups, and academic institutions can share ideas and work together. Our function as an umbrella group bringing together local and national groups working on radical and progressive agendas may end up being one of the most important roles played by the Guild in this alarming political moment. ■

bills. The Guild also teamed up with the *Academic Solidarity Network* to create a [fact sheet](#) on the federal "Unmasking Antifa" legislation introduced in 2018.

In 2018, allied organizations including the Center for Constitutional Rights, the Civil Liberties Defense Center, the Climate Defense Project, and others created the new coalition [Protect the Protest](#), a network of groups committed to challenging frivolous lawsuits against activists, journalists, and whistleblowers known as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP). NLG National joined this new coalition and Executive Director Pooja Gehi became part of the *Protect the Protest* steering committee. We recently wrote about the use of SLAPP suits and the increase in legislation hostile to environ-



## NLG WEBINARS!

As part of its educational programming, the NLG regularly holds webinars offering timely insight and analysis to hot button topics featuring NLG members and coalition partners.

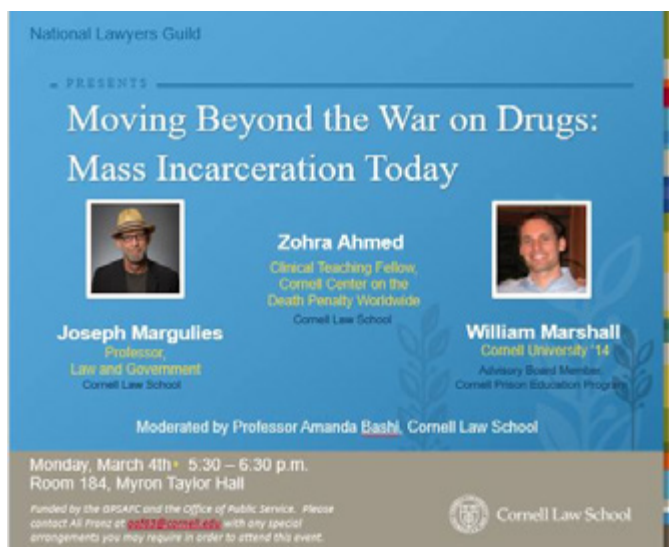
Watch them at [nlg.org/public-webinars!](http://nlg.org/public-webinars!)

# WEEK AGAINST MASS INCARCERATION 2019

In 2019, NLG law schools once again joined forces to put on events and activities for the annual Week Against Mass Incarceration (WAMI). Our student members organized panels, prison visits, workshops, tabling, and other creative ways to bring attention to the harmful effects of the prison industrial complex. This year's theme was **"Mass Incarceration and the War on Drugs"** and students highlighted the complex relationship between the exponential increase of incarcerated people and drug policy over the past four decades. Here are just a small sample of our law school members in action! And be sure to follow [facebook.com/NLGStudents/](https://facebook.com/NLGStudents/)!



St Thomas NLG students share resources and information on mass incarceration.



Cornell NLG hosted this panel discussion, "Moving Beyond the War on Drugs: Mass Incarceration today."



Santa Clara NLG hosted this panel discussion with their American Constitution Society Chapter: "CANNA-BUST: Who the green rush leaves behind"

(Right and Below)  
Washington  
College of Law  
NLG WAMI  
photobooth.

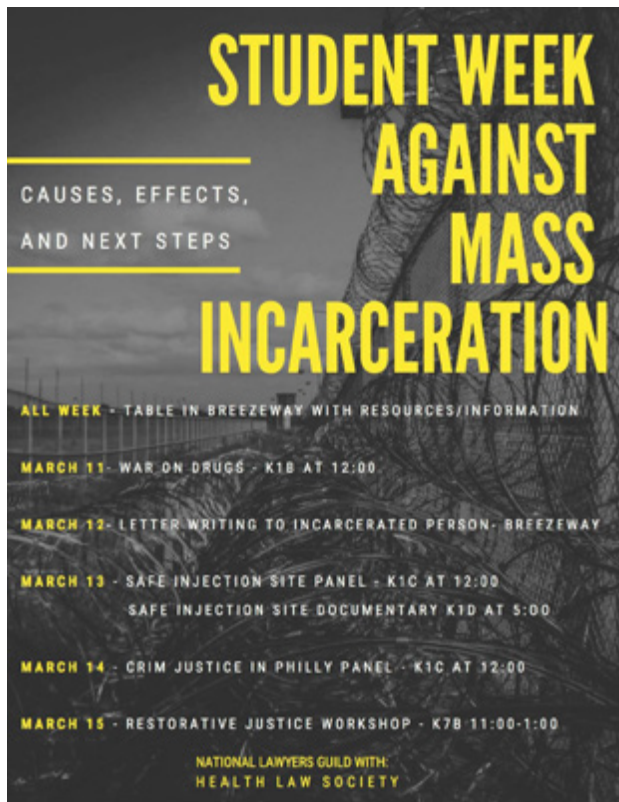


For WAMI, Membership  
Director Lisa Drapkin  
published,

**"What American Drug  
Culture Reveals about  
Race in the US."**

Read it at [nlg.org/blog/](https://nlg.org/blog/)!





Temple NLG's schedule of events for WAMI 2019.



University of Montana NLG hosted a discussion by attorney Moe Spencer, of Spencer Palace Law Office on marijuana and incarceration.

## ★ WAMI EVENTS: ★

**MONDAY MARCH 11 | 11:30AM-12:30PM | LAW 184**  
**LABOR ORGANIZING & MASS INCARCERATION**

Mark Warne from the Oregon AFL-CIO will discuss ways in which labor can organize around issues of incarceration. Specifically he will talk about former work around apprenticeship programs for incarcerated folks, the Ban the Box movement in Oregon, and discuss how these programs were successful & flawed.

**LAW 184 | 12:45-1:45PM**  
**CRITICAL RESISTANCE PORTLAND: ABOLITION NOW**

CR is a grassroots org building a national movement to abolish the prison industrial complex. Learn about shifting away from policing/imprisonment and instead moving towards things that create healthy, self-determined communities. CR publishes The Abolitionist newspaper which spreads news, art, and culture to thousands of prisoners nationwide.

Want to Subscribe? Bring a check. **Lunch Provide!**

**TUESDAY MARCH 12 | 12:00-2:00PM**  
**TABLING & PENPAL PAIRING**

NLG will be tabling throughout the week to collect clothing donations for SPONSORS Inc. Please bring lightly used business attire (Mens & Womens), Mens winter clothing, and new toiletries, socks, and underwear (mens, women, & kids). We will also be pairing folks with penpal profiles of incarcerated folks.

**WEDNESDAY MARCH 13 | 12:00-1:00PM | LAW 142**  
**CONVICTING KIDS: LASTING EFFECTS OF MEASURE 11**

Join OCAP for a conversation about Oregon's Measure 11 and the lasting implications it has on convicted youth. We will be joined by Trevor Walraven, a formerly incarcerated juvenile lifer, who cofounded the Oregon Youth Justice Project and Kimberly McCullough, policy director for the ACLU of Oregon. **Pizza Provided!**

**LAW 141 | 6:30-7:30PM**  
**SCREENING: "STREETFIGHTER IN THE COURTROOM"**

A documentary, produced by Roxanne Makasdjian, about NLG defense lawyer Charles Garry, who defended political activists including the Black Panthers, and Los Siete de la Raza. His methods made Garry one of the most-watched courtroom lawyers of his time. **Popcorn!**

**THURSDAY MARCH 14 | 12:00-1:00PM | LAW 184**  
**END MONEY BAIL: PORTLAND FREEDOM FUND**

The PFF is a small group of activists in Portland who assist in providing access to folks who have been burdened by the bail system. PFF advocates to end the cash bail system in Oregon while weakening its devastating effects on vulnerable populations. A 25 minute documentary on the bail system will be screened followed by an informational on how students can get involved in the work of PFF! **Lunch Provide!**

WAMI events organized by the University of Oregon NLG.

CHICAGO-KENT NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD

## WEEK AGAINST MASS INCARCERATION

MARCH 11 - MARCH 15, 2019

<b>MON</b> <b>3/11</b> <b>11 AM</b>	<b>COMBATING THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THE WAR ON DRUGS: CANNABIS LEGALIZATION IN ILLINOIS</b> State Representative Kelly Cassidy Hosted by Cannabis Law Society Room C20 - Lunch Provided
<b>MON</b> <b>3/11</b> <b>6PM</b>	<b>THE WAR ON DRUGS: BUILDING A JUST FUTURE</b> Speakers Maya and Keeley Schenwar, and film screening of "The House I Live In" Room 520 - Food Provided
<b>WED</b> <b>3/13</b> <b>10-4</b>	<b>BAKE SALE FOR CHICAGO RECOVERY ALLIANCE</b> All proceeds will benefit Chicago Recovery Alliance 3rd Floor Table outside Spak

Chicago-Kent NLG's schedule of events for WAMI 2019.



Univ. of North Carolina NLG distributed these rad buttons as prizes for WAMI events.

# IN 2019, #LAW4THEPEOPLE



*...returns to the South!*

Oct. 16-20 / Durham, NC

**5 DAYS • 6 MAJOR PANELS • 16 WORKSHOPS  
5 SOCIAL EVENTS • 500+ PARTICIPANTS...  
1 RAD CONVENTION**



**REGISTER AT EARLY BIRD RATES!**

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



NLG TUPOCC (The United People of Color Caucus) members at the 2018 #Law4thePeople Convention. Help legal activists of color get to the convention by donating to the TUPOCC travel stipend fund at [nlg.org/donate/tupoccestipends](http://nlg.org/donate/tupoccestipends)



# Honoring: **MACARTHUR JUSTICE CENTER LOUISIANA OFFICE**

Roderick & Solange  
**MacArthur  
Justice  
Center**

The Roderick & Solange MacArthur Center, Louisiana Office is receiving the **Law for the People Award** for their work defending protesters following the July 2016 police killing of Alton Sterling. In the lawsuits filed by the MacArthur Justice Center, a total of 14 Baton Rouge area residents arrested during the protests allege violations of their constitutional rights, physical injury and denial of necessary medical treatment while in jail— all experience ongoing trauma as a result of their unlawful arrest and brutal treatment by law enforcement officer. The lawsuits claim that several law enforcement agencies conspired as the protests began to stifle dissent against police misconduct against Black residents of the area.

## SHOW YOUR SUPPORT WITH A SPONSORSHIP!

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

Show your support for the Guild and reach thousands of lawyers, organizers and activists by becoming a sponsor!

As a sponsor, you can be seen by over 500 convention attendees as well as our online network of 100,000+ people through our social media, website and emails.

Sponsors will receive the benefits listed for each level. This year, ***all sponsorships include convention registrations and tickets to the Saturday night Awards Dinner!*** Sponsorships at the Resistance level and up also include tickets to the Friday Smash the Patriarchy Brunch and ad space in the #Law4thePeople Dinner Journal.

Dinner Journal ads are still available on their own, at [nlg.org/dinnerjournal](http://nlg.org/dinnerjournal).

Sponsorship Levels	
<b>Victory</b> \$7,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Convention Registrations</li> <li>8 Tickets each to Awards Dinner &amp; Brunch</li> <li>Full-page Dinner Journal ad (6"w x 9"h)</li> <li>Podium recognition at Awards Dinner</li> <li>Primary logo placement in select event media</li> <li>Social media mentions leading up to event</li> </ul>
<b>Liberation</b> \$5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 Convention Registrations</li> <li>6 Tickets each to Awards Dinner &amp; Brunch</li> <li>Half-page Dinner Journal ad (6"w x 4.5"h)</li> <li>Premier logo placement in select event media</li> </ul>
<b>Revolution</b> \$3,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Convention Registrations</li> <li>4 Tickets each to Awards Dinner &amp; Brunch</li> <li>Half-page Dinner Journal ad (6"w x 4.5"h)</li> <li>Preferred logo placement in select event media</li> </ul>
<b>Justice</b> \$1,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Convention Registrations</li> <li>2 Tickets each to Awards Dinner &amp; Brunch</li> <li>Quarter-page Dinner Journal ad (3"w x 4.5"h)</li> <li>Logo placement in select event media</li> </ul>
<b>Resistance</b> \$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Convention Registration</li> <li>1 Ticket each to Awards Dinner &amp; Brunch</li> <li>Eighth-page Dinner Journal ad (3"w x 2.25"h)</li> <li>Listing in select event media</li> </ul>
<b>Solidarity</b> \$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Convention Registration</li> <li>1 Ticket to Awards Dinner</li> <li>Listing in select event media</li> </ul>

# UCLA NLG Hosts Second Annual Liberation Lawyering Conference

By Sasha Novis, Student National Vice President & UCLA NLG

NLG law students from across Southern California hosted the second annual [Liberation Lawyering Conference](#) at UCLA School of Law on March 2, 2019. Entirely planned and run by students, the event encouraged conversation between attorneys, students, and non-attorney organizers, uplifting voices and topics not traditionally discussed in law school.

More than 200 law students, law professors, practicing attorneys, and community advocates and organizers came to the law school for the all-day program.

Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan, NLG Past President and a human rights attorney with LatinoJustice PRLDEF, opened the morning session with an inspiring speech about her own journey to becoming an attorney. Bannan encouraged the students of color in the room to join the legal profession despite the obstacles they may face and reminded attendees that, “there is no greater urgency than now. We need all of you to show up... to challenge unchecked power.”

Dr. Melina Abdullah, co-founder of the Black Lives



NLG LA Executive Director Kath Rogers (Left) with Liberation Lawyering Keynote Speaker and Co-Founder of the LA Black Lives Matter Chapter, Dr. Melina Abdullah.

Matter chapter in Los Angeles and a professor at California State University Los Angeles, offered the morning keynote address, which was co-sponsored by La Raza Law Students Association as part of their For People of Color Conference. Abdullah rallied students to

use their legal skills and passion to challenge fundamentally oppressive institutions and advocate unceasingly on behalf of Black and other marginalized communities.

Dr. Abdullah reminded the crowd that people and movements, not traditional organizations, are at the forefront of liberation movements. “I want you to think of yourselves as movement lawyers, engaged in the lifelong struggle for liberation that we will eventually win,” she said. “It is our sacred duty to work towards our freedom.” Dr. Abdullah thanked the NLG Los Angeles chapter, and in particular, its ED, Kath Rogers, UCLA NLG students show sex workers support at the SB233 photo booth.



for their tireless support of BLM activists like herself who have been arrested for their political actions.

Workshop sessions focused on affirmative action; self-determination for Puerto Rico; decriminalization of sex work; abolition of prisons and police; intersectional immigrants’ rights advocacy; animal rights; and achieving economic justice through worker-owned cooperatives. Kath Rogers and Addie Tinnel of the Los Angeles NLG Chapter offered a Legal Observer training to round out the day.

NLG students led by Jordan Palmer (UCLA Law Class of 2021) created a photobooth to show support for SB233, a California bill proposed by Senator Scott Wiener that would help protect sex workers from arrest. Organizers of the event include conference chair Sasha Novis ’19, NLG-UCLA co-chairs Stephano Medina ’20 and Rachel Pendleton ’20, as well as Erik Berner ’20, Ary Hansen ’21, Nicole Hansen ’21, Samantha Keng ’21, Loyola Law student Chris Kissel ’20, Tori Lew ’20, Lydia Nicholson ’21, Jordan Palmer ’21, Simon Sherred ’21, Ihaab Syed ’19 and Sara Yufa ’21. ■



## Pipeline Fight Update from Wisconsin

By Patricia (PK) Hammel, NLG Madison

Madison NLG attorney Patricia (PK) Hammel is currently representing seven landowners from Dane County, Wisconsin who sued Enbridge Energy to enforce a pollution insurance requirement the county put into Enbridge's conditional use permit. The landowners and county won in the state Court of Appeals and the Wisconsin Supreme Court took Enbridge's appeal. Oral arguments are set for March 26. Anishinabe/Ojibwe jingle dancers will be at the Capitol prior to the argument.

Enbridge has tripled the flow of Canadian tar sands oil through its ten year old Line 61 pipeline, which starts where Line 3 ends in Superior Wisconsin after crossing the Minnesota border.

In 2018 PK worked with NLG attorneys John Bachman

of Eau Claire Wisconsin and Ralph Hurvitz of Seattle to represent six water protectors who locked onto Enbridge's Line 3 construction in northwestern Wisconsin. Most of the defendants, including members of the Ojibwe, Navajo and Dakota nations were convicted following two jury trials in Douglas County. The judges refused to allow a coercion defense (Wisconsin has no "necessity" defense) or a University of Wisconsin climate expert to testify. Two defendants were ordered to pay over \$40,000 of "restitution" to Enbridge for halting construction on four days in 2017.

PK and Ralph met in Bismarck, ND. in December 2016 as members of the Water Protector Legal Collective, and John defended people arrested at the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis in 2008. ■

## New and Improved NLG Members-Only Job Board!

Our members-only job board now allows users to search employment opportunities by location, job type, and more!

Login to [nlg.org](http://nlg.org) login with your credentials and go to [nlg.org/job-board](http://nlg.org/job-board) to view social justice-based job openings shared by fellow NLG members for fellow attorneys, paralegals, organizers and legal workers.

Do you know of a job opportunity that'd be of interest to Guild members? Send job postings to [jobboard@nlg.org](mailto:jobboard@nlg.org)!

Keywords	Location	
States	SEO CivCRM Copy to a new draft	
Our Network	News Resources Events Members Only	STORE My Account Donate
Labor and Employment Attorney Kaljarvi, Chezi, Newman & Fitch	Washington, DC	Full Time Posted 1 day ago
Labor Attorney Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld	Alameda, California	Full Time Posted 1 day ago
Operations Associate New York Transgender Advocacy Group (NYTAG)	New York, New York	Full Time Posted 2 weeks ago
TGNC/NB Community Organizer New York Transgender Advocacy Group (NYTAG)	New York, New York	Full Time Posted 2 weeks ago
Bilingual Helpline Associate Transgender Law Center	Oakland, California or New York, New York	Part Time Posted 2 weeks ago
Immigration Attorney for Black LGBTQ+ Migrant Project (BLMP) Transgender Law Center	Oakland, CA or New York City (remote may be considered)	Full Time Posted 2 weeks ago
Detention Staff Attorney Transgender Law Center	Oakland, CA or New York, New York	Full Time Posted 2 weeks ago
Legal Services Project Staff Attorney Transgender Law Center	Oakland, California or New York, New York	Full Time Posted 2 weeks ago

## LET'S BE FRIENDS!

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# NLG International Committee Announces New Hawaiian Kingdom Subcommittee

By Steve Laudig, Dr. Keanu Sai, Martha Schmidt, NLG Hawaiian Kingdom Subcommittee Co-Chairs

The Hawaiian Kingdom Subcommittee was established by the NLG International Committee in San Francisco during its annual retreat on March 3, 2019.

The Subcommittee has two projects for 2019. The first is to educate Committee and Guild members on the Hawaiian

Kingdom's status as an independent and sovereign State and the application of international humanitarian law and human rights law to the situation in the Hawaiian Islands. The second project is to plan and sponsor a Guild investigative delegation to the Hawaiian Islands to conduct fact-finding and report to the International Committee.

There is a common misconception that the Hawaiian Islands is U.S. territory as its political subdivision, the State of Hawai'i. The Hawaiian Islands is actually the territory of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

In *Larsen*, the Permanent Court of Arbitration recognized "that in the nineteenth century the Hawaiian Kingdom existed as an independent State recognized as such by the United States of America, the United Kingdom and various other States." The lack of any US congressional constitutional authority to non-treaty annexation of another country was noted in a [1988 memorandum](#) by the Office of Legal Counsel which questioned whether Congress was empowered to enact a domestic law annexing the Hawaiian State in 1898. Its author Douglas Kmiec cited constitutional scholar Westel Willoughby who had written: "The constitutionality of the annexation of Hawaii, by a simple legislative act, was strenuously contested at the time both in Congress and by the press. The right to annex by treaty was not denied, but it was denied that this might be done by a simple legislative act. ... Only by means of treaties, it was asserted, can the relations between States be governed, for a legislative act is necessarily without extraterritorial force—confined in its operation to the territory of the State by whose legislature it is enacted."

On February 25, 2018, Dr. Alfred M. deZayas, a United Nations Independent Expert, communicated

to State of Hawai'i judges stating: "I have come to understand that the lawful political status of the Hawaiian Islands is that of a sovereign nation-state in continuity; but a nation-state that is under a strange form of occupation by the United States resulting from an illegal military occupation and a fraudulent annexation. As such, international laws (the Hague and Geneva Conventions) require that governance and legal matters within the oc-

cupied territory of the Hawaiian Islands must be administered by the application of the laws of the occupied state (in this case, the Hawaiian Kingdom), not the domestic laws of the occupier (the United States)."

The Hawaiian Kingdom

Subcommittee provides legal support to the movement demanding that the US, as the occupier, comply with international humanitarian and human rights law within Hawaiian Kingdom territory, the occupied. This support includes organizing delegations and working with the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and NGOs addressing US violations of international law and the rights of Hawaiian nationals and other Protected Persons.

A historical and legal overview of the Hawaiian Kingdom situation appears in the following: the [Larsen v. Hawaiian Kingdom](#) arbitration at the Permanent Court of Arbitration case review; a [communication](#) to State of Hawai'i judges from United Nations Independent Expert, Dr. Alfred deZayas; Dr. Sai's [three articles](#) on the Hawaiian Kingdom published by the National Education Association; and, Professor Matthew Craven's [legal brief](#) on Hawaiian Kingdom continuity under international law cited by Judge James Crawford in his *The Creation of States in International Law* (2d ed.). Read more at [hawaiiankingdom.org/blog](http://hawaiiankingdom.org/blog).

Contact the co-chairs of the Hawaiian Kingdom Subcommittee of the NLG International Committee at [hawaiiankingdom@nlginternational.org](mailto:hawaiiankingdom@nlginternational.org) ■



Front page of the *San Francisco Call*, September 30, 1897.



# NLG Delegation to Tijuana Releases Report Documenting Human Rights Violations of Asylum Seekers

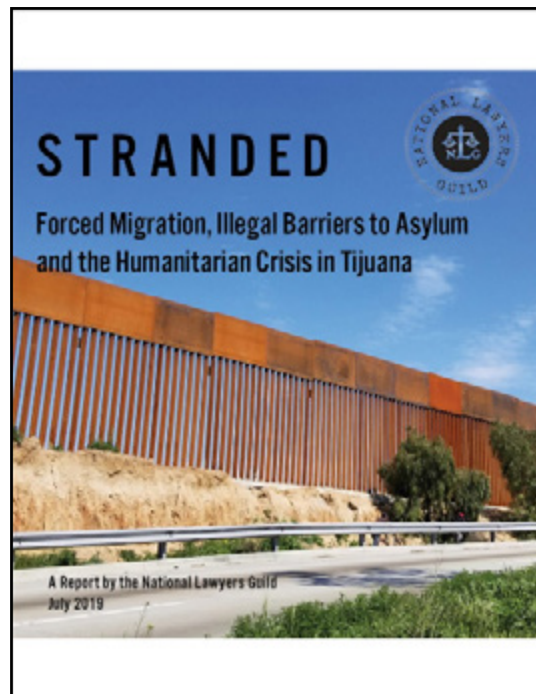
By Tasha Moro and Judy Somberg

The NLG has released the report, [\*Stranded: Forced Migration, Illegal Barriers to Asylum, and the Humanitarian Crisis in Tijuana\*](#), documenting human rights abuses of migrants observed during a March 2019 NLG International Committee fact-finding delegation. The team traveled to Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego, California with the aim of investigating and illuminating the injustices and human rights violations confronting asylum-seekers and their advocates in Tijuana. Read the [full report here](#).

NLG members and national office staff joined long-term, on-the-ground NLG volunteers for the week-long delegation. The team met with lawyers and activists working with migrants as well as governmental and nongovernmental human rights organizations, Mexican police, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), local and international humanitarian aid organizations, and migrants themselves. The main findings of the report are as follows:

1. President Trump applies a racist perspective to US immigration policy and has ramped up barriers to migration to create a humanitarian crisis at the border;
2. The barriers to asylum, including the so-called “metering” system and the “Remain in Mexico” policy, misleadingly named, “Migrant Protection Protocols” (MPP), are illegal and exposes asylum-seekers to life-threatening conditions;
3. The governments of the United States and Mexico are neglecting their respective obligations under domestic and international law to respect the human rights of asylum-seekers;
4. Anti-immigrant sentiment in Mexico has resulted in harassment and violence towards migrants in Tijuana by Mexican authorities and residents;
5. Vulnerable populations, such as unaccompanied children and LGBTQ+ individuals, are especially at risk, and are not being afforded the rights to which they are entitled under international law; and
6. The U.S. and Mexican governments have criminalized migrants and those who are aiding them or documenting their plight, using illegal surveillance and other tactics.

Since March, the situation has worsened significantly. The asylum-seekers list in Tijuana is currently the longest it's ever been, with 9,150 people waiting to present themselves for asylum according to Al Otro Lado, a bi-national legal services organization the NLG has



Download the full NLG report on the humanitarian crisis at the Southern Border at [nlg.org](http://nlg.org).

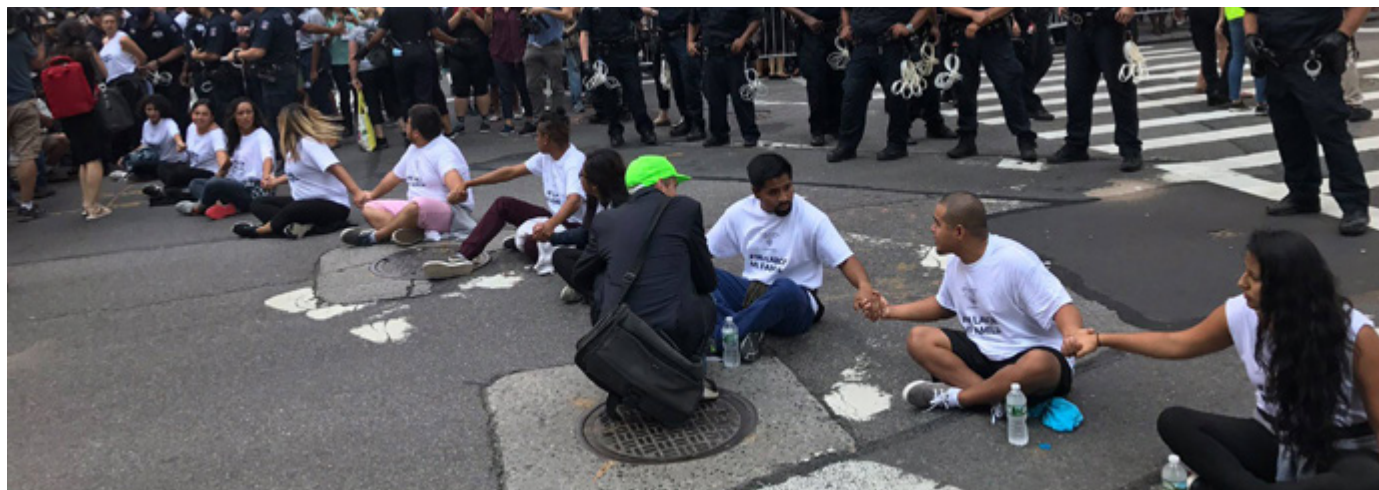
been working with. MPP has been expanded along the border to the most dangerous states of Mexico. In the US, ICE raids started July 14, targeting 11 cities with large migrant populations. The NLG is working with organizations like United We Dream to connect migrants to pro bono representation.

At the 2019 #Law4thePeople Convention this October in Durham, NC, the delegation will hold a workshop with representatives from some of the groups it met with to discuss ongoing barriers to the legal right to asylum, efforts of migrants organizing in resistance and survival, and state-sponsored criminalization and surveillance of human rights defenders. ■



Numbers assigned to asylum seekers waiting to present are announced verbally and posted to the wall at El Chaparral plaza by the migrants themselves.

# On The Ground Running: Broadening the Scope of NLG Trainings



An NLG-NYC Legal Observer documents the arrests of Movimiento Cosecha members outside Trump Tower in NYC following the announcement of the DACA repeal on Sept. 5, 2017. (Photo courtesy of Movimiento Coshecha)

## By Andy Izenzon, NLG-NYC Chapter President

This January, the NYC chapter of the NLG hosted its second day-long protest support training for legal and activist communities, “On the Ground Running: Protest Support in the Streets and in the Courts.” As last year’s chapter VP, and current President, I am passionate about collaborating with Executive Director and comrade Susan Howard to organize widely-available trainings for NLG members and non-members alike.

The morning had two tracks of standard NLG programming. The legal track included Legal Observer and arraignment training to expand the volunteer pool for legal support at demonstrations and for arrestees: the larger that pool, the more sustainable our work. The activist track included court support training for non-lawyers in navigating the court system and supporting arrestees, and basic street first aid by a member of NYC Action Medical. Protestors face dangers from increasingly militarized police forces and emboldened alt-right counterprotestors, which makes practical training a crucial component of the mutual aid that makes up our movement.

The afternoon programming contained three plenary sessions developed just for this event: ICEWatch, information security, and trauma first aid.

ICEWatch discussed applying Legal Observer program principles to a new human rights threat: ICE officers entering civil and criminal courts to arrest, detain, and deport community members appearing for unrelated court dates. I am thrilled to support Guild members in adapting existing tools to meet new challenges, and grateful for the expertise of our cofacilitators from Resistencia Legal and the Anti-Violence Project.

Information security is a common concern among activists. Our facilitator from Palante Technology spoke from a harm reduction perspective, helping us recognize

that the technologies we use daily are powerful tools for both organizing *and* surveillance. They helped us understand risk, strategy, and the tools available to meet different needs. Especially with intergenerational activist groups, this kind of work serves as a crucial equalizer.

Finally, a facilitator from the Gender and Sexuality Therapy Collective led a trauma first aid workshop. Trauma is rarely addressed in activism and the legal field, yet I know first-hand that protest arrests and even brief interactions with the prison system can be traumatic. Many Legal Observers suffer from vicarious trauma, and failing to understand how to help each other heal is a weakness in our movement.

We learned about the basic mechanisms of trauma: how traumatic events function in a nervous system, how they affect the body and mind, and how to distinguish between traumatic and non-traumatic responses. We learned how to identify traumatic activation in our comrades and in ourselves, and practiced tools for de-escalating our own and each other’s stress and trigger levels.

I have never seen any organization commit to trauma competence the way I believe we must if we want to succeed. Moving through the world in a marginalized body – one that is Black, brown, or indigenous; that is disabled; that is queer, trans, or read as feminine; or on the business end of any of the other axes of oppression that make up the systems of violence we struggle against – is inherently traumatic, and in seeking to liberate ourselves from the cycles of that violence, we must begin by learning how to be kind to each other, and ourselves, around the hurt that they have dealt us already. Only then can we move forward together into a more healed world.

I encourage other chapters to hold trainings that consider a wider range of support than only Legal Observer training; particularly trauma competence and sensitivity for all facets of our work—in the streets, in the courts, and everywhere else. ■



# NLG-NYC's Michael Steven Smith's New Book Profiles NLG Members in *Lawyers for the Left*

This interview was originally published in the [Independent](#), May 24, under the title "[Who You Going To Call?: Movement Lawyers Testify in Michael Steven Smith's New Book](#)"

By Dean Patterson

Activists know that by disobeying the law, they bring the spotlight to their cause, gum up the legal machine and show grit to their comrades. But what happens when a pernicious government decides to prosecute them beyond a simple slap on the wrist... or to illegally tap their phones? That's where movement lawyers come in.

For over 40 years, Michael Steven Smith has been representing left-wing causes in the courtroom, from defending political prisoners in 1960s Detroit to bringing charges against shipping companies on behalf of indigent sailors to taking cases on behalf of the poor in Jamaica, Queens.

The *Independent* spoke with Smith about his new book, *Lawyers for the Left*, in which he takes a step back to view movement lawyers from the perspective of a historian. This conversation has been lightly edited for concision and clarity.

*Why did you write Lawyers for the Left?*

Lawyers for the Left has interviews with a number of significant lawyers who were my contemporaries, mostly '60s radicals. I hope it will inspire and instruct people.

This is my sixth book. I have a radio show on WBAI, which I started with Michael Ratner and Heidi Boghosian in 2004. We are on 119 other stations nationwide and on the internet at [lawanddisorder.org](http://lawanddisorder.org).

*One of your longer profiles is of Bill Schaap and the work of Covert Action Quarterly, which exposed CIA agents and the crimes of American spies overseas. What does the magazine, revived last year as CovertAction, have to say about our current surveillance state?*

*Covert Action Quarterly* was started by Bill Schaap, Ellen Ray and Louis Wolf to expose the crimes of the CIA. They were ultimately shut down by a libel lawsuit from the Reagan administration. Subsequently, Congress passed the Identity Agents Act, which criminalized the exposure of CIA agents. What Schaap and the others did was not illegal. They used public sources to expose who CIA agents were — mostly out of American embassies abroad — because they were facilitating the overthrow of democratic governments.

This applies to Julian Assange too, because he is a truth-teller in the modern age. He published what Chelsea Manning gave him from the Iraq War logs. Manning had been to several establishment outlets who refused to publish it, so she then went to Assange.

*As a socialist lawyer, how do you define the law?*

Liberals view law as a set of rules to resolve differences

between people or between people and the government, but William Kunstler said that the law is in fundamental essence nothing but a method of control determined by a socio-economic system set on perpetuating itself by all means necessary for as long as possible.

That's an accurate view of the law with one exception: The powers that be cannot rule by repression alone. It's untidy and expensive. You can't have six cops on every corner, so they rule by certain mythologies, like all men are created equal, and they hold out certain promises, like you can make change if you abide by the law, so that people stay within certain bounds and govern themselves. All men are created equal is a myth. You are not equal to Donald Trump, Jr. Equal opportunity is a myth. Real wages are declining. Most people live from hand to mouth. There's no free education to speak of, no health care, no housing, no right to a job. That would be changed by a massive social movement and opposed by the powers that be. History comes from that struggle between classes.

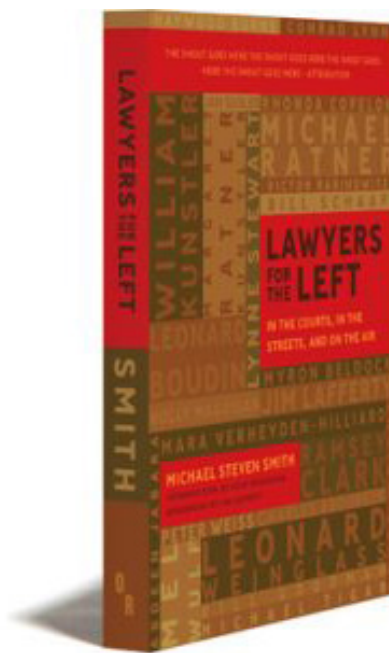
*There's a lot of anxiety about the right-wing majority on the Supreme Court these days. How do we exert social pressure on the justices?*

The Supreme Court needs legitimacy. It needs people to believe that they'll be fair and just. This current Supreme Court is way behind popular sentiment. They're poised to outlaw the right to abortion, which was won by struggle 50 years ago. I think what might restrain them is their vast unpopularity.

*What are conditions like for social-movement lawyers these days?*

The three most crucial causes we face are the threat of nuclear war, the decline of democracy and rule of law, and the threat of ecocide and vast environmental catastrophe due to human-caused climate change.

The movement today has to be very wary. The government is infiltrating mosques, they're labeling Black Lives Matter an extremist organization and attempting to prevent them from exposing police brutality and murder. As the struggle heats up, and it is heating up, I think we'll see more secret police attempts to subvert socialist, black nationalist and Muslim organizations.



# Labor & Employment Committee Launches Training Program for Immigrant Workers

By Setareh Ghandehari and Henry Willis, NLG Labor and Employment Committee

As part of its overall war against immigrants and immigrants' rights, the Trump Administration has attempted to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for people from various countries, including Haiti, El Salvador, Nepal, Sudan, Honduras, and Nicaragua while the conditions that lead to the TPS designation persist. Working Families United (WFU), a coalition of unions including UNITE HERE, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, the Ironworkers, the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, The United Food and Commercial Workers, the Teamsters, and the Laborers International Union of North America, has organized to save TPS and protect their members.

WFU, members of the National TPS Alliance, and other advocates have been working hard on various fronts to protect TPS recipients. Including litigation, which led to an automatic extension until 2020 for many TPS recipients and legislative advocacy. Most recently, the coalition had a hard-fought win when the House passed the Dream and Promise Act. While the Act is not perfect, it would give DACA recipients, TPS recipients and DED recipients a pathway to citizenship. It's a step in the right direction, though it faces a significant hurdle passing in the Senate.

While the fight for a permanent solution continues, WFU wants to serve its members who are facing TPS re-

lated challenges now. WFU approached the Guild's Labor and Employment Committee last year for help:

- organizing clinics to assist TPS holders in finding alternate forms of immigration relief,
- training union and community organizers on preparing and responding to raids and audits from both labor and employment, and immigration angles so that organizers and lawyers can spot issues on both fronts, and
- developing up-to-date materials for both the clinics and the trainings.

With local partners we have already hosted clinics in Los Angeles, the DMV, and Long Island, NY; we are planning more for New Jersey, Orlando and Houston.

The next phase will be organizing a workplace raid training for worker advocates. We are looking now for Guild members (both labor and immigration lawyers and legal workers) who can help put on this training or are interested in joining a rapid response network, similar to the ones that the Guild, the ACLU and other immigrants' rights groups have organized in many communities.

If you are interested in working on this project contact Setareh Ghandehari at [nlglabor@gmail.com](mailto:nlglabor@gmail.com) or Henry Willis at [hmw@ssdslaw.com](mailto:hmw@ssdslaw.com). ■



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*From your experience dealing with government surveillance and subversion of the left, what advice would you give radical groups like Black Lives Matter or the Democratic Socialists of America?*

Be very wary of anyone who advocates or urges doing anything illegal. Following them is leading with your chin and it allows the government to put the onus of violence on us rather than on themselves, where it belongs. I'd be wary of anyone who is extremely dogmatic and sectarian, who is unkind and un-comradely to others in the organization. I'd be very wary of stories that are spread. I'd check out their sources. Make sure you're dealing with the truth and not just rumor mongering. And I'd deal in utmost transparency.

*Who stood out most of all the lawyers you spoke with in Lawyers For the Left?*

The people I talk about in my book are extraordinary, courageous figures like William Kunstler and Leonard Boudin. All 23 lawyers in the book are creative, bold, inventive, and courageous and had an impact.

Rhonda Copeland, working for the Center for Constitutional Rights, won the famous *Falartaga* case, which allowed for international torturers to be sued by

people that live in the United States. Lynne Stewart's defense of the "blind sheik," Abdul Rahman, was a demonstration of how everyone, even Dracula, is entitled to a lawyer.

*Any advice to young activist lawyers?*

My advice is to read *Lawyers for the Left*, and you'll get inspiration about what your predecessors have done. The motto of the National Lawyers Guild is that justice is a constant struggle and you'll have to pave your own way out there. You'll derive some courage and sustenance from knowing that there are people that have preceded you.

We're living through extraordinarily dire times. Donald Trump is a malignant symptom of the failure of capitalism to provide for a good way of life. There's the threat of climate change, nuclear catastrophe and the crushing of democracy. So I would advise activists or law students that that's what you should devote your time to. ■

*Lawyers for the Left by Michael Steven Smith is available at [orbooks.com](http://orbooks.com).*



# BEYOND BARS

## Voices of NLG Jailhouse Lawyers

### Announcing New Jailhouse Lawyer Rep & Call for Inside VP Candidates

Thank you for participating in the election among jailhouse lawyer members for a formerly incarcerated, “outside” representative to hold the position of co-Jailhouse Lawyer Vice President (JLVP) on the National Executive Committee (NEC). There were five very qualified nominees. We are thrilled to announce that the winner is Diana Covarrubias! Diana joins our board with over 20 years of law clerk experience and currently works with Justice Now, in Oakland, CA.

At Justice Now, Diana is the Legal Services Coordinator, where she provides direct client services and advocacy regarding human rights abuses in conditions of confinement, medical care (navigating the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation/CDCR medical system), and compassionate release. Having experience and knowledge of CDCR policies, procedures, and legal remedies, Diana follows the mission of Justice Now in serving the needs of marginalized incarcerated women and the LGBTQI+ community within CDCR. She promotes wellness, healing, and recovery from the abuses endured pre-incarceration, to the trauma of mass incarceration, and exploitation post-incarceration. Diana advocates for change in the women’s prison industrial complex. In San Francisco, she volunteers with Sister Circle Women’s Support Network, assisting system-impacted women. Diana is also continuing her education as a student at CCSF.

We are now accepting nominations for an “inside” Jailhouse Lawyer VP who will serve as the NEC co-chair. This person will maintain regular communication

with the outside chair and act as the voice for incarcerated members in our jailhouse lawyer membership program. This includes representing the interests of JHL members, and supporting involvement in NLG work when logistically feasible through centering the opinions and ideas of incarcerated members in *Guild Notes*.

To be considered a nominee, you need to be presently incarcerated, and will be so for at least another five (5) years at minimum.

Your submission should include the length of your incarceration sentence and why you wish take on this role, including an idea you think that the NLG can implement to improve the membership program. Submissions should be no longer than one 150 words, and can be sent to:

NLG, Attn: JHL Nominations  
132 Nassau St., #922  
New York, NY 10038

Please mail your submission to us by August 31, 2019

Thank you and please join us in welcoming Diana! We look forward to receiving your submissions!



Diana Covarrubias, newly elected “outside” Jailhouse Lawyer Vice President.

## JLI Law School Tour to Uplift Legal Work of Incarcerated People

By Jhody Polk

The [Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative \(JLI\)](#), hosted by the NLG, is excited to be launching the *Legal Empowerment is Abolition* law school tour in seven states starting in the fall of 2019 through spring 2020. JLI will be visiting law schools in Florida, New Orleans, Texas, Chicago, California, New York, and Washington, DC.

Panelists will include formerly incarcerated law clerks and jailhouse lawyers, movement lawyers, formerly incarcerated lawyers, community paralegals, and social justice advocates. Legal empowerment suggests that when people know the law, they can use it and shape it. The tour will nationally elevate the JLI’s mission to empower law clerks and jailhouse lawyers through and after incarceration and what the impact of supporting and strengthening those inside has on prisons and our communities outside. The tour will highlight law libraries, law clerks and jailhouse lawyers across

the country and the Participatory Defense movement—a community organizing tool dedicated to empowering families with incarcerated loved ones to successfully navigate the criminal justice system and impact the outcome of their loved ones case. We look forward to building strategic partnerships with law schools, lawyers, justice advocates and organizations that can bridge into law libraries throughout the United States. This will be the official public launch of JLI and the beginning of creating the third goal of JLI which is to create an advocacy network to support those inside as well as those returning to the community.

We have and continue to receive many emails and letters from law clerks and jailhouse lawyers in prisons all over the US. We are thoughtfully responding to each and sharing your voices with partners nationally. We are currently developing relationships that can lead to paralegal clinics in prisons throughout the US. The first phase of JLI was to connect with law clerks and jailhouse lawyers inside. We

*continued on following page*

## Beyond Bars: Voices of NLG Jailhouse Lawyers

JLI Law School Tour to Uplift Legal Work of Incarcerated People *continued*

apologize if we have not yet been able to respond to your letter! If you have written to JLI and not yet received a response, please know that we look forward to writing to you soon. If you are incarcerated in one of the above listed states hosting a law school tour, please write to us and let us know what topics you feel we should highlight in the tour relevant to access to law libraries, legal resources and training needs, as well as what opportunities you would like to see inside and after incarceration for law clerks and/or jailhouse lawyers.

We cannot build out the JLI without you. It has been very

inspirational to hear from and organize with you inside and we look forward to lifting one voice and collectively organizing to push back against mass incarceration through legal empowerment.

Jhody Polk  
jailhouselawyerinitiative@gmail.com  
Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative  
P.O. Box 2516  
Alachua, FL 32615

## America, You Exposed the Line

By Jason Geray  
Represa, CA

America, you exposed the line  
Back in my younger days your judges had their axes to grind,  
You promised us that justice was really blind,  
But that is not what we would find,  
You just saw me as someone who was born to do time,  
And yeah, I'm from California the Golden State,  
But you've sent me to prisons more times than I've made it  
across the Golden Gate  
Unless I'm riding on the prison bus,  
Your green dollars all say "In God We Trust,"  
But to you I'm worth about a hundred grand a year,  
And all the people that I know have all passed through here,  
It's just how you keep the system filled,  
But you can't break my spirit cuz it's so strong-willed,  
So I turn on my T.V. and stare at the screen,  
And it's a habitual liar named Trump,  
And he has big plans to build a wall,  
But unfortunately that's not all,  
He also wants to slit the families apart,  
And stop the brown people from a better life and a fresh

start,  
So I guess that the rumor is true,  
That the Brown and Blacks are not red, white, or blue,  
But I guess that's just America's plan,  
The rise of the Ku Klux Klan  
That's spread all the way from the back woods,  
And the secret meetings wearing white hoods,  
And elevating them to become the police, then the local  
judge,  
And even the mayor of the big city, and then  
A a department of corrections union member,  
Funneling a percentage of their pay,  
To keep the disadvantage people locked up all day,  
By paying politicians and telling them what to say,  
Like we're tough on crime,  
And then they pass a thousand laws at a time,  
And have no respect for our civil rights,  
So we are doing lifetimes of wasted days  
And wasted nights,  
But now I can clearly see through your soulless eyes,  
And your great American white lies,  
But I vow to stop you from suppressing my kind,  
Because yes America you exposed the line...

## Thrown to the Wolves

By Cecil G. Truman  
Craigsville, VA

[Editor's Note: The following story mentions suicide]

This is a true story about a kid we will call Max. I met Max a few weeks ago in Bible study. Upon speaking with Max, I could tell that his heart and mind were very young. At the age of 19 Max was sentenced to 40 years for what he was convicted of. Furthermore, Max was very young and even I could tell that Max was suffering from the pressures, trauma, and stress inflicted upon him from the unfair things in life—many of which he was powerless to prevent and were not a result of his choices.

Max suffered domestic abuse for God knows how long, killed a family member, and was condemned to pretty much the rest of his life in prison. All of these things thrown upon this young man are more than anyone would wish to bear. Max killed himself. In this heartless, cruel,

and inhumane criminal justice system, this young man was mercilessly condemned, his emotional and mental needs were ignored, and he was thrown in prison stripped of hope and justice. Anyone could see that this young man—barely older than a child—needed help processing the tragedies and suffering this life afflicted him with. Instead Max was thrown in prison. Max was a level 3 and they were raising his security to a level 4. It is truly a tragedy that Max would be in high security prisons and no care to his safety or mental and emotional state considered.

Please don't let Max be forgotten. He deserved a sentence that would have allowed for his rehabilitation. He deserved a life, but because of the heartless atrocities of the Commonwealth of Virginia he was given more than he could bear—more than any 19 year old kid should have to bear.

The prison system in Virginia does more than incarcerate people: it kills hope, deprives humans of dignity and justice, it is the enemy of truth and crushes the light of



Love (charity) at every opportunity, it promotes death in its practices, and in every way steals life from the human heart. It stole Max's life and has broken the hearts of his family and friends.

The Commonwealth of Virginia condemned Max to die and now the world is less without him. I am less without him. We are less without him.

The inhumanities of the sentencing practices combined with the neglect for the mental and emotional care of the human beings coming through these prisons is just too much. Our prisons have become an industry for profiting. The hearts and lives of the human beings incarcerated are ignored and the whole of our society suffers because of

it. We are enslaved, deprived of the basic care needed to promote healthy living and productive social growth. We are made to live in unsafe conditions, fed an improper diet conducive to mental and emotional development, and in all confined to hellish conditions. There is nothing about prisons that helps human beings become healthy and more productive citizens upon release. We need to really examine what is being done in our criminal justice system, and for the sake of society and the human condition, start progressing towards real change to heal the hearts and minds of so many of us suffering human hearts that the criminal justice system has labeled "criminal." ■

## 9 LIVES

By Joshua Garner aka Mujahid  
St. Petersburg, FL

This is a story about 9 lives that should be free,  
9 lives taken by the Commonwealth and the DOC,  
This system is corrupt, I know first-hand believe me,  
So listen to their story so now you can see

My big brother Hadi, strongest aqeedah I've ever known,  
He hustles candy so he can call his family on the phone,  
The courts gave him life and now he feels all alone,  
Inshallah keep up the fight, Allah will bring you home.

My other big brother Tariq, 100 years is what he got,  
They found him guilty of taking the life of a Philly cop,  
He's got a son and da daughter who loves him a lot,  
That's what he cries in sujood everytime he offers salat

My one homie Reg kept it real so they gave him the mandatory,  
He grew up a rough life with even a rougher story,  
A rat took the stand and told lies to his jury,  
He's an innocent man but the Judge still gave him 30.

My oldhead Chris got 60 years but he's already 41,  
He had 2 robbery convictions from when he was really young,  
He got convicted of his third, 3 strikes now he's done,  
Everywhere he goes, he carries a picture of his son.

My brother Thomas got 40 years for a string of robberies,  
He's trying to fight his appeal and ask Allah for what he needs,  
But the courts take all his money in fines and court fees,  
So how can he get a lawyer or even just pay for copies.

My oldhead Alamo's a lifer so he keeps the block tight,  
Still remember the day I felt like I was stabbed with a knife,  
He trashed the whole block after he hung up with his wife,  
Found out on the phone, someone took his daughter's life.

My big homie Country use to laugh till his face turned red,  
Got caught with some meth, 70 years is what the Judge said,  
He became depressed so he just ate and laid in bed,  
Ate himself into a heart attack, in his cell they found him dead.

My homie Vinny broke his back at work trying to pay his family's bills,  
So the doctors have him perks and a ton of oxy pills,  
Pills stopped working so he fell in love with how the dope feels,  
Can't support his family now, he killed his dealer and got wheels.

My man Andell, my boy since daycare and show-n-tell,  
I was on the streets when my homie first  
He couldn't afford a good lawyer, the courts said "Oh well",  
Public defender just pretended and they gave my boy an L.

These are just a few people that I want you to see,  
Where justice is never just and freedom is never free,  
I'mma make a real change, knowledge is the key,  
Someone needs to take a stand, that someone will be me.

[Dedicated to Ilyas Abdul-Hadi, Levon (Tariq) Warner,  
Reginald Carr, Christopher Moore, Donald Thomas, Luis  
Alamo, Mark (County) Lewis, Vince McCarthy, & Andell  
Benelli]

**"Beyond Bars" Submission Guidelines & Instructions: Send us your writing, artwork, or poetry!** Submissions must relate to the issue of prison, prisoners' rights, or mass incarceration in some way. While we will not publish writing detailing the writer's own legal case, drawing upon personal experience as an illustration of a broader topic is encouraged. Hand-written submissions must be printed clearly and sent to: Guild Notes Submissions, 132 Nassau St. Rm 922, New York, NY 10038. Writings submitted via email may be sent to [communications@nlg.org](mailto:communications@nlg.org) with the subject line: "Guild Notes Submission." Articles have a limit of 600 words. Always include a suggested title for your writing or artwork. Submissions may be written anonymously, or under a pseudonym. In addition to publication in *Guild Notes*, submissions may be considered for online publication (e.g. NLG blog, social media). While all submissions will be considered for publication, there is no guarantee of publication. Articles may be edited for grammatical accuracy and readability, but no substantive changes to content will be made. Anyone in prison, regardless of NLG membership status, may submit writing and/or artwork for publication consideration. NOTE: In response to our rapidly growing jailhouse lawyer membership, and in addition to articles and artwork by people in prison, we are expanding *Beyond Bars* to also include pieces by other NLG members that are specifically geared toward the needs of folks on the inside (e.g. strategies to bring litigation against prisons, or stories of solidarity and survival).

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