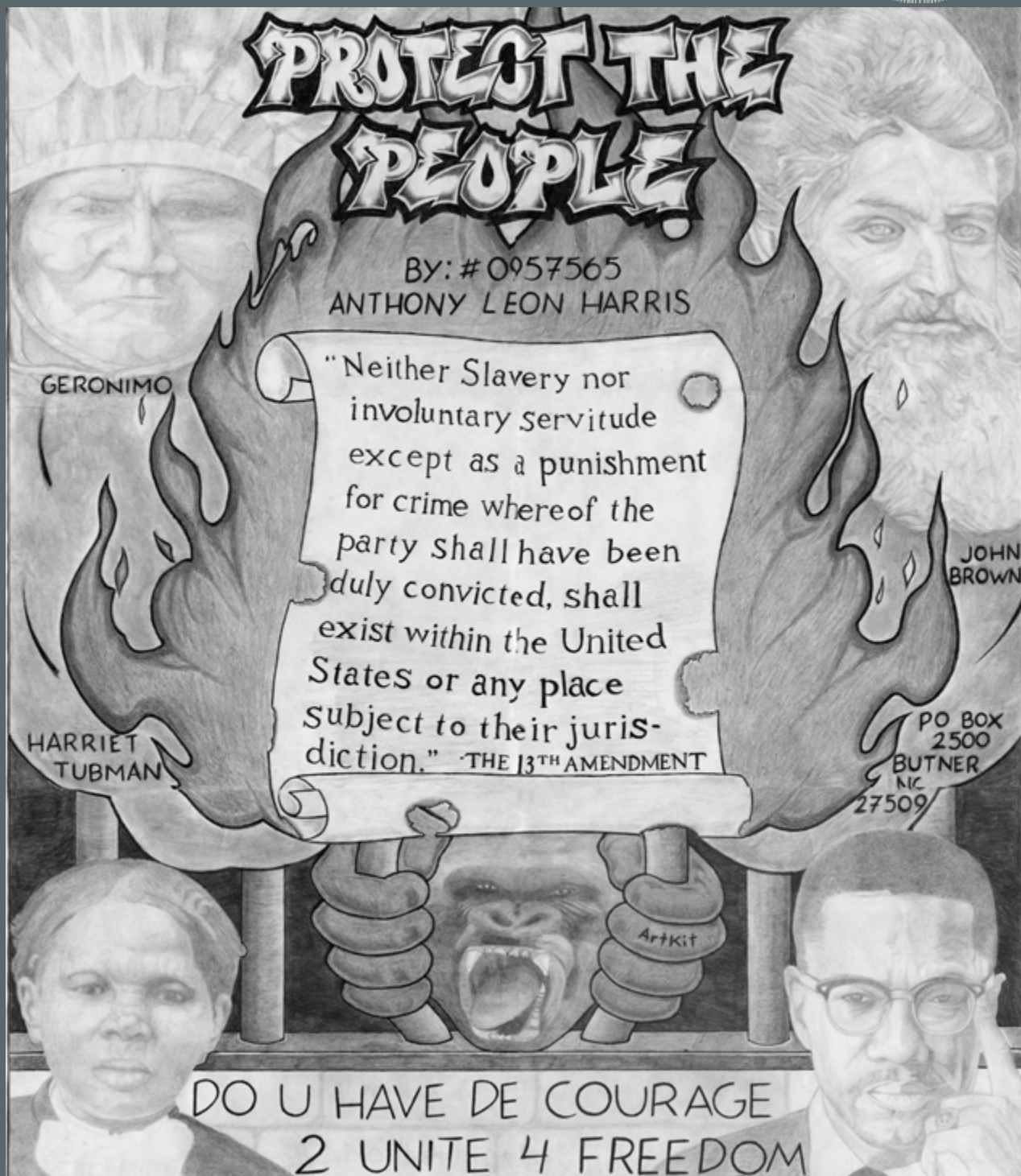


Guild Notes

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Inside this issue:

- Deepening our radical roots in the South at the 2019 #Law4ThePeople Convention in Durham, NC
- NLG Law Students Produce Report on Massachusetts Campus Police
- New Know Your Rights Handbook in Farsi
- Poetry from Jailhouse Lawyers
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NOTE: The views expressed in *Guild Notes* are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NLG as a whole.

Cover Art: Original illustration, "Protect the People" by NLG jailhouse lawyer Anthony Leon Harris, incarcerated in Butner, NC. A poem by the artist, "If Walls Could Talk," appears on p. 19.

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 23, 2020

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

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President's Column



Fruit of Labor Singing Ensemble performing at the 2019 #Law4thePeople Convention plenary.

by Elena Cohen, NLG President

As the decade comes to a close, I would like to take a moment to reflect on our accomplishments, challenges, and ongoing work. In times of deepening crisis, uncertainty, and wide-scale injustice, the Guild and its members have consistently mounted resistance through its vibrant network of those who value human rights over that of property. This is reflected in our most recent [resolutions](#), all passed with the overwhelming support of our members (see p. 12).

With this round of elections, I want to take a moment to recognize our outgoing leadership for their tireless commitment to fighting injustice. Ria Thompson-Washington, Sasha Novis, Maggie Ellinger-Locke, Danny King, Amy Willis and Cameron Green: Thank you all for stepping up and taking on leadership roles within the Guild. Your motivation and passion have helped strengthen all of us on the radical left! I'd also like to welcome our new Treasurer, Amreet Sandhu, Secretary, Dan Gregor, and Student National Vice-President, Luna Martinez Gomez. I am excited to work more closely with all of you!

This year's #Law4ThePeople Convention in Durham, NC was deeply inspiring. We were honored by the attendance of longtime NLG member and civil rights attorney Walter Riley, who grew up in Durham and who is commemorated in the Durham Civil Rights memorial right down the street from where our convention was held. Friday morning's plenary brought organizing labor with an immigration perspective into focus, showing how worker's rights are immigrant rights and setting the tone for an intersectional understanding of issues and solutions.

Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson, the first Black woman executive director of the Highlander Center, delivered an invigorating keynote speech, challenging convention attendees to imagine and articulate the world we want

to see after the movements our radical legal work support win. After we dismantle our existing oppressive structures, what do we build? Ash-Lee encouraged us to ask ourselves, "What time is it on the clock of the National Lawyers Guild?"

Our panels and workshops attempted to answer that question, with speakers on issues including reparations, protecting the right to vote, prison strikes, organizing in the South, how lawyers can support abortion access, exposing U.S. exceptionalism and intervention around the world, decriminalizing sex work, community based environmental justice, asylum and legal support at the Mexico/US Border, anti-immigrant legislation, indigenous struggles to end occupation, and so many more pressing areas.

We were also delighted by a performance by the Fruit of Labor Singing Ensemble. Their songs and music, born out of the struggle of organizing African American workers in the Black Belt region of North Carolina and the South, energized convention attendees into an action-oriented convention.

Our amazing speakers, performers, and members in attendance ensured that the convention was focused on action- moving towards the other world we NLG members know is possible. That world would not be possible without your continued support. Your work keeps the Guild alive and functioning as an invaluable organization and political force for generations of radical lawyers, legal workers, law students and jailhouse lawyers. Now more than ever, the Guild needs your help. It needs your commitment, passion, energy, and perhaps most importantly, it needs funding. With support from all of us, the Guild will continue to flourish and stand as a vanguard in these troubling times.

In Solidarity,
Elena L. Cohen
NLG President

In Memory of Chas Ransom

by Luna Garzón-Montano, 2019 Haywood Burns Fellow

[The Parole Preparation Project \(PPP\)](#) of the [NLG-NYC Chapter](#) was co-founded by now Executive Director Michelle Lewin and Nora Carroll in 2013. Parole Prep works with incarcerated people who are eligible for parole. In New York State, when someone is eligible for parole, they appear before the Board of Commissioners of Parole for a short interview—but cannot have an advocate with them. Parole Prep trains volunteers to help applicants prepare for these hearings. Additionally, volunteers request prison and medical records, obtain letters of support, and draft advocacy letters to the Commissioners. Upon release, PPP welcomes applicants home at its annual Welcome Home celebration. I became involved with PPP in 2015 when I learned that the Project would be assisting Chas Ransom.

I met Chas in 2013. I was one of ten Vassar students who traveled to and from Otisville Correctional Facility every Tuesday for class. I had never been to a prison, and my knowledge of them, and the people inside, was minimal. With each passing week, I was struck by one of the Otisville students: Chas. When he walked into the classroom, his presence commanded the attention of the room. He always smiled, truly appreciative of the opportunity to be among peers learning and exchanging ideas.

Halfway through the semester I learned that Chas was 29 years into an indeterminate sentence of 25-years-to-life imprisonment for second-degree murder. At this point, he had been denied parole three times. Years later, in conversations about redemption, Chas would say, “people will believe it when they see it.” Knowing Chas was knowing that people are more than their worst mistake. And it wasn’t because of anything he said. It was who he was. Knowing him was to believe in redemption.

In 2015, he was denied parole for the fourth time. The Commissioners cited the nature of the offense, a fixed event. In subsequent conversations with Chas, we discussed how the Commissioners were unable to recognize redemption in someone convicted of a serious crime; that their understanding of humanity was limited.

In 2017, after 33 years, Chas was finally granted parole. A few weeks later, Michelle Lewin and I went to pick him up at Otisville. As we drove away from the prison, Chas let out a sigh. “I’m so glad to be going somewhere without shackles. Now it’s on to the road out there,” he said, pointing ahead. We spent the day doing what would have otherwise been mundane tasks: going to the bank, stopping by the supermarket, buying clothes and toiletries. Observing Chas highlighted things I took for granted. Upon leaving the bank, Chas stared at the money he held in his hands. In prison, this was contraband. At the supermarket, he marveled at all of the options. In prison, his choices have been limited to the commissary list.

In October I received a devastating call. Chas had suffered a fatal heart attack. He had been home three months, not even long enough to attend his Welcome Home party. In the moments of confusion following Chas’s death, I felt fortunate enough to know exactly what he would have wanted me to do. Chas believed in redemption, in doing the personal work most of us shy away from, in creating, in fighting, and in giving back.

This past week I attended Parole Prep’s annual Welcome Home celebration. I thought of my time as a volunteer for the Project and I thought of Chas. Each of the applicants who had been released took to the stage to share a small piece of their story and give thanks to PPP and the volunteers. When you work with an applicant you give your time and your energy, but what you receive in return is unparalleled. As volunteers, we learn that good people can make

terrible mistakes, that everyone has dignity, and that these two things are simultaneously true. We see firsthand how, as a society, we do not give people room to change, yet we punish them for what they cannot change. We work with people who understand most deeply what it means to forgive. Watching the applicants on stage I couldn’t help but feel that we should be the ones giving thanks. ■

The Parole Preparation Project works with people who are incarcerated serving life sentences in New York State. Their website is paroleprepnyc.org and their mailing address is 168 Canal St 6th Floor, New York, NY 10013.



Photo of Chas Ransom by the author, driving away from Otisville Prison after being released.

NLG Students Produce Report on Massachusetts Campus Police

by Chase Childress, Christine Farolan (NUSL NLG), and Alex Stein (NLG Chicago)

Ahead of the annual [NLG Week Against Mass Incarceration](#), NLG members from Northeastern Law and Chicago NLG have produced a report on private campus police forces using the Northeastern University Police Department as a case study. We encourage

all NLG student chapters to conduct similar research on the private campus police forces at their schools and share the results! Please check out the [full report](#) as well as [this guide to replicating the project](#).

In recognizing racist and systemic police violence around the country and considering the presence of private police officers all around our law school campus, we sought to investigate the legal authority governing those officers. We are law students from Northeastern University, and we wanted to ask: What is the source of authority for campus police, and how are they able to operate in essentially the same manner as state or local police officers? To answer these questions, we analyzed statutory and case law for Massachusetts and attempted to gather as much information as possible on the activities of Northeastern University's police force in particular. We then documented all of our findings in a comprehensive report now available to the public, titled ["Who is Protected and Who is Served: The Gap Between Massachusetts Campus Police Authority and Action."](#)

We found that campus police appear to be operating in a gap between the judicial interpretation of their authority and the authority granted to them in practice by employing institutions. Private police in Massachusetts have the statutory power to make arrests in certain circumstances, and nothing more. Even when further empowered as deputy sheriffs, campus police officers and departments are seemingly acting beyond the bounds of their statutory authority. Additionally, based on our case study of Northeastern University Police Department (NUPD), campus police are not subject to public accountability regarding the availability of their data. Campus police are mandated to maintain a record of and provide information on arrests, stops, and some demographic data on who is stopped to members of the public upon request. However, Northeastern's independent student newspaper, *The Huntington News*, provided much more comprehensive

information on campus police activity than the records we obtained from NUPD itself.

Our case study of Northeastern in particular showed that NUPD most frequently interacts with members of the public, with only one fourth of their logged incidents being reported by someone definitively affiliated with the university involving another university-affiliated person. Between August 2017 and October 2018, NUPD almost exclusively responded to "quality of life" violations such as public intoxication and noise com-



Northeastern University Campus Police Department [patrol car](#) by Mbta108 (Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 license).

plaints, and minor thefts of backpacks and bicycles. Despite this—and consistent with the broader trend of police militarization—they also carry assault rifles and have the capacity for inflicting massive violence, as campus police around the country have done. We conclude that campus police in Massachusetts enjoy imbalanced privacy from public scrutiny compared to their statutorily-granted level of authority. In short, while NUPD effectively operates in a way indistinguishable from public police forces like Boston Police Department, NUPD is shielded from the same level of public scrutiny and accountability as public police forces.

We encourage NLG student chapters at other schools around the country to conduct a similar exercise. We found the process to be enlightening and, above all, concerning. We hope that students find our one-page [Guide to Interrogating Campus Police as Law Students](#) helpful, and we are open to being contacted at nuslcriminallaw-project@gmail.com if we can be supportive in some way! ■



Download the report at bit.ly/MassCampusPolice

Resource Links:

- Full Report: <http://bit.ly/MassCampusPolice>
- Guide to Interrogating Campus Police as Law Students: <http://bit.ly/LawStudentGuideCampusPolice>
- 2020 Week Against Mass Incarceration: nlg.org/wami

Law Students Against ICE Takes on Westlaw & LexisNexis Data Contracts

by Anna Nathanson, Harvard NLG

Westlaw and LexisNexis are ubiquitous across the legal field as the foremost legal research services. But at law schools across the country, students are drawing attention to these companies' role in the United States' violently racist immigration system. Westlaw's parent company Thomson Reuters, and LexisNexis's parent company RELX, both have large-scale data contracts with ICE. Thomson Reuters profits from six distinct contracts with ICE for an estimated value of over \$54 million. These include its CLEAR platform and its license plate reader database. Meanwhile, in 2013 ICE called the databases it accesses through its LexisNexis contracts "mission critical". (To read in depth about Thomson Reuters and RELX's data contracts with ICE, see Sarah Lamdan's ["When Westlaw Fuels Ice Surveillance: Legal Ethics in the Era of Big Data Policing"](#)). In short, these data contracts are helping ICE target immigrants for arrest, caging, and deportation.

So, Law Students Against ICE was founded in response—we feel that Westlaw and Lexis's contracts with ICE is a practice we are in a unique position to challenge. Westlaw and Lexis get so many special privileges from law school administrations — from access to student listservs, to space to hold sponsored research training, to free closet space — that they have a lot of exposure on law school campuses. We felt we had a contribution we could make to the larger #NoTechforICE and immigrant rights movements. NLG student chapters make up the base of the Law Students Against ICE backbone, and NLG student support has been a big part of what has allowed us to expand so

rapidly.

Soon after our group put out feelers, we were connected to Mijente, who had already been planning a petition against Thomson Reuters and RELX's collaboration with ICE. Mijente, the Immigration Defense Project, Researchers Against Surveillance, and Law Students Against Ice launched a joint "Drop Your Contracts!" petition, which can be found at notechforice.com/lawletter/. It already has over a thousand signatories.

Then, on our November 14th Day of Action, Law Students Against ICE members at law schools across the country held teach-ins, put up posters demanding #NoDataforICE, and tabled to discuss the issue with classmates. LexisNexis has signaled it is feeling the pressure from students' efforts, giving all of its campus representatives talking points that attempt to minimize the significance of its data contracts with ICE. A LexisNexis representative even reached out to the National Lawyers Guild asking the Guild to stop its students from targeting LexisNexis.

Law Students Against ICE looks forward to escalating its demands against Thomson Reuters and RELX from campus to campus. All attorneys, law students, legal workers, librarians, and law professors are encouraged to support their work by signing the petition at notechforice.com/lawletter/. Law students can also indicate on the petition that they want to get involved with the student organizing efforts.

Follow Law Students Against ICE on Twitter @ [nocontracts4ice](#) and Instagram: [@LawStudentsAgainstICE](#)

NLG Students Stand Up for Reproductive Justice

by David Gespass, NLG Past President

In 2019, a wave of anti-choice bills swept through state legislatures as anti-abortion politicians moved to restrict access to abortion across the country. After passing an organizational resolution opposing the criminalization of people's reproductive lives in 2019, Guild members have organized to write and submit amicus briefs in states where these bills are under consideration.

The Trump administration's appointment of historic numbers of federal judges and two Supreme Court justices has sparked the passage of laws in at least nine states designed to challenge and overrule *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the decision that protected a woman's right to a safe and legal abortion. With Catholic reactionary ideologue and Federalist Society stalwart Leonard Leo selecting Trump's judicial picks, there is good reason to think that *Roe* is doomed, whether in one fell swoop or by a thousand cuts.

With the rash of Federalist Society judges now deciding important issues of privacy and personal liberty, it is clear that reliance on precedents like *Roe*, which emphasize indi-

vidual rights, will be less and less persuasive to the emerging federal bench. To that end, law professor and NLG Review editor Brendan Beery wrote an article titled, ["How to Argue Liberty Cases in a Post-Kennedy World: It's Not About Individual Rights, But State Power and the Social Compact."](#) Beery's argument is that challenges should focus on intrusive and overreaching government laws and regulations, rather than on the privacy rights of individuals.

With the passage of ever more restrictive laws limiting abortion rights came the dubious opportunity to test this thesis. Professor Beery and two of his students drafted a template based on his article, and over a dozen NLG law students volunteered to draft amicus briefs based on that thesis and tailored to each of the various state laws. Guild students are currently working under the supervision of Guild attorneys on briefs to submit in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Ohio, and Utah.

There remains a danger that judges will find that fetuses are "persons" under the Fourteenth Amendment and therefore entitled to "life, liberty or property." For strict

continued on following page

In Memoriam: Bob Wollheim (1948-2019)

by Steven Goldberg and Larry Kleinman
NLG-Portland

Our friend, comrade, and long-time Portland Guild Member Bob Wollheim died on September 21, 2019. He's survived by his three sons, a wonderful grandson, countless friends and colleagues, and a legacy of doing amazing work.

Bob grew up on the south side of Chicago and came to Oregon to attend Reed College—years later he finished his BA at Portland State. The transfer and hiatus was due to Bob's principled and brave decision to resist the military draft during the Vietnam War. Judge Gus Solomon in US District Court in Portland convicted Bob of refusing induction. He was sentenced and served four months at the federal minimum security prison at Safford, Arizona before his conviction and sentence were reversed on a technicality of administrative procedure.

Bob spent years working as a paralegal and then went to law school, graduating from Lewis & Clark in 1983. As Bob delighted in recounting, Judge Solomon swore him in as an attorney. During all this time, he was an active member of the Portland Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild.

Bob's specialty was workers' compensation, eventually including a sub-specialty in appellate work mostly on those issues. Bob made a point of traveling to nearby Woodburn to advise and represent members of Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), Oregon's farmworker union. Bob went on to serve on the board of the Willamette Valley Law Project, PCUN's sister corporation. He always prized his solid relationship with unions and union members.

In March, 1998, Gov. Kitzhaber appointed Bob to the Oregon Court of Appeals. At Bob's swearing in, he delivered one of his classic punch lines, pointing out that he was one of the very few judges who had done time before being appointed to the bench. Bob won election to a full six-year term in 1998, and then was re-elected in 2004 and 2010 before retiring in 2014. He drew a challenger in 2004 and Bob's past "criminal" history did come up in a few of

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constructionists who look to the intent of the written word, one would think that would not be an issue, since the Amendment protects "persons born . . . in the United States." On its face, that would seem to preclude the unborn or preborn but originalists' capacity for sophistry is not to be underestimated. To that end, I added a section to the briefs arguing that fetuses are not persons contemplated by the Fourteenth Amendment, a position endorsed even by Antonin Scalia.

The cases have moved fairly quickly through the district courts, as the statutes were intentionally written to be unconstitutional under current law. Only judges willing to defy the law (an oxymoron, but one that cannot be discounted in the present environment, viz. Roy Moore)

the newspaper editorials (he universally won endorsement). Many unions and community organizations endorsed him and he won handily. Bob underscored his bond with the union and farmworker communities by holding his retirement party at PCUN's Risberg Hall in Woodburn. He remained a proud Guild member throughout this legal and judicial career.

His pursuit of justice, however, did not end with his retirement. A few years ago, Bob traveled to Dilley, Texas to do work for a week at the immigration detention center there, joining students from Lewis & Clark who Bob always supported and inspired. He also went to an international lawyers conference in Brussels sponsored by the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, an organization the Guild works closely with. People were so impressed that a Court of Appeals Judge was principled enough to be willing to attend such a Leftist political meeting.

Bob was smart and principled and funny (in a dry humor kind of way) and committed to serving so many people--as a lawyer and as a judge--people who sought justice for themselves and/or to uphold justice more broadly.

We are in very good company among the many who will deeply miss Bob and who will hold him in a place of honor as a true mensch.

Bob Wollheim, ¡Presente! ■



would do anything but strike the statutes down and allow their decisions to be appealed. The Guild anticipates filing amici in the circuit courts and, when one or more reaches the Supreme Court, to file them there as well. The intent is to give the judges the choice between adhering to the originalist principles they claim to espouse or exposing those supposed principles as smokescreens for decisions dictated by the desired outcome and not by any adherence to law or precedent. We hope for the former, but fear the latter.

This piece was originally posted to the NLG Blog on 11/25/19 at www.nlg.org/nlg-students-stand-up-for-reproductive-justice/ ■

A Message From Past NLG President, David Gespass



Dear NLG Family,

The National Lawyers Guild has been the center of what we laughingly refer to as my professional life since my senior year in law school nearly 50 years ago. Even though

that relationship has not always been smooth, mainly because I was such an asshole when I was younger, I have remained and participated in many varied ways, from our student chapter demanding our school admit more Black students (there were four when I was there) and transforming the school, to even serving as president. Over the years, and particularly during my time on the NEC, I've become ever more aware of how critical

adequate funding is to our work. Indeed, I am in awe of all we have done and have dreamt of how much we could do if we had even one-tenth the funding of the ABA.

I know that you too have helped defend people's resistance struggles and trust, in these perilous times, you will continue to do so. Now, in the face of increasing repression and growing threats, it is incumbent on all of us to do even more to further our mission.

If you are 70½ or older, like me, you may also be interested in a way to lower the income taxes from your IRA withdrawals. An IRA charitable rollover is a way you can do this while also continuing to protect and defend human rights. Check out the information below to see if you can join me in making a special gift!

In solidarity,

David Gespass

Make tax-free charitable gifts directly from your Individual Retirement Account

To qualify:

- You must be age 70½ or older at the time of gift.
- Contributions must be made directly from a traditional IRA account by your IRA administrator to the National Lawyers Guild Foundation.
- Gifts from 401k, 403b, SEP and other plans do not qualify. Ask your financial advisor if it would be right for you to create a traditional IRA account so you can benefit from the IRA Charitable Transfer.

Benefits:

- Satisfy your required minimum distribution for the year.
- Avoid taxes on transfers of up to \$100,000 annually.
- Reduce your taxable income, even if you don't itemize deductions.
- Make a gift that is not subject to deduction limits on

charitable donations.

- Further the work and mission of the National Lawyers Guild

How an IRA charitable rollover gift works:

- Contact your IRA plan administrator to make a gift from your IRA to the National Lawyers Guild Foundation.
- Your IRA funds will be directly transferred to the NLG Foundation to help continue our important work.
- Please note that because IRA charitable rollover gifts reduce your taxable income, they do not qualify for a charitable deduction.
- Please contact nlgfoundation@nlg.org for more information or if you wish for your gift to be used for a specific purpose.

Please note: This information is not intended as tax or legal advice. We recommend that you consult with your legal and financial advisors.

NEW Know Your Rights Handbook in Farsi

The NLG handbook, "You Have the Right to Remain Silent: A Know Your Rights Guide for Law Enforcement Encounters" is now available in Farsi (Persian)!

A HUGE thank you to the **Iranian American Bar Association - New York Chapter** for this translation! Visit their website at iaba.us/chapters/new-york.

In addition to Farsi/Persian, our KYR handbooks are available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Urdu, and Bengali. All are available for free download at nlg.org/kyr.



Announcing the NLG Foundation Guild Grants Recipients!

By Daniel McGee, NLG Foundation Managing Director place immigration raids and I-9 audits.

The NLG Foundation (NLGF) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2019 Guild Grants! Now in its fifth year, the Guild Grants Program continues to support NLG chapters, committees and projects by providing small grants up to \$5,000 each. These grants help build the Guild by funding innovative projects that will lead to an increase in membership while also strengthening programmatic work and enhancing coordination across the Guild as a whole.

In the latest grant cycle, eight projects received small grants. These projects were selected from a total of 19 requests for funding. The NLGF Grants Selection Committee reviewed the applications and prioritized projects that could serve as a template or example for other chapters and committees, those that would encourage membership growth especially in under-resourced areas, as well as the project's ability to raise matching funds and to carry out and promote the proposed work.

We are excited about the depth of programming that is being proposed across the country. So many chapters and projects are collaborating with community partners to provide critical resources to the broader community while creating opportunities for members to deepen their involvement with the Guild.

The NLGF is proud to support the work of the following projects, committees, and chapters through this small grants program.

Guild Grants Recipients:

Labor & Employment Committee to hold a training program to prepare unions and labor organizers for work-

Delaware-New Jersey NLG Chapter Prisoners Legal Advocacy Network (PLAN) to publicize the collection and analysis of data tracking prisoner reports of unconstitutional conditions of confinement.

District of Columbia NLG Chapter in collaboration with the Maryland NLG Chapter and the Black Identity

Extremism Abolition Collective (BIEAC) to conduct community-based education and strategy sessions to decrease the federal, state and local governments' surveillance programs that target black and brown activists.

St. Louis NLG Chapter Pro Se Asylum Clinic Project to help

preserve the rights of immigrants in Immigration Court through legal clinics, court observation, and accompaniment.

Notre Dame Law School NLG Chapter to provide immigration-focused volunteer opportunities for NLG law students in collaboration with La Casa de Amistad, a local nonprofit.

Massachusetts NLG Chapter Street Law Clinic Project to up-

date Street Law Clinic booklets, train more lawyers and students, increase the number of workshops offered and to share materials across the NLG.

Georgia State University College of Law NLG Chapter to launch the "Freedom is Sweet" speaker series on Prison Abolition.

Southern Florida NLG Chapter to create a pro/low bono project for immigrants and low-income community members while also providing trainings and resources for volunteer attorneys. ■



Black and Brown Activism Defense Collective strategy session in Baltimore with NLG DC and Maryland Chapters.



Massachusetts NLG Chapter Street Law Clinic Project

¡El Pueblo No Se Rinde Carajo! An NLG Delegation to Colombia

by Alexandra Hernandez

In solidarity with Lazos de Dignidad, defenders of human rights recently threatened by paramilitary forces for defending the rights of ex-combatants.

In light of the recent alarming events that threaten, once again, the human rights of the people of Colombia and Latin America, the National Lawyers Guild sent a delegation to Colombia in August 2019. Aiming to establish a solidarity network between human rights defenders in Colombia and the US, the delegation met with key human rights groups, victims' organizations, and social leaders in conflict-stricken areas.

Ever since the signing of the 2016 Peace Agreement with FARC-EP (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), the transition into "peace" has been tainted by not only systematic attacks against social leaders, human rights defenders, and demobilized ex-combatants, but also the re-victimization of Indigenous and Black communities and other groups who seek reinstitution of land rights and governmental protection. These human rights concerns are now revealing the five decades of struggle for economic and political control at the hands of the far-right political elites, paramilitaries, and guerillas over regions of abundant natural resources. Hence, the delegation continued its solidarity work in Latin America, this occasion in Colombia, due to its geopolitical importance, the continuation of an "extractionist" far-right government, and the continuous political and military influence of the U.S. Thanks to the visits to different territories: Bogota, Buenaventura, Cali, and La Balza in Northern Cauca — the delegation witnessed the daily struggle of these communities to find the voice subdued by the violence and systematic attacks that aim to marginalize and take control over the most vulnerable populations of the country.

The delegation started its work in Bogota, meeting with human rights defenders, victims' organizations, and with the Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), the mechanism of transitional and restorative justice established to deal with the transition process with FARC. There, the overwhelming evidence provided by all of these organizations highlighted the shortcomings of the Colombian government in terms of peace. Human rights lawyers and defenders, along with their families, are constantly under threat of violence or



Children fly a kite in Buenaventura where the delegation visited an Afro-Colombian community fighting to defend their land and rights to basic services like water, energy, and housing.

death for defending ex-combatants and victims; members of victims' organizations try to work around a "Victim's Law" that legitimized the dispossession of their land and does not recognize their losses and trauma; and lastly, the only independent mechanism of transitional justice, the JEP, proves insufficient as it is constantly limited by a government that does not believe in the peace process. Then, the visits to Buenaventura, Cali, and Cauca proved that the interest of the Colombian government is not restorative justice. Buenaventura and Cauca are both great examples of how being a geostrategic territory is the violent burden that Black and Indigenous communities there have to live with. With plans to make Buenaventura "a seaport with no people" and the Cauca region a territory for megaprojects such as hydroelectric industry, extraction of minerals, monoculture plantations, and drug trafficking, these vulnerable communities are now facing the dangers of a conflict that is changing its dynamic to defend the interests of capitalist and political elites. Thus, in efforts to create an organized process of visualization, these organizations confided in our delegation how imperative it is to establish an international support network. The people of Colombia need a helping hand that will assist in the fighting against these strategies of displacement and social control that aim to have these communities leave their territory to "others". ■

NLG Participates in Anti-Imperialism Convening in Cuba

by Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan, NLG Past President



In November 2019, nearly 1500 activists, lawyers, union leaders, teachers, students and representatives of social and political movements throughout Latin America attended the Anti-imperialist Convening of Solidarity for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism in Havana, Cuba. The Guild participated in this precedential showing of regional solidarity, which included numerous sessions on strengthening democracy, challenging unilateral sanctions and economic intervention and stopping neoliberal presence and policies throughout the world. Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel, former President Raul Castro and President Nicholas Maduro of Venezuela were all in attendance. ■

2019 #LAW4THEPEOPLE

Oct. 16-20, 2019 Durham, NC



Right to left, top to bottom: [Row 1] NLG law student Michael Podgurski of John Marshall School of Law receives the CB King Award; Azadeh Shahshahani (left) receives the Ernie Goodman Award, presented by Jeanne Mirer (right); Brigada Legal Solidaria founders Nicole Marie Diaz Gonzalez (left) and Mariana Nogales-Molinelli (right) receive the Arthur Kinoy Award for their legal support efforts for protesters in Puerto Rico; [Row 2] Denyse Sabagh accepts the Carol Weiss King Award from the National Immigration Project of the NLG; Leoyla Cowboy (left) receives the Legal Worker Award for her work with the Water Protector Legal Collective, presented by WPLC Co-director Carl Williams (left); Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson of the Highlander Center delivers an electrifying keynote address; [Row 3] Judy Somberg (left) receives the Debra Evenson "Venceremos" award from the International Committee, pictured with Executive Director of NLG Massachusetts Ursula Masny-Latos; Jim Craig (left) accepts the Law for the People Award on behalf of the MacArthur Justice Center -Louisiana Office for their work representing protesters for Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, with by Michael Avery (right).



2019 NLG VOTING RESULTS: RESOLUTIONS & OFFICER ELECTIONS

At the second plenary of the 2019 Convention, Guild members presented proposed resolutions which went to the full membership for an online vote after the convention. All passed. See below for the results and read the full text of the resolutions at nlg.org/about/bylaws-and-resolutions

Resolutions



Outgoing NLG Student National Vice President Sasha Novis speaking at the first plenary of the convention.

Candidates:

Treasurer: Amreet Sandhu: 56.61%

Secretary (following a runoff of an exact tie!): Dan Gregor: 58%

Updated 2019 Resolution Supporting Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions

YES: 82.75% NO: 5.28% ABSTAIN: 11.97%

Resolution Supporting Reparations for Slavery and Racial Discrimination Against Africans and African Descendants, Including Compensation for Forced Labor, Stolen Land and Protracted Trauma, Pain and Suffering

YES: 91.58% NO: 3.51% ABSTAIN: 4.91%

Resolution Against Illegal Occupation of Hawaiian Islands

YES: 78.37% NO: 4.61% ABSTAIN: 17.02 %

Resolution Opposing Selective Service and the Draft

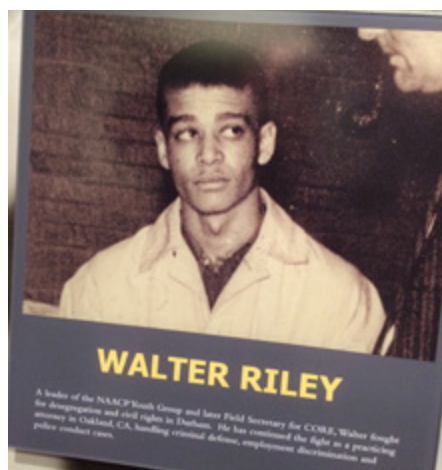
YES: 61.7% NO: 14.54% ABSTAIN: 23.76%

Emergency Resolution: Opposing the Latest Attacks on Cuba's Sovereignty

YES: 89.75% NO: 0.71% ABSTAIN: 9.54%

Emergency Resolution: On Academic Freedom - YES

YES: 87.19% NO: 0.71% ABSTAIN: 12.1%



THEN & NOW

Left: A photo of a young Walter Riley, recipient of the 2015 #Law4thePeople Award, was spotted by NLG member Art Heitzer at an exhibit at the Carolina Theater, just blocks away from the 21c hotel where the convention was held.

As Art writes, "The exhibit documents the successful attempt by Walter, as part of the NAACP Youth Council, and others to end the racial segregation in the theater, which had only allowed African-American patrons in the upper balcony, and they were denied use of the elevator to get there."

Right: Walter Riley speaks about growing up in the Civil Rights Era in Durham at the 2019 awards dinner.



From left to right, top to bottom:
 [Row 1] Current NLG president Elena Cohen (left) with immediate past president Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan; NLG Massachusetts members post for a photo before the keynote address; NLG North Carolina (our 2019 host chapter!) members fundraising for the chapter with custom convention merch [Row 2] Libertie of the Asheville, NC worker-owned anarchist bookstore, Firestorm Books; NLG national office staff at the registration table; Guest speaker Kyla Hartsfield of Southerners on New Ground (SONG) addresses attendees at the Smash the Patriarchy Brunch; [Row 3] NLG students raise their fists following the annual Student Caucus; NLG Portland members pose for a photo; [Row 4] NLG NYC members huddle for a photo for the joint NIPNLG and NPAP reception; NLG national office staff with Anti-Racism Committee Co-Chairs.



National Police Accountability Project Celebrates 20 Years

By Rachel A. Pickens, Executive Director of the National Police Accountability Project

In celebration of our 20th anniversary, the National Police Accountability Project (NPAP) had a large presence at the 2019 #Law4thePeople Convention. We started the convention with the day-long CLE, Framing Your Case: Building Power Through Litigation. Co-hosted by Law 4 Black Lives (L4BL), this seminar addressed how to create and support movement building through litigation strategies and tactics. Proudly, our panelists and speakers were mainly of women and people of color.

Marbre Stahley-Butts, founder of L4BL, started the day with an engaging presentation on the foundational principles of movement lawyering. Following were presentations and interactive discussions on how

litigators can position their efforts in coordination with community power building.

Afterwards, NPAP co-hosted a reception with the National Immigration Project (NIP). Michael Avery, NPAP Board President, gave a short speech about the history of NPAP and its future. As the first and current board president, the organization presented him an award for his leadership and dedication to the organization.

At the Saturday plenary, the celebration continued with a presentation on NPAP's founding, its successes, current health, and its future.

NPAP has an active list serve on which members exchange information daily, with over five hundred plaintiff's lawyers and legal workers across the country, and a new website that can be found at npapjustice.org. ■



Clockwise from top: *New York Times* article on NPAP's first CLE in 1999, included in plenary presentation; Michael Avery, NPAP Board President and Rachel A. Pickens, NPAP Executive Director; Attendees at the NPAP CLE in Durham, NC.

Mass Defense Committee Wraps Up 2019 With Strong Focus on Protest Support

by the MDC Steering Committee

The NLG Mass Defense Committee (MDC) had a busy year as resistance continued across the country and around the world. Whether the protests have been against pipelines and environment devastation, neofascism and white supremacy, police murders, ICE policies that are sending children and adults to concentration camps and destroying families, efforts to build a horrendous border wall, or any of the other myriad causes that sparked resistance this year, 2019 kept everyone involved in the NLG's mass defense organizing in overdrive. Much of this work was focused on in-depth at the MDC meeting at the 2019 #Law4thePeople Convention in Durham, NC.

More than 60 members converged to focus on the successes of 2019 and to talk about what to expect in 2020—including the Democratic National Convention (in Milwaukee) and Republican National Convention (in Charlotte). We also discussed two notable legal support efforts: cases involving the necessity defense, and the multifaceted refugee support along the southern US border. For the necessity defense, the Washington State Supreme Court ruled that this defense can be used at trial, allowing a climate justice activist there to move on to his second re-trial, where he is anticipated to use this defense. The Minnesota State Supreme Court issued a similar ruling allowing the use of the necessity defense in the “valve-turner” cases.

The solidarity organizing along the US-Mexico border is an impressive and ongoing effort involving a range of organizations, activists, and community resources on both sides of the border as both countries’ policies are keeping tens of thousands of migrants and refugees from throughout Central America (and around the world) trapped in Mexico and, more recently, Guatemala. On-the-ground legal support has looked different than it often does in the US; for example, in Mexico, it’s illegal to record or photograph the police. NLG members and others created guidelines for border monitoring in Mexico, allowing organizers to collect and share information. They have also provided support to migrants they wind their way through the agonizingly slow and corrupt immigration bureaucracies of both countries. Earlier this year, an NLG delega-

tion produced the report, [Stranded: Forced Migration, Illegal Barriers to Asylum, and the Humanitarian Crisis in Tijuana](#). The urgent need for support and solidarity is expected to continue into 2020.

At the meeting, members also spent time connecting in break-out groups, focusing on two key questions: 1) “What can the MDC do to support and contribute to your mass defense work?”; and 2) “What are the recent trends in protest law and practices you think are relevant nationwide?” Members engaged in rich exchanges about the conditions members are facing in different regions, as well as opportunities to brainstorm how the MDC can support members in their work.

The MDC Steering Committee (SC) was also particularly excited to share a new version of the Legal Observer (LO) training manual with MDC members. A complete overhaul of this important training resource was years in the making and eagerly awaited by LO training programs nationwide. It was produced collectively by the Steering Committee and was professionally edited and formatted to help make it a strong internal resource for this important function of mass defense organizing. Expanding on previous training resources, it provides updated guidance on LO skills, particularly ones focused on keeping each other safe in the streets and maintaining focus on protesters’ rights in high-stress situations created by police. Additions to the manual include sections on dealing with primary and secondary trauma while LOing, challenging the privileges we bring to this work that can negatively affect other NLG members/volunteers and the communities we’re in solidarity with, and performing this crucial role in dangerous situations involving violent white supremacists. The LO manual was one of the top strategic priorities identified by members at the 2018 Convention (as well as training resources in general), and the MDC SC focused on it throughout the year to bring it about. Yet there are many more priorities that have yet to be met, and the MDC SC is still struggling to find the capacity it needs to tackle all these strategic priorities.

If you want to join us, new members are welcome at any point! To join the MDC Steering Committee, contact any current member of it, or reach out to the chair, Jude Ortiz, at jude.ortiz@riseup.net.■



National Lawyers Guild 2019 Annual Report

New! NLG 2019 Annual Report

The NLG sure was busy in 2019! Check out all you helped us accomplish this year in this newly released publication summarizing the NLG's activities.

Download it at www.nlg.org/2019-annual-report

BEYOND BARS

Voices of NLG Jailhouse Lawyers

Update on Inside Jailhouse Lawyer VP Election

Thank you so much to all those who sent in their candidate statements for the inside jailhouse lawyer VP election. We received an overwhelming number of statements from interested candidates, and at this time are not ready to proceed with the election as planned due to unforeseen logistical challenges. We are following up with everyone who wrote in and will notify all jailhouse lawyer members about next steps later on this year. Again, we apologize for the delay and we truly appreciate hearing from all of you and learning more about what issues are important to you as valued jailhouse lawyer members of the Guild.

Are Prison Law Libraries Set Up to Fail?

By Jeffrey Isabell-Taylor
New Haven, MI

Prison law libraries are the last line of defense for those appealing convictions. Usually incarcerated individuals rely on these libraries as the only way to seek justice and gain their freedom.

However, here in Michigan, we are given restrictions and limitations that effectively turn our law libraries into a bad joke. We are restricted to no more than 4 hours per week. All material is on the computer, but no class on the use of the program, Lexis Nexis, is offered. We are also told that if we have a GED or diploma, we are too smart to qualify for legal writer assistance. As a result, we have no choice but to go through it by ourselves.

The version of Lexis Nexis that Michigan uses gives us access to court rules as case law rulings, but has a vital flaw. We do not have access to a brief bank, like the legal writers do. Every motion someone tries to write is like reinventing the wheel. Why is that?

The answer is not “security” because the inmates who are legal writers have access. The answer is not cost, because it would only require one or two computers dedicated to a brief bank and the Prisoners Benefit Fund, money donated by prisoners, would pay for it.

So why does the department of Corrections not offer basic training or a brief bank? The answer is simple: they don’t have to. It is not their problem. However, not having these things sets prisoners up to fail. Very few prisoners, if any, come to prison with legal knowledge. We don’t qualify for legal writer help. We are told, “here is a law library. If you want your freedom, figure it out.” How fair is that? How is that justice? Most people get frustrated and quit. That is not right either. Is this the best we can do? Is this how you

would want your loved one to be treated?

So, what can be done? One thing is to have law schools partner with prisoners to form a committee including both “inside” and “outside” individuals to educate everyone on what would make an effective law library. I know for me, a brief bank would be very helpful. If you’re researching a case and you see where someone received a favorable outcome, why would you not want to see the motions that accompany the judgment? What case law did they use? How did they form their argument?

Though this is beyond a brief bank, there are other things we can do to make law libraries more effective. Another way is to hold classes to teach people how to use Lexis Nexis or Westlaw. There could be a paralegal program with volunteers from local law schools. Possibly some form of mentorship program for those interested in continuing in the law profession upon their release, like myself. We could even have “inside” chapters of the National Lawyers Guild. These are but a few of the ideas I have had, but I am sure there are many others.

I believe that working together and getting involved is the only way we will see change. That is why I recently submitted my nomination for the “inside” Jailhouse lawyer VP of the National Executive Committee. That is why I am currently enrolled in the Blackstone Career Institute paralegal program. And that is why I am writing to you today.

Will you work with me to make this legal system of ours fair and just? Or will you be like the corrections department and say, “Oh, that is someone else’s problem”? Every little bit helps. Simply by telling someone else about this is a start. Small conversations lead to larger discussions which leads to action and change. It all starts with us. Thank you in advance for your thoughts and effort. ■

“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 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).

Book Review: *The Meaning of Life: The Case for Abolishing Life Sentences* (The New Press, 2018) by Marc Mauer and Ashley Nellis

Review by Christopher Santiago
Columbia, SC

More than 200,000 people are serving life sentences in the United States. That's more lifers than in any other country, and despite declining crime rates, their number is growing.

In *The Meaning of Life: The Case for Abolishing Life Sentences* (2018), Marc Mauer and Ashley Nellis of The Sentencing Project succeed in drawing from a wide range of sources plenty of evidence to make their case against life imprisonment. They explain how life sentences conflict with human rights norms, contradict the principles of rehabilitation, contribute to mass incarceration, and result in diminishing returns for public safety as prisoners "age out" of criminal behaviors. Life sentences disproportionately affect vulnerable populations and people of color while having little or no deterrent effect on crime.

The book provides a roadmap for research-based criminal justice reform and policy recommendations at a time when there is bipartisan support for decarceration in America. "To lay the groundwork for a realistic challenge to mass incarceration and to provide a better approach to public safety," the authors write, "sentences in American prisons should be capped at a maximum of twenty years, except in circumstances in which the individual still represents a clear threat to public safety."

Mauer and Nellis thoroughly debunk the notion that life sentences are an alternative to the death penalty. They show that life imprisonment is a more protected from

of the death penalty with less procedural safeguards and public scrutiny. At the top of the sentencing scale, life sentences exert upward pressure on the severity of all other sentences, resulting in longer prison terms that distort how criminal justice resources are allocated. Aging prisoners cost twice as much as younger prisoners to house and are far less likely to reoffend. If those funds were reallocated to reentry services, education, employment, housing, and substance abuse treatment in under-resourced neighborhoods, the book argues, they would produce better outcomes for public safety.

Spread throughout the book are six profiles of lifers written by award-winning author and former lifer, Kerry Myers. It's hard to read the profiles without pangs of sympathy for these six people. Lifers are condemned to live in hopelessness and despair, with little reason to pursue an education or refrain from violence. But these stories reveal, again and again, that humans have the capacity for positive change and personal transformation. They deserve a chance at redemption.

"It is long past time to join the rest of the democratic world by scaling down the excessive nature of punishment that has become the hallmark of mass incarceration."

It's time to end life imprisonment. For more information, visit endlifeimprisonment.org. ■

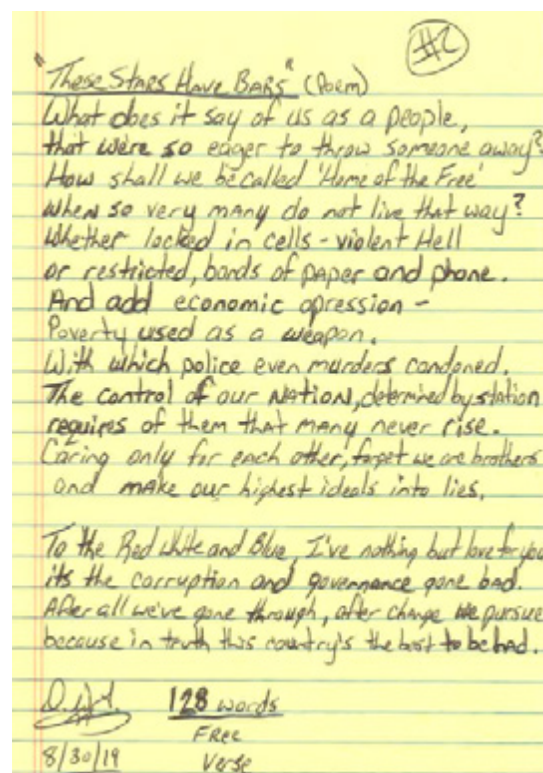
Christopher Santiago is a prisoner serving life without parole in the South Carolina Department of Corrections.

These Stars Have Bars

By Dustin Tate
Hardwick, GA

What does it say of us as a people,
that we're so eager to throw someone away?
How shall we be called 'Home of the Free'
when so very many do not live that way?
Whether locked in cells—violent Hell
or restricted, bonds of paper and phone
And add economic oppression —
Poverty used as a weapon.
With which police even murders condoned.
The control of our Nation, determined by station
requires of them that many never rise.
Caring only for each other, forget we are brothers
and make our highest ideals into lies.

To the Red White and Blue, I've nothing but love for you
It's the corruption and governance gone bad.
After all we've gone through, after change we pursue
Because in truth the country's the best to be had.



At What Cost Do I Become

Richard Moise
Cumberland, MD

Martin Luther King had dream because he was free.
I have nightmares because I am in prison.
There is a guy down the hall. He is always screaming
I know he will never be free because he never stops screaming.
I wish desperately he would stop screaming.

In here my only friend is a pen.
The only thing that gives me the illusion of freedom
even then, my only friend I can't depend on because
the guards deprive me of him.

The guards who says he guards me for my
"protection" also wears the American flag on his shoulders
that quietly tells me "give me liberty or give me death"
but out loud I'm screaming "I am a Haitian, unity is strength"
in the morning I tell the same guard
"Stop trying to divide and conquer, my enemy is not my friend"
The same guard they are all the same, with the American flag
On their shoulders quietly telling me "give me liberty or give me death"

During the weekdays I motion the Judge
For my freedom, without hesitation, he denies me and
Tells me freedom ain't free, it would cost me \$400,000 and
a Bentley.

Yesterday, I called my mother and asked her for a
Penny, but it's too late she is caught up in the frenzy
of the American Dream because she is free

I have been locked away for a decade
now.
I finally receive a letter from my brother, my
sister and cousin, man I'm so happy and excited
I open the letter, and the guard smile at me,
I look down to read the letter.
Damn! It's not a letter, it's a painted picture
of eulogy of somebody I was supposed to be

Dear Rick, your son has grown into a
successful man, every morning he wears a suit
and tie to work making six figures, he dreams
of becoming president to abolish the 13th Amendment

The guard walks away from me, but the flag on his
shoulders whispers at me "give me liberty or give me death."
Today I wake up with strength, and suddenly I take
on running, the man down the hall stops screaming,
the flags are staring at me,
while I wonder if I will make it past the
fence I'm screaming "I'm a Haitian, unity is strength"
now I make it over the fence and all I remember
is Martin Luther King had a dream.

Don't Be Fooled by Court Clerks

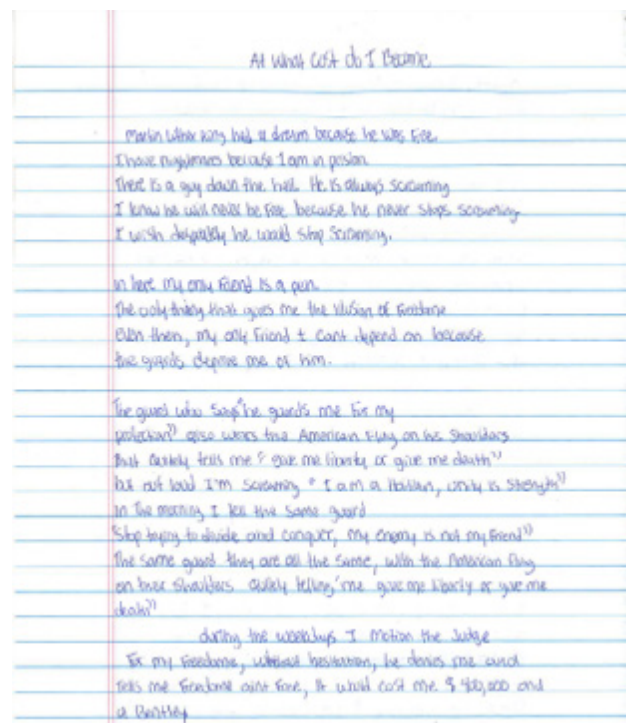
By Douglas Ankeny
Independence, VA

I recently had the
privilege of assist-
ing a prisoner with a
tort claim against the
Commonwealth of
Virginia. After ensuring
the prisoner exhausted
the offender grievance
procedure, I helped
him complete his no-
tice of claim alleging a
lieutenant deliberately
destroyed his property.
The Commonwealth at
first denied liability, but
then in light of the doc-
umentary evidence, ca-
pitulated and admitted
liability. A trial was set
for the purpose of de-
termining the amount
of damages.

I helped the pris-
oner prepare a writ
of habeas corpus ad
testificandum to have
him transported to the
circuit court for trial.
The clerk returned the
petition with a note

saying the court did not
have authority to grant
the petition or issue the
writ.

We then filed a mo-
tion requesting an
order from the circuit
court denying the peti-
tion so that we could
take an appeal. We
included in the motion
relevant case law on a
plaintiff's right to be
heard; on the circuit
court's authority to
issue transportation
orders for incarcer-
ated litigants; and on
the necessity of a final
order before an ap-
peal may be taken.
Approximately one
week later the prisoner
received a copy of the
granted petition for a
writ of habeas corpus
ad testificandum. The
prisoner represented
himself at trial and
prevailed in obtaining
an award that was more
than was offered at ne-
gotiations. ■



To Serve and Protect, or Extort and Exploit

Cecil Guy Truman
 Craigsville, VA

I just found out my friend Aimee died recently. Aimee testified against me in trial because the prosecutor offered her a deal and the detectives intimidated her to lie against me. When I was first arrested another friend of mine, Jeremy, also died. He, like Aimee, died of a heroin overdose. Jeremy was arrested and charged with drug related charges and in exchange for a deal he agreed to testify against me. The prosecutor's greed and avarice for a conviction against me cost Jeremy his life. Jeremy got out on bond and overdosed that night.

The prosecutors and detectives use, exploit, and extort drug addicts all the time to obtain "witnesses." Instead of helping Jeremy or Aimee with their disease of addiction, they used them. They used their drug addiction as a way to control them and force them to comply with their designs to convict me of crimes I never committed.

How many people have been exploited into falsely testifying, or extorted into creating "controlled buys" for detectives that in their greed for busts use, exploit, and manipulate addicts, who desperately need help, into being their snitches? How many innocent people have been convicted based on false testimonies given by drug addicts being paid plea deals and bonds for their false testimonies?

Four paid drug addicts testified against me in trial. It has already been proven that these "witnesses" lied about being given plea deals and bonds. Two of them have come forward and admitted they were "threatened" and "bribed" to falsely testify but the Judges and court-appointed attorneys have done everything in their power to cover up the crimes

committed by the prosecutor over the course of convicting me. The courts and its agents work in absolute collusion to produce false evidence, perjury, speculation, and all forms of deception to convict people.

My friends Aimee and Jeremy are dead. I was never angry at anyone that testified against me, I knew they were being threatened and extorted by the Commonwealth. How many more people will the Commonwealth exploit, use, and manipulate to carry out their mass incarceration agenda against the citizens of this country? At sentencing the prosecutor said drug addicts are weak and have no place in society. This reflects the Commonwealth's dehumanization of people who suffer from addiction.

When will the Commonwealth be held accountable for the lives they've destroyed? Not only are lives being lost to life sentences of prison but lives are being lost from the prosecutors and detectives exploiting addicts to work for them against their will. How many addictions have been encouraged by the Commonwealth so that they can use drug addicts, and control drug addicts, to work for them to fill the prisons?

I know two people who have died who should have been given help. The practice of paying drug addicts to falsely testify is widely practiced. Even when the "witnesses" come forward and admit they were threatened to lie the corruption is suppressed and concealed.

Human life means nothing to the Commonwealth of Virginia. We are slaves to them to be discarded and used up in whatever way they see fit. There is no law here in Virginia, no rights, and no justice – no justice for me or my friends that died. ■

If Walls Could Talk

Anthony Leon Harris
 Butner, NC

The untold secrets are unspoken
 The strength of my elements stay unbroken
 The pain from my secrets leave a mother to cry
 But the restraints can't dry my eye
 I stand aside while many men die
 Some look up and pray I ask myself why
 If I was that guy I'll look at myself and reach for the sky
 He questions my patience for a silent reply
 I know of your horrors and watched you tortured
 Alone in the terrors bleeding the poison
 So, I am your witness, your mentor, your friend,
 But within this cell your spirit may end
 Imagination will take you out of this lion's den
 When you find life's true purpose you'll be destined to win
 Trust in your soul & stay true to your heart
 I'd tell you I love you every day, if walls could talk.

"If Walls Could Talk" 10-11-19
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 I'll tell you I love you everyday, if walls could talk.
 By Anthony Leon Harris

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New York, NY 10038
www.nlg.org



ONE WORLD, ONE RESISTANCE

Join the **NLG SF Bay Area Chapter** for their annual testimonial dinner honoring Dennis Riordan, Liz Jackson, and GABRIELA Oakland on **March 28**.

Featuring keynote speaker **Rashida Tlaib!**

Tickets available at
nlgd.org/2020dinner