

# Guild Notes

Published by the NLG Foundation

Volume 45, 2020



## Inside this issue:

- Coverage from this Summer's Uprising for Black Lives
- 2020 Digital #Law4thePeople Convention Round-Up
- Artwork and Poetry by Jailhouse Lawyers
- Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative Calls for Submissions
- ...and much more!

# IN THIS ISSUE

President's Column.....	3
Pooja Gehi Transitioning from NLG Executive Director to Member .....	3
NLG Statement on COVID-19: Solidarity in Times of Crisis.....	4
Statement of Support for Legal Observers Targeted & Brutalized by Police .....	5
Resources for Resisting Federal Repression .....	5
NLG Welcomes Mass Defense Director Tyler Crawford.....	6
CA Central Valley NLG Use Guild Grants to Air Spanish Know-Your-Rights Radio Spots .....	6
NLG Condemns Violent Police Response to Black Lives Matter Protests Nationwide .....	7
NLG-Chicago Legal Observers: Ready at the Drop of a (Neon Green) Hat.....	8
NLG Statement In Support of #8ToAbolition.....	9
DisOrientation Webinar Recordings .....	9
NLG-PDX Chapter Statement on Federal Troops in Portland.....	10
NLG 2020 #Law4thePeople Convention Roundup	
NLG National Office Staff: Reflection and Thank You.....	11
Keynote and Awardees .....	12-13
NLG 2020 Voting Results.....	13-14
NLG MN Condemns MPD For Mass Arrest of 100s in Election Protest, Incl Minors .....	14
Power to the People! NLG Responds to 2020 US Presidential Election Results.....	14
Remembering Beloved NLG Member, Karen Weill.....	15
In Memoriam: Jeffrey (Jeff) Goldstein.....	16
In Memoriam: Henry (Hank) di Suvero, Past NLG President & People's College of Law Founder.....	17-18
Announcing the NLG Foundation Guild Grants Recipients.....	18
<i>Beyond Bars: Voices of NLG Jailhouse Lawyers</i>	
Prosecutors Must Be Held Accountable for Their Misconduct.....	19
Poem: See The Light.....	20
Poem: Fighting a Foreign War .....	20
Artwork: Untitled .....	20
My Revolutionary Resurrection.....	21
Technology Nonprofit Ameelio Offers Free Communications Alternatives to Connect with People in Prison.....	21
Legal Empowerment Toolkit Series: A Project of the Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative.....	22
Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative: Narrative Project Call for Submissions .....	23
Unlock the Bar: A New York Social Movement .....	23

*Guild Notes* is published bianually by:  
National Lawyers Guild Foundation  
PO Box 1266  
New York, NY 10009

To subscribe to *Guild Notes*: Contact [communications@nlg.org](mailto:communications@nlg.org). One year subscription for non-member individuals: \$50. One year subscription for institutions: \$75. *NLG members receive digital or print copies of Guild Notes at no extra cost.*

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.

*Cover Art: Memorial in Portland, OR for George Floyd and all Black, Indigenous and other people of color lost to racist police violence. (Photo: Tasha Moro)*

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

Deadline for the next issue:  
**Monday, March 22, 2021**

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.

## National Office Staff

Director of Education and Research: Traci Yoder - [traci@nlg.org](mailto:traci@nlg.org)  
Director of Communications: Tasha Moro - [communications@nlg.org](mailto:communications@nlg.org)  
Director of Membership: Lisa Drapkin - [membership@nlg.org](mailto:membership@nlg.org)  
NLG Foundation Managing Director: Daniel McGee - [nlgfoundation@nlg.org](mailto:nlgfoundation@nlg.org)  
Director of Operations: Kimmie David - [officemanager@nlg.org](mailto:officemanager@nlg.org)  
Director of Mass Defense: Tyler Crawford - [tyler@nlg.org](mailto:tyler@nlg.org)  
Program Assistant: Charlie Blodnieks - [charlie@nlg.org](mailto:charlie@nlg.org)

**Editor's Note:** Due to circumstances outside of our control, including the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this issue of Guild Notes is a double issue for the entirety of 2020. We will resume our regular biannual publication schedule starting in 2021. Thank you for your understanding!

## President's Column

*NLG President Elena Cohen gave the following address at the start of the 2020 #Law4thePeople Convention. Read more about this year's 2020 #Law4thePeople Convention starting on page 11.*

Dear Guild Members and Allies,

This year has been extraordinarily difficult. The dual pandemics of COVID-19 and state-sponsored murders and violence against Black people have shown us that we can- we must- radically rethink the racist capitalist structures that have brought these pandemics to the fore. None of us can opt out of anti-racist solidarity and movement building. Support for building an actual social and economic safety net that includes universal public health, fixed basic income, dignified housing for everyone, guaranteed pensions and collective welfare must be robust and accessible to all. Climate disaster is an integral part of all our lives now and we must all honestly engage with our individual and collective relationships to the Earth and the role we play in her existence.

This is why we are here. Because the Guild always shows up when injustice is rampant and has been a pivotal part of social justice struggles for 83 years. The other world that is being breathed into existence in Louisville, Portland, Minneapolis, Chicago and in all of our communities is here. It is arriving. And the National Lawyers Guild will be here to support this other world and fight back against the rise of global fascism and its white supremacist, nationalist covers to perpetuate the police state and justify the murders and disappearances of citizens.

I am reminded now of all those who came before us. While they couldn't finish the work of creating the

liberatory world in which they wanted to live, as we may not be able to, neither can we desist from engaging in it. There are no better examples of this than our honorees at this year's convention. This year we are honoring Dr. Angela Davis, Michael Wishnie, Jodi Hill, Jeanne Mirer, and the UndocuBlack Network in the memory of Arthur Kinoy, Carol Weiss King, C.B. King, Ernie Goodman, and Daniel Levy. We also honor Sara Kershner with the 2020 Legal Worker Award, as part of our recognition that radical legal change is accomplished through the tireless work and dedication of non-attorneys.

This work is not achieved in one night, in one convention, or in one lifetime. We can, and should, sit with this point when the world seems the darkest and change seems most out of reach. While the arc of the moral universe may be long and bends towards justice, it also takes devastating and demoralizing twists and turns along the way. Yet as 83 years have shown us, we are in this for the long haul, and we will persevere. And while this journey of collective struggle for freedom for all may feel heavy with the tremendous weight of the fate of our loved ones and of the world that rests upon it, we also find moments for celebration. Let this convention, and our time together, be in service of the transformations we all seek and the moments for joy and for hope that allow us to continue. Welcome.

Elena L. Cohen, NLG President

## Pooja Gehi Transitions from NLG Executive Director to Member

*The following statement was originally published to [nlg.org](https://nlg.org) on December 3, 2020*

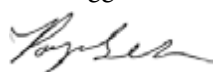
I am writing to share that after five years as Executive Director of the NLG, I have stepped down to focus on my writing and lawyering for social justice.

It has been an honor and privilege to lead the NLG in our ongoing work to unite lawyers, law students, legal workers, and jailhouse lawyers in service of people and the planet, not profit. In the last five years, we have quadrupled our membership and increased our budget, with over \$1 million in new donations just in the last six months. We have committed to prison abolition, and furthered our existing commitment to Palestinian solidarity and the Boycott, Divest, & Sanction (BDS) movement. We have supported water protectors in Standing Rock and Black Lives Matter protesters around the country.

We have educated our members and the public about bail funds, refugee caravans, and criminalization related to COVID-19.

While leaving this position is not easy, it feels good to know that the NLG is now stronger than I found it. I appreciate the NLG and have every confidence that NLG board, staff, and members will continue to lead and build in ways the world needs in coming years. I look forward to aiding the transition process and participating as an NLG member.

In struggle and solidarity,



Pooja Gehi



# NLG Statement on COVID-19: Solidarity in Times of Crisis

*The following was originally published to [nlg.org](https://nlg.org) on March 18, 2020.*

The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) is committed to building collective power and solidarity during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the spirit of our mission of valuing human rights and the rights of ecosystems over property interests: “We must lift coercive economic sanctions, prioritize mutual aid, ensure access to quality health care for all, and secure protections for houseless people, disabled people, prisoners, immigrants in detention, and low wage workers,” says NLG president Elena Cohen.

The NLG National Office staff is taking necessary steps to keep ourselves and our communities safe, including working from home. We recognize this and the ability to “self-isolate” are tremendous privileges, and we remain dedicated to using those privileges to further our mandate of using the law for the people.

In times of global crisis, the interconnectedness of our struggles is laid bare. We urge our members to remain engaged to the extent possible with their NLG chapters’ and committees’ email lists and other forums as we build strategies and tactics to support each other during this time. However, without access to our physical office, we must temporarily suspend our postal mailing operations, impeding our ability to communicate with our incarcerated jailhouse lawyer members who mostly rely on postal mail for connection with the outside world. That’s why efforts like that of Baltimore IWOC to establish [a nationwide hotline for prisoners](#) who may be experiencing COVID-19 symptoms are so important.

Knowing the myriad harms of our governments and the capitalist system, it is heartening to see so many people acting in solidarity with their neighbors near and far during the crisis. [Mutual aid networks](#) are emerging across the world, and [this comprehensive list](#) by the Anarchist Agency and activist and author Cindy Milstein details efforts in the US.

As former NLG Executive Director Pooja Gehi states, “The NLG has always known that we cannot rely on state and corporate structures to support our most vulnerable communities. During this global crisis, we are carefully monitoring the expanded role of the military, police, and other forms of state power and how it is increasing surveillance, violence, and repression in the name of national security and public health. This is a moment when it is critical to release incarcerated and detained people and to show solidarity with the people most marginalized in government response.” Let’s take care of each other.

In solidarity,  
NLG National Office

*Below are some responses to the COVID-19 pandemic by NLG committees that illustrate the intersectionality of our struggles and our work:*

**[Labor and Employment Committee:](#)** “Working people across our country are in dire need of protections from COVID-19. Even before this crisis, working people were laboring on the edge of poverty, working subminimum wages with no protections in case of emergency. Now, a true emergency is upon us and we need the government to act fast to pass legislation granting paid sick leave to all employees, expanded unemployment insurance, and strong protections for frontline health care workers, among so many more interventions. We are in solidarity with those on the front lines working around the clock to keep us healthy, ensure our public transportation is running, care for our children, stock the shelves at our grocery stores and pharmacies, deliver our mail and work overtime at warehouses, fulfillment centers and factories producing essential consumer products and completing online orders. Thank you for your work.” Sarah David Heydemann, Representative to the National Executive Committee

**[Prison Legal Advocacy Network:](#)** “It is deplorable that many prison systems have suspended legal visits at the very moment that prisoners arguably need access to legal counsel the most, as with the [Federal Bureau of Prisons’ \(FBOP\) 30-day suspension](#). FBOP is notorious for depriving prisoners of auditory confidentiality during legal calls, and attorneys should not need to argue for special exceptions in order to engage in confidential in-person communications with their clients. While pre-trial detainees’ trials are being suspended, health services are reportedly inadequate, and prisoners are being forced to live and work in conditions that are inconsistent with CDC COVID-19 guidelines.” —Stanley Holdorf, PLAN Supervising Attorney

**[Disability Justice Committee:](#)** “The needs of disabled people should be centered in all COVID-19 planning as we are at high risk of complications. Responses should include releasing people at high risk of complications from jails, prisons, and detention centers; protecting disabled people’s access to healthcare (including COVID-19 treatment); and making sure employment remains accessible to disabled employees. Disability justice principles like interdependence, leadership of the most impacted, and commitment to cross-movement organizing can help us to identify how we should move forward. While disabled people are more vulnerable to COVID-19, we also have wisdom and skills that make us uniquely prepared for the challenges we are facing right now.” —Katie Tastrom, former Chair

**[Housing and Homelessness Committee:](#)** “The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the crisis of housing and homelessness in the US, compounding this public health emergency and threatening to cause thousands of unnecessary deaths. This is a crisis of public health,

and the only way to solve it is to recognize that all people have the right to decent, affordable housing. Increasingly, the homeless are taking matters into their own hands by defending encampments, resisting police sweeps, and defying laws restricting the providing of food to the hungry.” —Sarah White and Anthony Prince, Chairs

**International Committee:** “The COVID-19 pandemic requires a response grounded in principles of international solidarity and cooperation that prioritize people’s access to basic human rights, particularly healthcare. The hegemony of neoliberal economic policies has siphoned money from public coffers and people’s pockets into the banks of corporate bosses in the current monopoly capitalist system. Further, the US Government’s use of sanctions or unilateral coercive measures against countries whose

governments it opposes must be lifted so that gravely needed medical supplies, food, water, and other basic necessities can reach those in need of care and recovery. Migrants and refugees who are fleeing war, poverty, and climate disasters must be provided for instead of continually criminalized and neglected. In this time of crisis and uncertainty, governments must share resources, not hoard them. The international community must be vigilant against any attempts by governments to take advantage of this vulnerable situation to consolidate power. For people to confidently practice social distancing and self-quarantine to slow the spread of COVID-19, they must be assured affordable housing and transportation, food and job security, and financial stability.” — Jackelyn Mariano, Suzanne Adely, and Jeanne Mirer, Co-Chairs

## Statement of Support for Legal Observers Targeted & Brutalized by Police

The following was originally published to [nlg.org](http://nlg.org) on June 16, 2020.

The Mass Defense Committee (MDC) Steering Committee and NLG National Office have been concerned about an increasing number of reports of police targeting Legal Observers (LOs) in a variety of ways, either with chemical or projectile weapons, physical force and brutality, or arrest and/or questioning. We strongly condemn these actions against any LO and against any participant in the movement for Black lives. The NLG recognizes the brunt of police violence is aimed at Black, Brown, Trans, gender non-conforming people, and that police killing people is a public health pandemic.

We also want to take this moment to let all MDC members and LO volunteers know that we stand in solidarity with you and are here to help and support whenever the police target you in any way. We know that donning our neon green and being clearly marked with “Legal Observer” is both a crucial way of supporting movements in the streets and an easy way to be targeted by the forces that seek to maintain the status quo. This support might look like working with your local chapters to help you figure out your

options for dealing with legal, physical health, or mental health needs after surviving police harassment or brutality. It might look like the MDC issuing more public statements decrying police violence and the targeting of LOs. It might look like adapting our mass defense resources to better support LOs in this constantly evolving political moment. It might look like things we have never done before that this political moment calls for.

We want to be in continual communication with all our members and volunteers so we can best help every NLG effort be an effective part of supporting movements for liberation. Please reach out to Tyler Crawford, Director of Mass Defense, at [massdef@nlg.org](mailto:massdef@nlg.org) if you need any support. Chapter leaders and LO coordinators should also reach out as needed, as no one needs to be alone in responding to police violence.

We also wanted to highlight a few of the many resources we have found helpful for addressing the trauma that the police inflict on those who dare to take the streets and struggle for liberation (see resources at link above).

In solidarity,  
MDC Steering Committee and NLG National Office

## Resources for Resisting Federal Repression

Since June of 2020, activists have been subjected to an increasingly aggressive crackdown on protests by federal law enforcement. The federal response to the movement for Black Lives has included federal criminal charges for activists, door knocks by federal law enforcement agents, and increased use of federal troops to violently police protests.

The NLG National Office has released this resource page for activists who are resisting federal repression. It includes a link to our emergency hotline numbers, as well as our library of Know-Your-Rights materials, our recent federal repression webinar, and a list of some of our recommended resources for activists. We will continue to update the page: [nlg.org/FederalRepressionResources](http://nlg.org/FederalRepressionResources).



# NLG Welcomes Mass Defense Director Tyler Crawford

In late March, 2020, the NLG National Office was thrilled to welcome Tyler Crawford (he/him) as the new Director of Mass Defense. As an NLG law student at Fordham, Tyler demonstrated a deep commitment to the Guild's principles. In 2018, Tyler was a Haywood Burns fellow, and helped mobilize Guild members in response to [the Conn crisis](#) faced by thousands of low-income Eastern Kentuckians.

Tyler has a robust vision for what mass defense in the Guild could look like in the current political context, and the NO staff is excited to work with him as we navigate our response to the uncertain future we're facing. He can be reached at [massdef@nlg.org](mailto:massdef@nlg.org), and his bio is below. Welcome, Tyler!

Tyler Crawford is an organizer, activist, and a graduate of Fordham Law School. Over the last decade, he has

worked extensively with community organizations and workers' rights groups, launching worker centers, tenant associations, and legal clinics. While attending Fordham Law, Tyler was an NLG Haywood Burns Fellow while he clerked at Appalachian Research and Defense Fund of Kentucky. During law school, Tyler also worked in Fordham's Criminal Defense Clinic, representing protesters and others, as well as in the Community Economic Development Clinic, counseling not-for-profits, community organizations, and worker centers.



## CA Central Valley NLG Use Guild Grants to Air Spanish Know-Your-Rights Radio Spots

by Mariah Thompson, CV NLG President

The California Central Valley chapter of the National Lawyers Guild (CV NLG) is located in California's politically conservative San Joaquin Valley (SJV). The area is home to hundreds of thousands of the agricultural workers who feed the U.S. and the world. These communities are especially vulnerable to state violence, discrimination, and marginalization due to language barriers, poverty, and immigration status.

SJV immigrant communities include families that have lived in the United States for generations and newly immigrated individuals. Many households are composed of mixed-status families, a term used to describe families that have relatives who have citizenship, those who hold green cards, and those who are undocumented.

The Fresno County Sheriff office is aggressively anti-immigrant and has historically worked closely with ICE to conduct deportation sweeps, ICE holds, and warm handoffs to ICE officials. The current Sheriff, Margaret Mims, has visited the White House to meet with Donald Trump to discuss methods to improve "border security." In multiple public venues, she has condemned a new California law prohibiting law enforcement agencies from working with ICE. Sheriff Mims also has implemented procedural workarounds to subvert these laws.

The region where CV NLG operates has no immigration attorneys providing pro-bono or low-bono deportation defense services. While CV NLG cannot provide direct representation, we do conduct know-your-rights (KYR) trainings on immigration rights and ICE Watch to help build community resistance to ICE enforcement. Yet the need has been greater than the chapter's capacity,

especially in hard-to-reach rural areas. Many low-income families do not have access to the internet where they could find KYR information online, as entire communities do not have internet service.

CV NLG sought and was awarded a Guild Grant in 2019 to produce a series of radio spots to provide basic KYR information for resisting ICE enforcement. These spots were aired on Spanish-speaking radio stations. Producing and airing radio spots allowed CV NLG to significantly magnify the reach of KYR information. Many people in rural communities and many farmworkers listen to the radio during their daily commute and while working.

CV NLG contracted with iHeartMedia to design and produce the spots. iHeartMedia wrote the scripts, provided the voice actors, and recorded the spots based on information that CV NLG asked them to include. Two spots were produced. These provided basic KYR for when ICE comes to your door, or when you interact with ICE or law enforcement on the street or in public. The format used was a conversation between two friends, one advising the other on how to protect themselves and their families. The work product was fantastic. The spots ran for 10 weeks on various Spanish radio stations in the area owned by iHeartMedia. The total reach of the spots was more than thirty-thousand (30,000) individual people over that time.

Many rural and agricultural areas include high numbers of individuals whose first language isn't English. Using radio spots to spread information about a community's legal rights and identify additional resources available is an effective method that CV NLG hopes other rural chapters will consider. ■



# NLG Condemns Violent Police Response to Black Lives Matter Protests Nationwide

A version of the following statement was originally published to [nlg.org](http://nlg.org) on June 1, 2020.

Spurred by the [uprising in Minneapolis](#) in response to the police killing of George Floyd, demonstrations took place in more than 75 cities over the weekend of May 29-31 as thousands of people protested to demand an end to racialized police violence and justice for Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and so many others. [National Lawyers Guild \(NLG\) Chapters](#) across the country have mobilized

to provide legal support to these people's movements and will continue to do so for as long as necessary. As a grassroots organization led by volunteer members who take direction from movements on the ground, we remain committed to the struggle for Black lives and an end to white supremacy.

"Racialized, violent policing of Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies has always existed in

this country. Now is the time for accountability. Property can always be replaced. Black lives cannot," stated former NLG Executive Director Pooja Gehi.

The unwarranted and excessively violent police reaction to demonstrators was strikingly similar across protests: NLG attorneys and Legal Observers consistently report accounts of police attacking people with batons and bicycles, running protesters down with horses and police vehicles, and freely deploying tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, and flash-bang grenades. In addition to both mass and targeted arrests of protesters, police also arrested journalists, legal observers, medics, and bystanders. Multiple NLG Legal Observers, clearly visible in bright green caps, were injured by police as they monitored the demonstrations.

By late Saturday, mayors and governors began calling in the military and National Guard, and imposing curfews in an attempt to shut down protests. Currently, more than 40 cities are under curfew and the National Guard has been activated in 15 states and Washington, D.C. In Minneapolis, video footage of National Guard and state troopers shutting down streets and attacking people on their porches went viral. In Chicago, police violently surrounded and mass arrested demonstrators. "The Chicago

Police rioted. Police violently attacked hundreds if not thousands of people demanding an end to police violence. This response was unacceptable and unnecessary," the NLG Chicago Chapter and Chicago Community Bond Fund [said in a joint statement](#).

Video and witness accounts indicate that far right nationalists and white supremacists were in attendance at many of the demonstrations, further stoking conflict by brandishing guns and arrows. Rather than condemning these actions, Trump has instead attacked left-wing activists and declared he will designate antifa a terrorist organization.

The number of arrests continues to grow. While many have been detained, not all have been charged and processed, making it difficult to give exact arrest numbers. However, NLG chapters report arrests in almost all cities, ranging from a few dozen to nearly 1,000 depending on location. As of now, protesters are be-

ing charged with disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, and failure to disperse. NLG Chapters have been continuously providing Legal Observers, running legal support hotlines, tracking arrests, and coordinating representation for those arrested.

The NLG denounces the violent and in many cases openly racist attacks of the police. In solidarity with movements for Black lives, the family of George Floyd, and all victims of racialized police violence, we are demanding a full, transparent, and independent investigation into his murder and the Minneapolis Police Department. We also call for investigations into the many law enforcement officers who have been documented brutalizing protesters this weekend, as well as all police officers who have records of complaints for violence. Finally, we call for the defunding and demilitarizing of the police, an investment in community resources including housing, healthcare and income and reparations for the families of those murdered. Please read, sign and share this [petition from Black Lives Matter to #DefundThePolice](#).

Donations to the NLG Mass Defense Program can be made at [nlg.org/donate/massdefense](http://nlg.org/donate/massdefense).



Minneapolis police outside the Third Precinct in Minneapolis. Firing tear gas at those protesting the May 25th death of George Floyd. [Chad Davis](#) / [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

# NLG-Chicago Legal Observers: Ready at the Drop of a (Neon Green) Hat

by Betsy Merbitz, NLG-Chicago Chapter Administrator

NLG Chicago Legal Observers (LOs) have been out in the streets at action after action since the uprising began, facing the challenge of remaining calm and focused on their role even when being beaten, pepper sprayed, pushed or threatened by police. In some cases, police actively prevented LOs from getting arrestees' names, as Legal Observer Nico Coronado describes. "[The police] trying to isolate the Legal Observers from everybody was very apparent to me. It was very obvious... The cops saw us and they were like, we don't want these people trying to help them. The less they [protesters] know about their rights is really the mentality [of the police]." Other LOs reported witnessing police preventing both LOs and medics from reaching protesters.

Legal Observers described long, tiring, actions that ended in sudden unexpected escalation of police violence and arrests, and the high pressure of getting last-minute calls to go into unpredictable situations. Our administrators estimate that LOs have put in more than 1,000 person-hours of Legal Observing since May 30th. "We have observed more actions since the uprising began than in all of 2019," said LO administrator Joe DiCola. "The sustained energy of the organizers and the people out there—it's inspiring and it makes you WANT to be ready. That energy wouldn't be there if it wasn't already there and sustained by the people in the movement," said LO Coordinator Becky Clough.

Many LOs said the uprising has been characterized by police violence in Chicago being even more sudden and unpredictable than other times, starting on May 30th. "Arrests, pepper spray and use of force on that day were coming faster than we could even record it," said LO coordinator Nell Taylor. Legal Observers have been pepper sprayed along with protesters without any warning or notice to disperse. One LO described it as the "sucker punch equivalent of pepper spray, absolutely unprovoked." LOs saw police drive cars through crowds, resulting in serious injuries, and bloody head wounds from batons. "[It's] so much riskier for us to be out there but also so important. There's so many violations of people's rights" said LO coordinator Jackie Spreadbury.

Legal Observers were struck by the difference between the peaceful crowds wearing shorts and T-shirts and the weapons and armor of the police. "A giant line of riot cops for some 19-year-olds blowing bubbles and dancing in the streets. The contrast really speaks for itself," said LO coordinator Nell Taylor. Legal Observer Nora Snyder describes the Freedom Square anniversary action, "People grilling



NLG-Chicago Legal Observers document police activity at at Blck Rising protest. (Credit: Betsy Merbitz)

"It's really awful, seeing what the cops are doing, and it's also really inspiring, seeing people continue to fight for justice, so it's both at the same time."

—NLG Chicago LO Coordinator Jackie Spreadbury

food, music, beautiful gathering. Across the street cops have their riot shields and their batons."

Many other Chicago MDC attorneys described the critical role of the Legal Observers in making the rest of MDC support possible. The work the Legal Observers do, being on the ground at actions and getting names of arrestees, ultimately makes it possible for the rest of Chicago MDC to do the work of the hotline, jail support liaisons, and coordinating representation. In several instances the only way hotline and jail support volunteers were able to track detained people at police stations was because Legal Observers were able to get the names on-scene of people being arrested.

During the uprising, many Legal Observers have gone above and beyond their standard roles, such as offering physical and emotional support for people who got pepper sprayed and helping injured protesters get to the hospital. LOs see themselves as one role within the community support networks, where organizers ensure protesters have medics, water, food and other resources. Legal Observer Elena Gormley described it as "a whole ecosystem providing crowd safety." She said it was inspiring, "how everyone is playing these different roles and seeing how people are cared for. Seeing how we're part of that."



# NLG Statement In Support of #8ToAbolition

A version of the following statement was originally published on [nlg.org](http://nlg.org) June 10, 2020.

The NLG supports the [#8toAbolition](#) campaign, which builds on decades of work by Black feminist abolitionists to demand an end to policing and prisons, and community investment that prioritizes the lives and safety of Black people. 8 to Abolition was created by BIPOC police and prison abolitionists as a response to the reformist changes of the [#8CantWait](#) campaign, that merely seek to reduce, instead of eliminate, continuing police violence against Black people.

As the [8 To Abolition website](#) states: “As police and prison abolitionists, we believe that this campaign is dangerous and irresponsible, offering a slate of reforms that have already been tried and failed, that mislead a public newly invigorated to the possibilities of police and prison abolition, and that do not reflect the needs of criminalized communities... Abolition can’t wait.”

The NLG supports the eight demands of the 8 to Abolition campaign:

1. Defund the Police
2. Demilitarize Communities
3. Remove Police from Schools
4. Free People from Prisons and Jails
5. Repeal Laws that Criminalize Survival
6. Invest in Community Self-Governance
7. Provide Safe Housing for Everyone
8. Invest in Care Not Cops

The NLG is an explicitly abolitionist organization. In 2015, the [NLG passed a resolution](#) that [calls for](#) the “dismantling and abolition of all prisons and of all aspects of systems and institutions that support, condone, create, fill, or protect prisons.” The NLG understands that [reforms are not enough](#) and the principles of 8 to Abolition are consistent with the those that have been adopted by Guild membership.

“The carceral state builds on this country’s history of slavery and colonization and is intrinsically intertwined to all systems where people are held against their will through coercion, force, or threat of force. As such, we call for the abolition not just of prisons and jails, but also police lockups, juvenile detention facilities, immigration detention facilities, and hospitals or nursing homes where people are held against their will,” said former NLG Executive Director Pooja Gehi.

Gehi.

8 to Abolition also acknowledges that abolition is a disability issue. “[Half of the people](#) killed by police are disabled. The intersection of Blackness and disability means that Black disabled people are especially likely to be victims of state violence, including through police, incarceration, [mental health facilities](#), and other institutions,” former NLG Disability Justice Committee co-chair Katie Tastrom said.

The NLG is grateful for the work of the [8 to Abolition authors](#) and the Black feminist abolitionists who paved the way for this moment and who continue to lead the police and prison abolition movement.



Graphic with the principles of the 8 To Abolition campaign. ([8toabolition.com](http://8toabolition.com))

## DisOrientation Webinar Recordings



As part of this year's DisOrientation, an annual event when NLG student chapters hold events to introduce their student body to the NLG and “people’s lawyering” in general, the National Office organized these two webinars to welcome progressive and radical law students to the school year and offer resources and support virtually.

Watch “[Movement Lawyering with the NLG](#)” and “[Staying Radical in Law School](#)” on our Vimeo page ([vimeo.com/nlg](http://vimeo.com/nlg)) or at our website ([nlg.org/public-webinars](http://nlg.org/public-webinars)). These webinars cover the culture of legal education, how to survive and thrive in law school, and how to prepare for a career as a movement lawyer!

# NLG-PDX Chapter Statement on Federal Troops in Portland

The following was originally published to [nlg.org](https://nlg.org) on June 22, 2020.

After the police killing of George Floyd, tens of thousands of Portland residents have continued to engage in daily demonstrations against police violence and in support of the movement for Black lives. In response, the Portland Police and Multnomah County Sheriffs have used unnecessary and unlawful violence against them, including tear gas, OC spray, flash bang grenades, and other so-called “less than lethal” weapons to dispel protestors, enforcing a curfew in the early days and after the curfew was lifted, simply using force to clear the streets. The Portland Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG-PDX) has had Legal Observers in the streets every day and night who, along with members of the press, have also been the subject of police violence. NLG-PDX condemns the federal government and its use of Border Control and U.S. Marshals in their effort to act as anti-protest shock troops in our city. We call on the federal government, the City of Portland, and the State of Oregon to immediately expel federal law enforcement from Portland, and for all charges related to arrests by those forces to be immediately and summarily dropped.

Members of NLG-PDX continued to monitor law enforcement conduct on the ground as Legal Observers, provide jail and court support to demonstrators who have been arrested, provide Know Your Rights training to community members, and have connected protestors, journalists, and movement organizations with criminal and civil litigation. On behalf of local Black-led organization [Don't Shoot Portland](#), protestors, and members of the press, the NLG-PDX has filed two legal actions against local law enforcement, resulting in a court-ordered injunction against the indiscriminate use of tear gas and other weapons against demonstrators engaging in passive resistance. In addition, the protests and community-led campaigns have resulted in the first signs of long overdue action by the Portland City Council to begin the process of defunding the police by pulling police out of schools and off public transit, eliminating a police task force aimed primarily at Black communities, and taking \$15 million from the police budget (far short of the \$50 million demanded by community mem-

bers) and allocating some of those funds for nonpunitive support for unhoused people.

As the protests continued, President Donald Trump saw an opportunity to distract from his failures with the COVID-19 pandemic and burnish his credentials as a so-called “law and order president.” On the 4th of July, President Trump deployed federal law enforcement officers to Portland to “quell” the demonstrations. These federal officers—apparently including U.S. Marshals and members of [BORTAC](#), a tactical unit within Border Patrol—have routinely subjected demonstrators to unconscionable violence. They have broken protestors’ bones with baton strikes and tackles, shot at least one protester in the head with so-called “less lethal” munitions, and indiscriminately launched huge amounts of tear gas and other chemical agents at crowds of demonstrators, all without warning. These officers do not wear name badges; they are unidentifiable and unaccountable as they terrorize Portlanders on a nightly basis. Recently, unidentified agents in military camouflage [pulled random protestors into unmarked vans](#), taking them into custody to search their persons and belongings. To date, residents and local officials have not received an explanation or reason why federal agents are abducting people off our streets. When Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf visited the city this week to applaud the actions of this federal occupying force, he did not meet with the Mayor or the Chief of Police but did meet with the defiant head of Portland Police union. Alarming, [on Monday Trump applauded](#) the disturbing actions of federal troops in Portland saying they have done a “fantastic job,” and has signaled that similar responses to protests may be replicated in other U.S. cities.

NLG-PDX continues to stand in solidarity with activists fighting for Black liberation. We highlight the cruel irony that those protesting police brutality are met with police brutality, and we condemn the conduct of federal and local law enforcement officers who continue to escalate tactics and punish protestors in violation of their First and Fourth Amendment rights. We echo activists’ demands that federal law enforcement leave our city, and support our community’s continued resistance against the encroachment of a police state.

## PM Press Bandana Benefits NLG Mass Defense!

Our friends at PM Press created this bilingual Abolish the Police/Chinga la Migra (F\*\*ck ICE) bandana to help raise funds for the NLG, and help folks now their rights at the same time!



The black and white bandana includes practical know-your-rights reminders in English and Spanish, and proceeds will benefit the NLG Mass Defense Fund to protect the rights of those protesting ongoing racialized police violence and repression.

Get yours: [bit.ly/PMpressxNLG](https://bit.ly/PMpressxNLG)

# 2020 Digital #Law4thePeople Convention Recap



Dear NLG Family,

Thank you all so much for being a part of the first ever, all digital #Law4thePeople convention!

Although we couldn't be together in person, these past two weeks have been a wonderful opportunity to build, reflect, and strategize on moving forward in our work to fight for a better world. Thanks to your participation and engagement, over the course of this digital gathering, our community included nearly 1,000 people around the country—and the world. A huge thank you to all our members and guest speakers, honorees, and panelists who helped organize each and every event!

A special thank you to LearningTimes which donated countless hours of their time to helping make this digital gathering a success, and to the captioners and interpreters who helped make this convention more accessible.

Below are links video recordings from three of our biggest events! These and additional recordings of Convention events are available at our Vimeo page ([vimeo.com/nlg](https://vimeo.com/nlg))

[Keeanga Yamahatta-Taylor: Keynote Speech](#)

[Walter and Boots Riley: A Father-Son Discussion on the Political Moment, Moderated by Barbara Ransby](#)  
[The Road to Abolition: Honoring Dr. Angela Davis](#)

Please continue to share your favorite moments from the Convention on social media using #Law4thePeople and tagging us on the following accounts:

Twitter: [@NLGNews](#)

Instagram: [@nationallawyersguild](#)

Facebook: [@NLGNational](#)

Sending love, light, solidarity, and much gratitude,  
 NLG National Staff



# 2020 #Law4thePeople Keynote and Awardees

## NLG Minnesota Chapter: Law for the People Award

The NLG Minnesota Chapter is honored to accept this award in recognition of the legal support we have provided to the people who have been in the streets pushing back against the police state in response to the brutal and tragic murder of George Floyd. We saw unprecedented police brutality and militarization in the Twin Cities, and yet the people were brave and resilient in their pursuit of justice. It has been a privilege to organize with and support the people of Minnesota through this fight towards justice and an end to this violent and racist police state. Justice for George Floyd.

## Dr. Angela Davis: Arthur Kinoy Award

Through her decades of activism and scholarship Angela Davis has been deeply involved in movements for social justice around the world. Her work as an educator has always emphasized the importance of building communities of struggle for economic, racial, and gender justice. Most recently, she spent fifteen years at the University of California Santa Cruz where she is now Distinguished Professor Emerita of History of Consciousness – an interdisciplinary Ph.D program – and of Feminist Studies. She is the author of ten books and has lectured throughout the United States and the world. Angela Davis is a founding member of Critical Resistance, a national organization dedicated to the dismantling of the prison industrial complex. Internationally, she is affiliated with Sisters Inside, an abolitionist organization based in Queensland, Australia that works in solidarity with women in prison. Having helped to popularize the notion of a “prison industrial complex,” she now urges her audiences to think seriously about the future possibility of a world without prisons and to help forge a 21st century abolitionist movement.

## Sara Kershner: Legal Worker Award

After Sara’s father tested positive for HIV, Sara began organizing with ACT-UP and became involved in needle exchange and co-founded the Harm Reduction Coalition. As a co-founder of GenerationFIVE, Sara was part of developing transformative justice responses to child sexual abuse. She is a founder of the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network and an anti-racist activist. Sara started participating in the NLG first as an activist, then as a Board member and now as Interim Executive Director of the NLG-San Francisco Bay Area chapter. Sara has relied on the NLG as a crucial resource in her thirty years of direct action and movement organizing.

## Jeanne Mirer: Ernie Goodman Award

Jeanne Mirer has been a Guild member since 1969, when she joined in her first year of law school. Over the past 50



years, Jeanne has worked closely with Massachusetts NLG, Michigan NLG, and NYC NLG. She has served as a co-chair of the NLG International Committee for many years and has been president of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers since 2009. Jeanne has extensively studied International Human Rights Law, and has published many articles on issues including Israeli aggression, torture and drones, and most recently, voting rights. In 2006, Jeanne and her husband moved back to New York City and she is now a labor lawyer in her law practice in the firm of Mirer, Mazzocchi and Julien.

## Jodi Hill: CB King Award

Jodi Hill is a third-year law student at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, where she served as the 2019 Vice-President of Loyola’s NLG Chapter. As Vice-President, Jodi organized student demand for a legal pedagogy that emphasized human rights rather than a singular focus on private property. Additionally, she galvanized student legal support for local immigration attorneys representing asylum seekers and detained immigrants in North Louisiana. Jodi spent the summer after her first year of law school clerking with the Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center, supporting the enforcement of the Fair Housing Act. She spent the summer after her second year of law school, clerking with the New Orleans Workers’ Center for Racial Justice, where she worked with organizers to develop strategies for challenging labor violations and building labor power. Jodi is a Louisiana native and is committed to leveraging her legal education towards advancing equity in the deep south.

## Charlotte Kates: Debra Evenson “Venceremos” Award

*Awarded by the NLG International Committee*

Charlotte Kates is an activist and organizer who coordinates the work of the NLG International Committee, working together with the co-chairs, steering committee and membership of the committee to advance international justice and oppose U.S. imperialism. She is the international coordinator of Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network and has organized delegations, actions, reports *continued on following page* and articles that highlight the struggle

# NLG 2020 Voting Results

Many thanks to the record-breaking 477 total NLG members who participated in this year's online voting process! The votes on the 2020 election, proposed amendments, and resolutions have been counted and membership verified by the National Office. They are:

## Officer Elections

National Vice-President: (Ken Montenegro, incumbent v. Jilisa Milton) Winner: Jilisa Milton (72%)

In addition, we thank all the outgoing national officers of the National Executive Committee, and welcome those that have been voted in by acclamation or nomination:

President-Elect: Suzanne Adely

Treasurer-Elect: Joelle Eliza Lingat

Student National VP: Samantha-Rae Tuthill (Outgoing: Cait De Mott Grady)

Legal Worker Co-VP: Andrey Garcia-Ponce De Leon (with incumbent Sarah Coffey)

Mass Defense Chair: Maggie Ellinger-Locke (Outgoing: Jude Ortiz)

Northwest Regional Co-VPs: Andi Pla and Junga Cha (Outgoing: Juan Carlos Chavez)

Far West Regional Co-VPs: Sasha Novis & Delia Metoyer (Outgoing: Colleen Flynn)

## Resolutions:

- Resolution on Non-Collaboration with Grand Juries: YES: 72% NO: 8% ABSTAIN: 20%
- Resolution Supporting the Abolition of Policing: YES: 69% NO: 19% ABSTAIN: 12%

## Amendments:

- Student National Vice President Proposed Constitutional Amendments: YES: 77% NO: 4% ABSTAIN: 18%

## Proposed Amendments to the NLG Constitution and Bylaws

- Article 3.2, Regions, NLG Constitution: YES: 70% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 27%
- Article 3.2, Definition of a Chapter, NLG Constitution: YES: 69% NO: 4% ABSTAIN: 27%
- Article 3.5, Chapter Autonomy Subject to Constitution and Bylaws, NLG Constitution: YES: 70% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 27%
- Article 3.7, Interests of Constituent Groups, NLG Constitution: YES: 68% NO: 4% ABSTAIN: 28%
- Article 5.1, Composition of NEC (National Executive Committee), NLG Constitution: YES: 69% NO: 4% ABSTAIN: 27%
- Article 5.2, Election of NEC (National Executive Committee), NLG Constitution: YES: 68% NO: 4% ABSTAIN: 28%
- Article 5.3, Terms of Office for Officers, NLG Constitution: YES: 68% NO: 4% ABSTAIN: 28%
- Article 5.3.1, Temporary Amendment to Treasurer and Treasurer-Elect Terms of Office, NLG Constitution: YES: 67% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 30%
- Article 5.4, Terms of Office for RVPs (Regional Vice Presidents), NLG Constitution: YES: 69% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 28%
- Article 5.5, Selection and Terms of Office for Project and Committee Reps, NLG Constitution: YES: 26% NO: 38% ABSTAIN: 36%
- Article 5.8, Executive Actions Between Meetings, NLG Constitution: YES: 68% NO: 4% ABSTAIN: 28%
- Article 5.9, Procedure to Fill NEC Vacancies, NLG Constitution: YES: 68% NO: 4% ABSTAIN: 28%
- Article 5.10, Removal from Office, NLG Constitution: YES: 68% NO: 2% ABSTAIN: 30%
- Article 5.11, Travel Expenses, NLG Constitution: YES: 70% NO: 2% ABSTAIN: 28%
- Article 11, Amendments, NLG

*continued on following page*

*continued from previous page*

for the liberation of Palestine and the Palestinian prisoners. She is also a member of Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition and the Organizing Collective of the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel.

## UndocuBlack Network: Daniel Levy Award

*Awarded by National Immigration Project of the NLG (NIPNLG)*

The UndocuBlack Network™ is a multigenerational community of currently and formerly undocumented Black people. UndocuBlack™ exists to work towards freedom for and promote understanding about what it means to be both Black and undocumented, to feel twice rejected by the country we call home. Fighting and creating space for currently and formerly undocumented Black immigrants to not only survive but thrive. UndocuBlack™ has ushered in victory for Liberian TPS and DED communities, fight for DACA, public health and mental wellness as well as media and narratives, center-

ing Black undocumented people. Since the inception of the network, we have proven that organizing always wins; there is no power like people power.

## Michael Wishnie: Carol Weiss King Award

*Awarded by National Immigration Project of the NLG (NIPNLG)*

Michael J. Wishnie is William O. Douglas Clinical Professor of Law and Counselor to the Dean at Yale Law School, where he co-directs the Worker & Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic. A graduate of Yale College and Yale Law School, Wishnie previously taught at NYU School of Law and served as a Skadden Fellow at the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project, staff attorney at The Legal Aid Society in Brooklyn, and law clerk to Judge H. Lee Sarokin and Associate Justices Harry Blackmun, retired, and Stephen Breyer. He served on the NIPNLG board in 2007-19.

# NLG MN Condemns MPD For Mass Arrest of 100s in Election Protest, Incl Minors

*A version of the following statement was originally published at [nlg.org](https://nlg.org) on November 5, 2020.*

The Minnesota Chapter of the NLG (NLG-MN) and the Legal Rights Center (LRC) stand in solidarity with the hundreds of demonstrators kettled and arbitrarily arrested last night on I-94. These protesters gathered to demand that all votes be counted—a fundamental tenet of a political system that claims to be democratic. At the direction of elected officials, law enforcement arrested over 600 people and cited many others, including four NLG Legal Observers (LOs) and half a dozen or more minors. At least one person was taken into custody, a young Black woman charged with assault of an officer. The NLG-MN and LRC unequivocally condemn these arrests and citations.

Leading up to the arrests and citations, law enforcement gave no orders to disperse. As people attempted to exit the freeway using access roads, they were not allowed to leave by officers and were then subject to pepper spray. The action was carried out by Minnesota State Troopers, Hennepin County sheriffs, and Minneapolis Police Department (MPD); there are unconfirmed reports that the National Guard was also present. A number of legislators and others have contacted Governor Tim Walz's office, and have reported the governor's remarks that last night's law enforcement actions were intended to "teach a lesson." After being cited, arrestees were put on buses and dropped off at random locations, including the University of Minnesota

campus, U.S. Bank Stadium, Lake Harriet, Bloomington, and others. NLG-MN worked with local activists and jail support to organize car caravans to safely shuttle arrestees back to Minneapolis.

The arrests of NLG LOs and media, present to document the actions of law enforcement, add to the wrongful arrests and are an additional attempt to avoid accountability and documentation of law enforcement actions. One Latinx reporter with a press badge was arrested, while another officer threatened to call Border Patrol on his wife after demanding to see her passport. These tactics, like the others above, are deliberate attempts to create a chilling effect on protest and to scare activists. We are also concerned about the arrests of minors, at least five of whom have been charged with crimes related to being on the freeway. Our hotline received more than 250 phone calls seeking support around citations.

These actions by the MPD, and the overwhelming silence from elected officials, are a striking demonstration of why the MPD cannot be reformed; it must be dismantled. The community is well aware that our elected officials will continue to defend the police department at every opportunity, so it is up to us to continue advocating and agitating for genuine change. We will not stop until our community's demands are met.

Follow the NLG Minnesota Chapter at [facebook.com/nlgminnesota](https://facebook.com/nlgminnesota), and visit their website at [nlgmnn.org](https://nlgmnn.org).

## Power to the People! NLG Responds to 2020 US Presidential Election Results

*The following statement was originally published to [nlg.org](https://nlg.org) on November 7, 2020*

The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) expresses its deep gratitude to the work of Black, Indigenous, and communities of color around the country who have led the way to the end of a fascist Trump presidency.

It is the hard work of community organizing—not any single politician, celebrity, or political party—that has led us to this moment. We are breathing a collective sigh of relief as we welcome an end to the Trump administration, but we remain vigilant, and will not let this election

fool us into complacency. As they always have, the rights of our most marginalized communities hang in the balance. There is much more work to be done to address the damage inflicted by the last administration—and the many before it—that have advanced racism, transphobia, misogyny, ableism, capitalism, and imperialism. Peoples' struggles for liberation will continue under a Biden administration, and the NLG remains committed to working in solidarity with them.

As Angela Davis [reminded us](#) at the 2020 #Law4thePeople Convention, "We know now that we can, indeed, forge our own futures."

*continued from previous page*

Constitution: YES: 67% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 30%

- Section 6.1, RVP Selection by Region, NLG bylaws: YES: 69% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 28%
- Section 6.2, Regions Determined by the NEC, NLG bylaws: YES: 67% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 30%
- Section 7.5, Officer Job Descriptions, NLG bylaws: YES: 33% NO: 30% ABSTAIN: 35%
- Section 8.1, Call for Proposals, NLG bylaws: YES: 67% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 30%
- Section 8.3, Proposed Resolutions and Amendments,

NLG bylaws: YES: 66% NO: 4% ABSTAIN: 30%

- Section 11, NEC Subcommittees, NLG bylaws: YES: 67% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 30%
- Section 12, National Convention Site Selection, NLG bylaws: YES: 68% NO: 2% ABSTAIN: 30%
- Section 15, National Convention Evaluations and Survey, NLG bylaws: YES: 67% NO: 3% ABSTAIN: 30%

Thanks again to everyone who voted. Here's to continued struggle and resistance in 2021!



# Remembering Beloved NLG Member, Karen Weill

by Larry Hildes, longtime NLG member from Bellingham, WA

She steered our practice into sexual harassment cases

On the early morning of March 10, I lost my wife, my work partner, my political comrade, my partner in a hundred ways I can name and at least as many that there are no words for. We were married just short of 20 years and worked together fulltime for the last 18 of those. These are my not quite organized thoughts about what made her special.

When I met Karen, she was recently back from attending the 4th UN World Conference on Women in Beijing and overflowed with the experience and with several weeks of being surrounded by powerful women, warriors all.

The attraction was immediate, but it took a while to sort things out—as anyone who knows us knows, we are and were very strong personalities. But we grew towards each other.

In December 1998, I went to visit Karen in West Virginia where she had moved back to in order to spend some quality time with her mother. We discovered how much we missed each other and got engaged six months later at the top of a mountain in the Cumberland Gap, and got married a year after that in an old growth Redwood grove in Northern California.

In 2002, I brought her to the NLG Law for the People Convention in Pasadena, and it was love at first sight. She plunged into work in various committees and projects and built lifetime close friendships just being who she was.

Earlier that same year, we started working together fulltime. She had ended up in corporate HR and was in a labor negotiation when the President on the Teamsters local across the table walked up to her on a break and said, “It’s clear you want to be on our side.”

She quit her job a month or two later and we began a very long partnership. She brought her background as a journalist and training in investigating incidents, as well as her master’s degree in Counseling to our practice along with her empathy, passion for justice, and brilliant, analytical mind.

As a legal worker, we insisted that she participate as an equal in case strategy meetings. She able to think outside the box in a way that us lawyers were not.

Our clients and colleagues absolutely loved her and requested her as a speaker on many occasions for various events as she had an ability to explain the law and conduct know-your-rights trainings in a way that was clearly understandable and approachable, yet comprehensive.

Most people who know her assumed she was a lawyer, and her skills were those of an outstanding attorney as is true of Guild legal workers. She made our work much better in a hundred different ways, and she loved the class implications of being a legal worker.



The NLG will be forever indebted to the work and spirit of legal worker member, Karen Weill.

and into representing environmental activists as much as possible as those were her priorities and we understood their value.

Karen loved to travel and never failed to connect with the radicals and activists everywhere. She lived and breathed international solidarity. She built relationships wherever we went. That was true back here as well.

When we began representation of Leonard Peltier and went to visit him at Coleman, FL, they immediately connected. They saw a kindred spirit in each other. The day after she died, while locked down, Leonard somehow managed to persuade a corrections officer to give him computer access long enough to send me a condolence e-mail. He described her as his sister warrior, and a better description of Karen I cannot imagine.

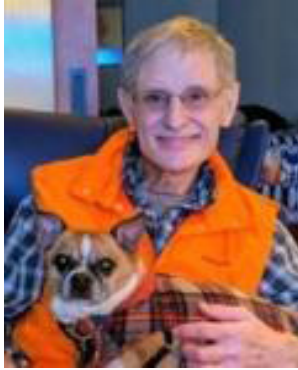
Whatever else I accomplish in my life, there is nothing that will equal the accomplishment of being the person Karen loved and chose to spend her life with.

She made me promise to keep up the fight and to never give up, and I battle on an continue to engage in the struggle in her name.

Karen, my beloved, my sister warrior. Rest in Power and in Love. ■

*Editor’s Note: To support Larry, who continues his commitment to movement work, and to honor Karen’s memory, contributions can be made to this GoFundMe, originally established as Karen’s medical fund: [www.gofundme.com/f/support-karen-weill-and-larry-hildes](http://www.gofundme.com/f/support-karen-weill-and-larry-hildes)*

# In Memoriam: Jeffrey (Jeff) Goldstein



Jeffrey Goldstein

Jeffrey Goldstein (August 17, 1944 - August 28, 2020)—a dedicated and tenacious attorney, civil rights advocate, judge, father, husband, brother, and friend to so many—passed away peacefully following surgery, with his wife and daughters at his side. With the support of dedicated doctors, nurses, and caregivers at Kaiser Permanente and St. Joseph Hospital, he had survived nearly 4 years coping with pancreatic cancer and its side effects.

Jeff was born in San Francisco, the eldest son of University of Southern California (USC) Dentistry Professor Dr. Charles Goldstein and Shirley Spector Goldstein. His grandparents on both sides were Jewish immigrants from Europe at the turn of the 20th century who built successful new lives in America. He grew up in West Los Angeles where he graduated from University High School. His family included two brothers—Jon and Joel, and his sister Judy. In 1966, Jeff graduated from Valley State University (now California State Univ., Northridge), and USC Law School in 1969. After his first marriage and the birth of his two daughters, Janine and Genevieve, the family moved to Denver in the early 1970s, where he resided until his death. Jeff married Marcia Tremmel Goldstein in 1976, and his third daughter Deanna was born in 1978.

Jeff began his law career in Long Beach, CA, where he headed the Legal Aid Society office representing indigent clients. In Denver, he co-founded the law firm of Busacca, Goldstein, Hazleton, and Temko, which served a number of pro bono civil rights and community activist clients. He later co-founded the firm of Karp, Goldstein & Stern, then established his own firm Goldstein & Dodge, which primarily represented injured workers in Colorado's Workers' Compensation system. After a few years serving as Special Counsel in the labor law firm of Brauer, Buescher, Goldhammer & Kelman, Jeff left his firm to serve as Administrative Law Judge, and later Chief Judge for the Workers' Compensation Division, Colorado Department of Labor until his retirement in 2018.

As members of the National Lawyers Guild during the 1970s and 1980s, Goldstein and his partners represented a number of political activists, including members of the American Indian Movement during the Wounded Knee Occupation of 1973, immigration rights activists, organizers in Denver's Chicano movement, labor organizers, military servicemen who were against the Viet Nam War, and victims of police brutality.

Stemming from this work, Goldstein launched his decades-long representation of the heirs and descendants of the original Hispanic settlers on the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant, established by Mexico in 1844, in what is now Costilla County, CO. As lead attorney in the landmark case known as *Lobato v. Taylor*, Goldstein filed a class action lawsuit in 1981 against lumber baron and ranch owner Jack

Taylor, who in the 1960s had won a federal court case barring local landowners and residents from exercising their historic rights to graze animals, gather firewood, and cut timber for construction of adobe homes on La Sierra—a 77,000 acre mountain tract of land which included 14,000 foot Culebra Peak. Representing class plaintiffs organized by the Land Rights Council in San Luis, CO, Goldstein headed a large team of pro bono lawyers, many recruited by the Colorado Lawyers Committee, who followed the case through dozens of lower district and appellate courts before successfully winning the right to take the case to trial and then restoration of the historic land rights by decisions of the Colorado Supreme Court in 1994, 2002 and 2003. Implementation of those decisions has required further litigation continuing to this day. This epic land rights struggle garnered national and international recognition and has been a tremendous victory for the people of the San Luis Valley. Countless generations of families who will use their land grant rights will be forever grateful to Jeff for leading and winning this classic David versus Goliath battle.

Jeff was a founding member of the Worker's Compensation Education Association, (WCEA) a claimant lawyer's organization that advocates and educates for the rights of injured workers in Colorado. Jeff worked tirelessly for legislative and administrative changes to better the plight of injured workers, and was respected by all sides for his depth of knowledge, fierce advocacy, and frequent lectures on worker's compensation topics.

Community and legal organizations have honored Jeff with a number of special awards for his lifelong pro bono legal work, including from the Trial Lawyers for Public Justice, the Denver and Colorado Bar Associations, the Colorado Hispanic Bar Association, the Colorado Lawyers Committee, the Worker's Compensation Education Association, and the Land Rights Council. This year, the Denver Bar Association honored Jeff for 50 years of service in the legal profession.

Jeff and Marcia loved traveling the world and camping with friends in their Airstream Bambi trailer. Jeff was also an avid sailor, fly fisherman, scuba diver, and an accomplished photographer. He spent many pleasant days at his mountain log cabin near Bailey, CO enjoying his family and friends, his dog Satchmo, as well as befriending countless birds, squirrels, and mule deer. He looked forward to helping to elect a new President in November.

Jeff is survived by his wife Marcia, three daughters: Janine Aquino (Vince) of Lafayette, CO; Genevieve Moya, M.D. of Thousand Oaks, CA; Deanna Goldstein of Denver; sister Judy Walter of Agoura Hills, CA; and brother Joel Goldstein of La Grande, OR. Four surviving grandchildren include Jade and Equis Moya, Madeline and Alexandra Armour. Preceding him in death were his parents Charles and Shirley Goldstein of Los Angeles, CA and his brother Jon Goldstein of Atascadero, CA.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in Jeff's memory may be made to the Pancreatic Cancer Network: [pancan.org](http://pancan.org) or the Colorado Lawyers Committee: [coloradolawyerscommittee.org](http://coloradolawyerscommittee.org)

# In Memoriam: Henry (Hank) di Suvero, Past NLG President & People's College of Law Founder

by Franklin Siegel, NLG-NYC

Henry (Hank) di Suvero, a peripatetic activist lawyer who served as national President of the NLG from 1977 to 1979, died on July 3, 2020 in New South Wales, Australia, where he was a law professor and practitioner for the last three decades.

Hank was a lawyer in New York and Los Angeles prior to becoming national NLG president. As a member of the NYC Chapter from the mid-1960's until 1972, he worked at the New York Civil Liberties Union and as Executive Director of the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee-ECLC (a national civil rights litigating organization formed by NLG founder Victor Rabinowitz, Leonard Boudin and Edith Tiger). Gerald Lefcourt, later the lead counsel for the NY Panther 21, worked for Hank at ECLC in late 1968 and remembers Hank "was a very fine lawyer and demanding as a boss." Hank was part of a noted New York movement law firm, di Suvero, Meyers, Oberman & Steel, where he defended the Fort Dix 38, a high profile case involving GI's protesting against the Vietnam War at a New Jersey Army stockade in 1969; represented the Tombs 3, detainees indicted for participating in a rebellion at the Manhattan House of Detention in a six month trial in 1970; and as Daniel Meyers, a past NYC chapter president recalls, represented "the Schermerhorn Row Artists" in an anti-eviction struggle. Lewis Steel, another former NYC president, recalls Hank representing revolt leaders after the 1970 Auburn prison revolt. Hank also led lawyers who went to Chicago to protest the arrest of NLG lawyers appearing in pre-trial proceedings of the Chicago 8 trial. Hank and his wife, the late Ramona Ripston, led and revived the New Jersey Civil Liberties Union at the start of the 1970's, following-up Hank's work during the 1967 Newark Rebellion.

Hank and Ramona departed New York in 1972 when Ramona became the Executive Director of the ACLU of Southern California, the first woman and one of the few non-lawyers to head an ACLU affiliate. Hank became the Senior Attorney of the Greater Watts Justice Center, a War on Poverty-funded organization representing criminal defendants in the Watts community, where he worked for nine years.

Hank was the lead organizer in the creation of the People's College of Law (PCL), a groundbreaking part-time night law school in L.A., where for five years he was the Treasurer and also taught criminal law. A 1975 *New York Times* article called PCL a "product of the left-leaning National Lawyers Guild and the only radical law school in the country." (PCL was a joint project of the NLG, La Raza National Students Association, the Asian Law Collective and the National Conference of Black Lawyers). PCL opened in 1974, and was one of 36 "unaccredited" (non-ABA) law schools that sprung up when California began permitting students attending non-ABA schools to take its bar exam. It had a mission unique at the time: to promote enrollment of people of color and women, setting out with the goal to have two-thirds of its enrollment be Black and Chicano students, and equal numbers of men and women. PCL's model was followed by



Henry di Suvero, seated second from right, addressing The National Conference on Government Spying in Chicago, January, 1977. (Photo by Barbara Plog/Liberation News Service)

the New College School of Law in San Francisco, and was an inspiration for the mission of CUNY School of Law which opened in 1983.

"We're trying to turn out fully trained people's lawyers", di Suvero told the *Times* as PCL began its second year, "lawyers who will go back to their communities to practice." The *Times* also reported that John Garfinkel, chair of the ABA's committee on standards, who was critical of many of California's unaccredited law schools, had much praise for PCL, observing "They're idealists, I think they're trying to do a good job."

Hank was elected national president of the NLG at its 40th Anniversary Convention in Seattle in 1977, opening an era of programmatic vitality following several years of contentious and harsh political in-fighting in the mid-1970's. Hank enlisted his L.A. chapter colleague, former NLG-National Office Collective member Phyllis Bennis (now a Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies), to work with him as one of the regional vice presidents. Phyllis recalls one of the things they took on was the fight for the Guild to adopt an organizational position supporting Palestinian rights: "It was a bit of trial by fire in maintaining unity in the Guild, figuring out the right political position to fight for, [and] not losing members or funders." Notwithstanding the bitter, largely generational divisions, Hank and Phyllis worked with an NLG cohort who persisted and won a strong pro-Palestinian position (albeit, Phyllis recalls, with a sometimes unfortunate lack of appreciation by many younger NLG members for some of the heroic work the older generation had accomplished in other contexts). It resulted in the NLG being recognized today as an early U.S. organizational supporter of the Palestinian liberation struggle.

At the end of his term as national NLG president, di Suvero left the U.S. intending to take a respite from being a criminal defense lawyer. He went to India, where he took up meditation and yoga, travelled throughout Asia, spent time with the then-independence movement in Irian Jaya in Indonesia, and ended up in Sydney, Australia where at first he became a yoga teacher.

Hank became a law professor at the University of New South Wales, and in 1987 became a Barrister in Sydney,

*continued on following page*



*continued from previous page*

specializing in criminal defense work. Ysaiah (Stan) Ross, a professor at NSW law school, noted Hank quickly developed a “reputation for an unusual form of criminal advocacy for Australian courts and other advocates would come to witness LA law in action.” Reflecting the British-influenced Australian system, the even-tempered di Suvero was brought up on bar charges for being “disrespectful” to a judge, and was suspended for six months. Hank also became a playwright, including authoring a play in 2005 about Palestine solidarity activist Rachel Corrie.

Hank’s widow Jinny, his sister Anna and two brothers, the sculptor Mark di Suvero and poet Victor di Suvero, survive him. Hank’s several peripatetic careers, from gritty prisoner’s rights lawyer in New York to yoga teacher to Justice Lionel Murphy of the Australian High Court, resonates with

a memorable image at the conclusion of the NLG’s 40th Anniversary Convention. Hank departed the Convention facility at Seattle University in a fire-engine red convertible sports car with the top down, heading home to Los Angeles, the open road and a new era in the NLG ahead of him.

Donations can be made on the People’s College of Law website, [peoplescollegeoflaw.edu](http://peoplescollegeoflaw.edu), noting the gift is in Hank’s honor.

*Franklin Siegel worked in the NLG National Office Collective at the beginning of di Suvero’s presidency, and is a past president of the New York City Chapter. He gratefully acknowledges information provided by Phyllis Bennis, NLG members Peter Franck, Gerald Lefcourt, Alan Levine, Dan Mayfield, Daniel Meyers, Frances Schreiber, Lewis Steel and Martin Stolar.*

## Announcing the NLG Foundation Guild Grants Recipients

Now in its sixth year, the NLG Foundation’s Guild Grants Program continues to support NLG chapters, committees and projects by providing small grants up to \$5,000 each. In the latest grant cycle, we received 31 requests for funding. 11 of the applications were for protest support expenses and infrastructure—such as LO Hats, hotline set-up, databases and staffing. The Mass Defense Program of the National Office disbursed these grants through a small grants program that provided over \$105,000 for mass defense needs. Of the 20 remaining applications, 15 were selected to receive NLGF grants.

The NLGF Grants Selection Committee reviewed the applications and prioritized projects that would lead to an increase in membership while also strengthening programmatic work and enhancing coordination across the Guild as a whole. The NLGF is proud to support the work of the following projects, committees, and chapters through this small grants program.

### 2020 Guild Grants Recipients:

- **Bay Area Military Law Panel (BAMLP)**, NLGSF to pay a law student intern to answer calls to the GI Rights hotline in San Francisco and to reach out to affiliated legal workers in the GI Rights Network, Vets for Peace and About Face!
- **Chicago NLG Chapter** to meaningfully engage in anti-racism work across the Chicago NLG Chapter and share resources and lessons learned with the Guild at large
- **Cornell Law School NLG Student Chapter** for their eviction court monitoring project to promote housing rights

- **Harvard Law School NLG Chapter** for campaign to abolish the Harvard University Police Department
- **Las Vegas NLG Chapter** for quarterly workshops and a Know Your Rights video addressing the unique legal concerns of sex workers in Las Vegas
- **NLG California Central Valley Chapter** to create a 7-series podcast addressing legal issues pertinent to the California’s Central Valley



NLG CA Central Valley Chapter podcast group: (From left) Ryan Wulschleger, Andrea Wulschleger, Cammeron Forgey, and Deyzha Gonzales. The young group is in the process of creating a podcast, titled *Central to the Valley*. For more information, follow [@cttvpodcast](https://www.instagram.com/cttvpodcast) on Instagram.

• **NLG International Committee** to strengthen ties between the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Committee, Colombia Subcommittee, and Environmental Human Rights Committee through strategic planning and legal research projects

- **NLG Miami Law** for the Wage Theft Advocacy Project
- **NLG-Savannah/Hilton Head Island Chapter** for outreach and educational work
- **NLG-SFBA Immigration Justice Program** to expand their court observation program to directly support building immigrant power
- **NLG-SFBA Litigation Program**

to launch a litigation program that will pair progressive attorneys, law students and legal workers with movement partners to submit PRA and FOIA requests, file amicus briefs, and identify impact litigation

- **Northwestern Law NLG Student Chapter** for a critical legal studies discussion series on race
- **Quinnipiac University School of Law NLG Student Chapter** for a speaker series to engage students
- **SFBA Chapter Bay Area Asylum Support Coalition (BAASC)** to support the planning and conducting of workshops to support individuals in their immigration proceedings
- **University of Illinois at Chicago John Marshall NLG Student Chapter** for an online Midwest DisOrientation

# BEYOND BARS

## Voices of NLG Jailhouse Lawyers

### Update on Jailhouse Lawyer Handbooks

We are very sorry that we are still not able to send out print copies of the Handbook at this time due to unforeseen circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are hoping that by early next year there will be a new, updated version of the Handbook to send and we will be able to mail out that one to those who requested it over this year. In the meantime, if you have someone on the outside who would be able to print out a copy of the Handbook for you, they can do so at [jailhouselaw.org](http://jailhouselaw.org).

## Prosecutors Must Be Held Accountable for Their Misconduct

Jay Van Story  
Huntsville, TX

Prosecutors who orchestrate the false conviction of the innocent are committing crimes every bit as bad as any they prosecute. They're not using turns to accomplish their offenses, but something far more dangerous—their immense, unchecked power.

Imagine a world without the terrible injustice of innocent men and women being falsely imprisoned by their own government. Of course, such a world will never exist. In any human endeavor, there will all too frequently be mistakes, misconduct, and abuses of power. And as things stand, prosecutors are the ones most likely to commit them.

If only prosecutors were properly motivated to always put truth and justice ahead of ambition and career preservation and advancement. If only they were held properly accountable to prevent them from even thinking about crossing the line in pursuit of a win at any cost. If only their absolute power didn't corrupt them so absolutely.

At the top of everyone's list of meaningful criminal justice reforms should be full prosecutorial accountability. If they knew they could go to jail and have to pay money damages out of their own pocket for misconduct, they would be a whole lot less likely to commit it in the first place, and there would be a whole lot fewer innocent people being falsely convicted. As long as they are allowed to keep getting away with misconduct, prosecutors are going to keep committing it with sickening regularity.

The public wants to feel safe. But how can they feel safe when prosecutors who are sworn to uphold the law

instead purposely violate it and convict the innocent? Falsely imprisoning anyone threatens the liberty of everyone. It makes everyone feel much less safe and secure in their freedom. None of us are truly free unless we all are.

At no point and for no reason does it ever become permissible for prosecutors to trample on anyone's basic rights. Prosecutors are not above the law. If anything, they should be held to a much higher standard, given their standing.

Courts often overlook and tolerate prosecutorial misconduct because prosecutors are seen as the good guys. Some courts feel that it's perfectly okay for prosecutors to bend the rules and the truth to their advantage because they supposedly have the greater good as their goal. It's the old, "the ends justify the means" excuse. But what about when it turns out the prosecutors are the bad guys? What about when their misconduct causes the conviction of the innocent? Should that be overlooked and tolerated, too?

What if everyone could run around committing crimes without any worry of being held responsible? That's exactly the privilege prosecutors have. They can rob the innocent of their liberty at will and not have to worry about having to answer for it. How can that be right or just?

Prosecutors don't become superior beings by virtue of getting a law degree, law license, and a job in the DA's office. They're still subject to the same universal human condition of weighing their actions against possible consequences. Naturally, if the corrupt among them know they can commit misconduct with impunity, they're going to do so whenever it suits them. It's a recipe for repeated disaster, and a major systemic flaw that must be corrected. ■

**"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).

## See The Light

Jason Geray  
Tehachapi, CA

Tell me what poet has made it this far,  
What poet was made from the dust of a star,  
What poet holds your attention line by line,  
What poet was born to shine...

For the year 2020, who pictured this,  
Caged in a cell raising a fist,  
Power to the people see my temper erupt,  
The whole political system is absolutely corrupt...

Corruption with the prison unions,  
With million dollar deals,  
And prisoners struggling with hunger,  
From 25 cent meals...

We could feed all of the poor,  
If justice was just  
But the prison unions say "Hell no!"  
Or our cattle ranch prisons would go bust...

So star light, star bright,  
A present for the people,  
And its wrapped up real tight,  
Let me get this to the NLG  
So they could get this out tonight...

Wake up the masses and give them hope,  
It's the new slavery, without the hangman's rope.

It was the war on drugs, that was the key to your  
door,  
And all of the judges, that sold us out like whores

So break that prison veil,  
That time has come to an end,  
And look out your cell window,  
At all of the busses they send...

Then tell yourself when you law awake at night,  
God help these prisoners to all see the light.

**(Right) *Untitled***  
by Brian Fuller  
Hondo, TX

Colored paper on cardboard.

## Fighting a Foreign War

Jose E. Roque  
Livingston, TX

As I sit in my cell so very dark and dreary,  
Anxious to plead my case to any ear that will hear me

A victim of a federal system I once risked my life to defend,  
Stuck in this prison industrial complex as a fly trapped in a  
spider's web

Calmly waiting for the federal courts to pull my file and call  
my case,  
The days slowly float away from the calendar on my wall  
without a trace.

Realizing that I'm still here in this federal holding facility as I  
awaken from my mid-day nap,  
It's hard for me to understand that the one here before me  
could save himself by putting his guilt on me saying I am to  
blame for this, this, and that.

I guess it's a game of "if you debrief on him we will let you go."  
As for me, my character and honor will never stoop that low.

So until my release date is upon me and I'm free to walk out  
of this federal prison's front door,  
I am still a soldier fighting a totally different type of foreign  
war.





# My Revolutionary Resurrection

Xinachtli AKA Alvaro Luna Hernandez  
Iowa Park, TX

You have falsified, destroyed our history, after you stole our lands, converting us into foreigners, illegal aliens in our own homeland. But you will never erase our identity, culture, tongue, our Indigenous roots, you so fear and despise. We are a proud, noble, humble, compassionate people, but a valiant, revolutionary one.

We will forever rattle and break these chains, physical and mental ones, you have wrapped on us as your brand of inferiority, to be your domestic wage-slaves. But, we will unite in your factories, and asphalt jungles and reservations and capitalist-profiteering prison cages of mass incarceration, to enrich your class, until we are free of your indoctrinated capitalist filth, your so-called values, morals, your greed, your worship of material wealth and possessions, your white ruling class privileges, your class barbarisms, you have subjected us to. We will unite against you and free Mother Earth you now hold hostage, de-

stroying it for corporate profits.

You may now have me in your racist, prison dungeon cages, and tomorrow you may kill me, but I vow to you and the world, you will never, ever kill my spirit of resistance, for I am of the quality of men that will never die, and will forever live in the hearts and minds of the powerless, the voiceless, the imprisoned, the oppressed. When you bury me, again, this time in a grave, and not in the one you have me in now, I will resurrect from the dead and come back to haunt you, to dispense the revolutionary justice you have so eluded, and to bury your racist, capitalist, imperialist system so deep in a grave you will never, ever rise again to destroy others and Planet Earth.

We are a proud, noble, humble, compassionate people, but a valiant, revolutionary one.

## Technology Nonprofit Ameelio Offers Free Communications Alternatives to Connect with People in Prison



by Ameelio Staff

Our jails are filled with people who haven't been convicted of the crime with which they've been charged. They're there because they can't afford bail.

Once in jail, it can cost up to [\\$25 for a 15-minute](#) phone call. Such exorbitant fees prohibit people from calling family members and witnesses who can help them build their defense. In result, most of those individuals plead guilty, are convicted and serve longer sentences than those who are not detained pretrial.

This injustice is only a piece of the total harm caused by private prison communications.

The prison phone system is a \$1.2 billion industry controlled by Securus Technologies and Global Tel-Link Corp that pulls its profits from the wallets of low-income Americans.

States and local prison systems grant [exclusive contracts](#) to these private companies in exchange for commissions. The companies, in turn, hike up fees to recoup what they have paid in kickbacks. State coffers, and the balance sheets of the [private equity firms](#) who own prison telecom expand as poor families pay the ransom demanded to maintain contact with their loved ones.

One in 3 of these families go into debt because of this system.

And now prisons and jails have [prohibited in-person visitation](#) and limited access to phone calls to mitigate the

spread of the coronavirus. People who are incarcerated are resigned to their cells for up to 23 hours a day with little or no ability to contact family members or other support systems.

Such contact drastically reduces recidivism. Yet it's inaccessible.

Ameelio ([ameelio.org](#)) makes connecting with incarcerated loved ones free and simple. We launched our first product, Letters, as a response to COVID-19 prison visitation suspensions across the country. Users of our web and mobile apps can send free hard-copy letters, photos, and postcards to any incarcerated person in the U.S. criminal justice system.

We also developed Letters for Organizations, a paid option for criminal justice organizations. Our partners use Letters for Organizations to send bulk mail to prisons and jails, to conduct targeted mailing campaigns for recruitment, and to manage volunteers engaged in letter-writing.

We'll soon disrupt the prison telecommunications industry through a suite of communications tools, including the nation's first free video calling software.

But for now, we're bringing families together one letter at a time.

"I'll never forget the sound a letter makes when it slides through your cell door," Richard, a formerly incarcerated user, said. "When I got a letter, the joy it gave me, it could last me a week."

"When I got a letter, the joy it gave me, it could last me a week."

# Legal Empowerment Toolkit Series: A Project of the Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative

The Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative (JLI) aims to ensure that jailhouse lawyers have access to effective and relevant training that equips them to meet the diversity of legal needs of incarcerated people. JLI also advocates for leadership, peer support and trauma responsive skills as a part of jailhouse lawyer training. JLI is a national project of the Legal Empowerment Advocacy Hub (LEAH) and is supported by the Bernstein Institute for Human Rights. The legal empowerment of current and former jailhouse lawyers, and law clerks is only half the battle! Families, community organizers, students and legal communities are central to ending the cycle of incarceration and enabling communities to obtain freedom from the inside out.



JLI believes that justice is best achieved through legal empowerment—a process of learning and practice where individuals and communities gain the knowledge and skills to **know, use and shape** the laws that affect their lives. Through this process, communities can

begin to transform the legal system. One model of legal empowerment is that of community paralegals. Community paralegals are not lawyers, but are trained in basic laws and skills and partner with their fellow community members to solve legal problems together. At their best, community paralegals create a bridge between the law and real life. Jailhouse lawyers and law clerks are community paralegals for people who are incarcerated together.

Nearly every person who goes to a jail or a prison comes across a jailhouse lawyer or law clerk. Law clerks are some of the few people who have access to people who are in solitary confinement, on death row, or in the infirmary. Jailhouse lawyers and law clerks are able to reach a large portion of the incarcerated community with the tools necessary for legal empowerment.

Over the next year, in partnership with NLG's *Guild Notes*, JLI will be releasing justice toolkits, a series of training resources to support the work of jailhouse lawyers. These toolkits will be aimed at practical skills that will help you better **know, use, and shape** the law—and share with your peers to be more confident participating in their own case. The legal system in the US needs transformation. It will not happen until we strengthen the power of people.

Our goal is to create resources that are responsive to your needs. Based on communications JLI has received from jailhouse lawyers and law clerks around the country, a range of topics have been identified. Please let us know if you have a special interest in one or more of the toolkits (our mailing

address is below). We invite you to share other skills areas you would like to learn more about. Our goal is to issue at least four toolkits in 2021!

## Data justice

Most of the data collected about the lives of those incarcerated are collected by the prison systems which hold them. This toolkit will provide skills and training on how jailhouse lawyers can collect, analyze, and use their own data to help advance justice and share stories of truth from the inside.

## Narrative storytelling for policy change

Laws and policy dictate aspects of the daily life of those who are incarcerated. Gain skills on how to tell your story of struggle and change in a way that helps the public understand your lived reality, and that can lead to responsive policy changes.

## Human rights law

Human rights are rights that exist simply because we're human beings. The work of law clerks and jailhouse lawyers is protected by Supreme Court cases like *Bounds v Smith* and *Lewis v Casey* in the United States but it is also protected by international human rights law.

## Legal Research/Legal Writing

Research and writing are the basic tools of any legal advocate. This toolkit will offer tips and strategies to ensure that our research is thorough and our writing effective.

## Motivational interviewing

Creating a space of trust and empathy are essential to building strong relationships with those we work with, especially when we're helping them with their legal needs. Motivational interviewing is a way to guide people through the process of sharing essential information from their case drawing on empathy and shared experiences.

## Conflict resolution

People do not leave behind all the difficulties of their life when they come to the law library to work on a case. It is important to have tools to manage emotions and conflict that come up when addressing legal injustices.

Be on the lookout in future issues of *Guild Notes* for the next toolkit! You can reach JLI at:

**Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative  
Legal Empowerment and Advocacy Hub  
PO BOX 2516  
Alachua, FL 32616**

# Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative: Narrative Project Call for Submissions

Jailhouse lawyers have a profound impact on the legal landscape. The work of some of the fields greatest has started to be recognized: Calvin Duncan, Shon Hopwood, and Derrick Hamilton. Still, many attorneys on the outside view the work of jailhouse lawyers with suspicion and skepticism. JLI wants to change this perception. We know how hard you work to advance the rights of your community members on the inside. Everyday you challenge unjust laws, hold institutions accountable, and create pathways for community members to come home. While the law prevents you from attaching your name on legal cases, we SEE you and all that you do. This work matters; the successes and impacts deserved to be shared.

Towards that end, we are collecting stories of the work of jailhouse lawyers across the country to help shape advocacy demands and uplift the work of jailhouse lawyers. Please share with us the story of your work as a jailhouse lawyer.

We would like to hear about the impact you have had on people's cases as well as the impact that doing this work has had on yourself. What motivated you to enter into this work and what motivates you to continue? What are the biggest challenges that you face in doing your legal work and how have you overcome these challenges? What are the things that need to change, and what do you think is the best way forward in building a movement of jailhouse lawyers?

We would love to hear your story, and have your voice become part of the movement of jailhouse lawyers advocating for better lives, freedom and justice:

**Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative**  
**Legal Empowerment and Advocacy Hub**  
**PO BOX 2516**  
**Alachua, FL 32616**

## Unlock the Bar: A New York Social Movement

Unlock the Bar is a coalition of movement lawyers and law students advocating in New York for a just and equitable legal profession. Recognizing that the Bar admissions process was created to restrict legal power to white men, we formed during the global uprisings for Black liberation to build a legal profession where Black, Brown, and system-impacted voices lead. From law school applications to Bar admissions, the legal profession pushes away voices from the most marginalized communities, perpetuating a classist, elitist, and white supremacist institution. We believe that a truly inclusive, democratized legal system requires the full empowerment and representation of oppressed peoples.

Our present goal is to dismantle the barriers to entry into the legal profession created by the Character and Fitness application. Specifically, we hope to challenge New York State to eliminate all questions about involvement with the legal system including criminal records, family court-involvement, debt, and more, in pursuit of our north-star goal: eliminating the Character and Fitness

application altogether in favor of a process that does not apply a carceral mentality to evaluating lawyers but that teaches lawyers to wield the law for liberative principles.

As we fight this system, we want to hear from those incarcerated in New York. If you plan to join the New York bar after release, we would love to include stories of your work on the inside and how it can strengthen your ability to be an attorney on the outside. We plan for our movement and the change it accomplishes to start a domino effect, ending system-impacted discrimination in every jurisdiction in the country, and to ultimately build true community representation. If you would like to learn more or join, please contact Tolu Lawal (tlawal.tl@gmail.com) and Al Brooks (ajb968@nyu.edu), or write:

**Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative**  
**Legal Empowerment and Advocacy Hub**  
**PO BOX 2516**  
**Alachua, FL 32616**



## 2020 NLG Webinars

The NLG National Office, in collaboration with our many chapters and committees, produced a total of 6 public webinars in 2020 (not counting the nearly 40 events across the #Law4thePeople Convention).

Watch them at [nlg.org/public-webinars](https://nlg.org/public-webinars) or [vimeo.com/nlg](https://vimeo.com/nlg) and stay tuned for more in 2021!



national lawyers guild foundation

**f** /NLGnational   **t** @NLGnews   **i** @nationallawyersguild   **v** /nlg

PO Box 1266  
New York, NY 10009  
[www.nlg.org](http://www.nlg.org)

