National Lawyers Guild
2020 Annual Report
The NLG's mission is to use law for the people, uniting lawyers, law students, legal workers, and jailhouse lawyers to function as an effective force in the service of the people by valuing human rights and the rights of ecosystems over property interests.
Dear NLG Members and Friends,

In reflecting on the many incredible accomplishments of the National Lawyers Guild in 2020, I am most in awe of the way that you---our members, supporters, and community---have taken to the streets, given generously, volunteered, and organized in the struggle for a more just future. Everybody who supported us did so in the face of tremendous grief and uncertainty. We are so grateful for your participation in movement work during this pivotal time.

Our members, volunteers, staff, and supporters responded to the many unique challenges of 2020 with immense compassion and resolve. On the ground, we coordinated legal support for over 20,000 people arrested while protesting in support of Black lives and an end to anti-Black police violence. We continued our focus on radical legal community education and produced webinars on topics ranging from Fighting for the Release of Detained Immigrants During the COVID-19 Pandemic to the Repression of Activists and their Lawyers. At our first virtual convention, we had the honor of presenting Dr. Angela Davis with the Arthur Kinoy Award and sharing her vision for the future of radical organizing with over 1,000 attendees. In this turbulent and devastating year, it was our community’s belief in our principles that kept us moving: the rights of people and ecosystems over property interests.

The global impacts of the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and state-sponsored murders and violence against Black people will be felt for years to come. Because of you, the NLG has been an unrelenting force for change throughout. We have been fighting for people over profit since 1937, and we will keep on doing it for many more decades to come.

In solidarity and gratitude,

Elena L. Cohen
NLG President
2020 was an incredible year of exponential growth for NLG membership! Over 5,000 new members joined the Guild, from every region of the country - expanding both our larger urban centers like DC, Chicago, NYC, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, but also our smaller, less populated area chapters like Southern Oregon, North Carolina, Ohio, Albany, Kentucky, and Alabama.

Many new chapters were formed this year, with the help of National Office staff, adding our presence to areas that were in need of an organized group of legal workers, lawyers, and law students to assist on-the-ground movements throughout the George Floyd uprisings and beyond. Some of these new chapters include Las Vegas and Utah in the Southwest, Whatcom-Skagit and Wenatchee in the Northwest, Oklahoma and Dallas/Fort Worth in the Texoma Region, Arkansas and Central Florida in the Southern Region, and Maine in the Northeast. We now have 70 local chapters and 125 law school chapters.

Over the years, we have had scattered members in all the areas where new chapters formed, but the political climate of the summer forged the momentum to become formalized. In addition to new chapters, numerous formerly defunct chapters were reactivated in every region. During the uprisings of 2020, people in the legal community responded to the movements in the streets. Joining the Guild was a clear path to connecting with other like-minded individuals to become a more effective force for justice.

Moving forward, we are going to keep providing the structure and resources to help our new and reactivated chapters stay as strong as they are now into the future, continuing to provide Guild support for social justice movements. So many long-term members tell us that the Guild has been their political home since law school and they will not leave even when they are retired. This is how we know we are doing something right!
DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

2020 was a historic year for the NLG Mass Defense Program, which continued to grow and play a pivotal role for movements throughout the United States. The NLG Mass Defense Committee (MDC) worked closely with chapters on the ground to respond to ongoing requests for support, share resources and strategies, and help grow new NLG Mass Defense chapters across the nation. We set up and staffed legal and jail support hotlines across the country, provided training and education to thousands of organizers and attorneys, assisted activists who are the target of federal prosecution and grand jury investigations, expanded our efforts to adapt to COVID-19, and maximized our ability to recruit, train and deploy Legal Observers (LOs).

The murder of George Floyd reignited a national uprising in response to police violence against Black people. Throughout the 2020 protests, we worked in coalition with the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) and Law for Black Lives (L4BL), set up jail and legal support networks as needed, provided attorney referrals and organized legal representation for the estimated 20,000 arrestees. In several jurisdictions where the Guild is active, such as New York City, Chicago and Portland, state and federal prosecutors have continued to pursue more severe penalties for some activists. The Guild is tracking several hundred such cases and many of those individuals are being represented by Guild attorneys, or groups in coalition with the Guild.

Much of this work has been accomplished in coalition with M4BL, L4BL, and other organizations such as the Center for Constitutional Rights. We hosted a mass defense anti-racism training with L4BL, Black Movement-Law Project, and Movement Law Lab and provided legal support for Juneteenth actions. In several states, such as California, Washington, Minnesota, and North Carolina, the Guild has also partnered with M4BL, Black Lives Matters, and the American Civil Liberties Union to legally challenge and enjoin the use of tear gas and rubber bullets by law enforcement. We continued to work with these groups to share information and resources to track prosecution efforts, create political strategies in support of movements for defunding and de-militarizing law enforcement, and to predict and analyze political and legal threats to movements.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mass Defense Program adapted to the changing conditions by implementing tactics that are as safe as possible from a public health standpoint, while still supporting community led uprisings. We drafted a set of recommended best practices for safety and updated it throughout the pandemic in order to keep pace with current information made available to
the public by public health experts. As part of this effort, we also distributed “Legal Observer Car Magnets,” making it possible to dispatch LOs to socially distanced car caravan protests.

During the pandemic we also focused on helping activists navigate a quickly changing landscape that increasingly criminalized the movements of already vulnerable communities. As new “security measures” such as quarantine, shelter in place, curfews, and contact tracing were put into place in the name of public health, existing patterns in criminalizing Black and Brown communities continue to escalate. In collaboration with Vision Change Win and other activists, we released a Know Your Rights guide and webinar series to help community members protect themselves in the face of increased criminalization, resist increased policing, and share strategies for protesting despite violent police repression.

The NLG also played a central role in monitoring Federal law enforcement efforts and increased prosecution. We implemented a 24-hour national Federal Defense Hotline staffed by volunteer attorneys. The hotline is for activists and others to call if they have been the target of a grand jury subpoena, have received a door knock by a law enforcement officer, if they have been arrested or charged with a federal crime, or if they have information about an arrest. Our federal hotline volunteers offer legal support and also try to find representation for organizers and activists facing federal charges. We also produced a webinar, Federal Repression of Activists & Their Lawyers: Legal & Ethical Strategies to Defend Our Movements offering both ethical and practical advice on shielding clients and attorneys from state
repression, including how to advise and litigate on behalf of clients to challenge the legitimacy of grand jury subpoenas.

The NLG also developed a new [partnership](#) with Colin Kaepernick’s Know Your Rights Camp (KYRC), to expand legal support for social justice movements and increase capacity for providing legal resources for freedom fighters arrested in relation to the movement for Black lives. The agreement included a $500,000 grant to the National Lawyers Guild Foundation that is helping the NLG strengthen digital security for mass defense organizing, assist chapters with mass defense infrastructure, expand criminal defense preparations, and create timely new know-your-rights publications.

Greenpeace USA and the National Lawyers Guild submitted [comments](#) to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in reference to General Comment 37 on Article 21: right of peaceful assembly. The comments bring attention to the rash of anti-protest legislation introduced at the state-level that seeks to increase existing criminal penalties for already illegal conduct, critical infrastructure bills targeting climate and anti-pipeline activists, and the weaponization of the judicial system against activists in strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). The comments urge the international community to support the efforts of activists on the ground to hold our government accountable for violations of international law.

The NLG’s mass defense efforts serve to strengthen our continued support for various intersectional social justice movements, including health and housing rights, labor struggles, environmental justice, immigration, anti-police violence, LG BTQ+ rights, disability rights, international solidarity, and abolition of the prison-industrial complex.
Much of the Guild’s national work is coordinated through our 14 national committees and projects. The national committees of the Guild are formed by members to focus on and organize around a specific issue. Committee members share resources and legal expertise, collaborate on projects, host webinars, write articles for Guild Notes, and put together workshops for our annual convention or a regional conference. The National Immigration Project of the NLG has been fighting for immigrant rights and an end to racist laws for 50 years. Our National Police Accountability Project works to protect the human and civil rights of individuals in their encounters with law enforcement. Our committees work for disability justice, anti-racist drug policies, environmental justice, in support of housing and people experiencing homelessness, for labor rights, for protesters, and against mass incarceration and militarization. Like our national Mass Defense Committee, whose work is described previously in this report, many of our committees were very busy in 2020. Here is just a sampling of what some of our committees accomplished:

Bringing an anti-imperialist lens to active solidarity with resistance movements across the globe, the International Committee (IC) continued to address human rights violations caused by illegal U.S. or corporate practices. The IC organized an important webinar on the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and efforts to use international mechanisms to hold the U.S. accountable for human rights violations. The IC’s Indigenous Peoples’ Rights & the Environmental Human Rights Committees presented a four-part webinar series that began with Decolonization, Discovery, Sovereignty, and Neocolonialism and culminated in Movement Lawyering and Working with Indigenous Communities.

The IC also teamed up with the NLG’s Labor and Employment Committee to submit an amicus brief in a New Jersey voting rights case. The amicus, submitted by Ryan McCarthy and IC Co-Chair Jeanne Mirer, with the participation of Marquel Ramirez, was submitted in Trump vs. New Jersey, the suit launched by the Republican Party and the Trump campaign in an attempt to block the state’s mail-in voting law for the 2020 election.

The National Immigration Project of the NLG brought a number of lawsuits seeking release for medically vulnerable people in immigration detention and coordinated with the NLG National Office and the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Area NLG Chapters to produce a continuing legal education webinar called Fighting for the Release of Detained Immigrants During the
COVID-19 Pandemic. This important resource provided both new and experienced advocates with tools and strategies for seeking the release of detained immigrants, many with underlying health problems, who have been forced to remain in crowded conditions that do not allow for social distancing and expose them to the deadly virus.

From rent strikes to the occupation of vacant homes, from encampments self-organizing to provide mutual aid to growing demands to cancel rent and decommodify housing, movements for housing justice rapidly expanded in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. The NLG Housing and Homelessness Committee organized the webinar Fighting for Housing Justice: Movement Lawyers and Housing Activists on COVID-19 and the Urgent Struggle for Homes for All to share information from organizers at the forefront of radical housing movements of tenants and the unhoused, and the movement lawyers supporting the call for housing justice.

The NLG, its International Committee, Palestine Subcommittee and Central Arizona chapter joined a collective letter calling on members of the Arizona Senate to reject proposed legislation, SB 1143 and HB 2683. These bills attempt to impose the so-called “IHRA definition of anti-Semitism” to define hate crimes. The IHRA definition and, especially, its associated “examples” repeatedly conflate criticism of and opposition to the Israeli state and anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism.

In collaboration DePaul University College of Law and the Federal Bar Association’s Civil Rights Section, the National Police Accountability Project of the NLG hosted a free webinar, Locked Up in a Pandemic: Prisons, Prisoner Rights, and the COVID-19 Pandemic, on legal efforts aimed at supporting the health and safety of incarcerated individuals during Covid-19.

In 2020, NLG law students rose to meet the many challenges and opportunities provided by the events of the year. As the year began, NLG law students worked with Guild attorneys to write and submit amicus briefs opposing anti-choice bills in nine states. The project reaffirmed the Guild's commitment, made in a 2018 organizational resolution, to supporting efforts to halt the criminalization of reproductive decision-making.

After returning to classes for the spring semester, Guild student chapters began planning for the annual national student Week Against Mass Incarceration (WAMI), held March 1-7, 2020. The theme was “Mass Incarceration and the Role of Policing,” which was co-sponsored by the NLG National Office and the NLG National Police Accountability Project. NLG law school chapters organized close to 100 events at dozens of law schools across the country, including panels, workshops, tabling, prison visits, letter writing events, fundraisers, book drives, and more!

By mid-March, the COVID pandemic led to the transition to online law school classes for almost all schools, and Guild students coordinated with other student groups to organize around COVID-related law school issues, such as diploma privilege, grading practices, and summer bar exams. To assist law students who lost their summer internship funding, the Guild worked with the COVID-19 Rapid Response/Systems Summer Institute to place interns with the NLG.
For the national uprisings in May and June following the death of George Floyd, NLG law students joined other Guild members to assist with legal observing, jail support, staffing hotlines, and other protest support activities. NLG law school chapters also wrote statements condemning police violence against BIPOC people and calling on their schools and communities to support movements for racial justice. As a result of the Guild’s work during the Black Lives Matter protests during the summer, NLG student membership nearly doubled and over 30 new law school chapters launched.

Due to COVID, law school classes remained online and Guild students adapted their usual Disorientation activities to a virtual setting. The NLG National Office provided virtual content to assist law school chapters, such as a new Disorientation webinar on Staying Radical in Law School. Due to the many new chapters formed over the summer, the Disorientation season brought in nearly 700 new law student members to the NLG! Law student membership continues to grow as students join the Guild’s work supporting the social movements of our times.

(Clockwise from bottom left) NLG students at Duke Law organizing letter writing to people in prison; John Marshall NLG Chapter #WAMI2020 event with Chicago NLG member Flint Taylor; Santa Clara NLG law students, Leo Kim and Morgan Willis, with Jennifer Orthwein (center) who spoke on advocating for transgender people in jails and prisons; Northeastern School of Law #WAMI2020 with the Muslim Justice League, Families for Justice as Healing, and Black & Pink.
In 2020, the NLG continued to support the work of our members through our two fellowship programs: the Haywood Burns Memorial Fellowships for Social and Economic Justice offered to law students and legal workers, and the Leonard Weinglass Fellowship for recently-graduated attorneys. We also assisted five students whose summer internships and funding were cancelled due to COVID-19 through the Systems Summer Institute.

The Haywood Burns Fellowship program is designed to encourage work in the NLG’s tradition of “people’s lawyering.” The program exists to help students and legal workers apply their talents and skills to find creative ways to use the law to advance justice. The Fellowships question traditional notions of how one must practice law and provide a summer experience that will enrich and challenge recipients. Providing much needed financial support and mentorship, the Fellowships help strengthen recipients’ long-term commitment to social justice. This year, we funded five aspiring people’s lawyers to work on projects focusing on economic justice, immigrant justice, racial justice, human rights, and prison law reform. Our fellows spent their summers working with social justice organizations in Atlanta, Miami, St. Louis, and NYC.

The NLG Weinglass Fellowship is awarded annually to a NLG member and recent law school graduate to spend 10 weeks working on a project in line with the mission of the NLG. The 2020 Weinglass committee selected Bay Area NLG member Zsea Bowman to
receive this year's fellowship. As a Weinglass Fellow, Zsea developed an environmental justice legal defense and action plan with the NLG San Francisco/Bay Area Chapter and the community group Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice. The fellowship is funded through the NLG Foundation thanks to a generous bequest from the Weinglass estate.

The NLG National Office also hosted five fellows from the COVID-19 Rapid Response/Systems Summer Institute. A collaboration between People’s Parity Project (PPP), the Systemic Justice Project (SJP), and the Justice Catalyst (JC), the COVID-19 Rapid Response/Systems Summer Institute engaged law students in summer legal fellowships, working with legal and law-related organizations. The NLG fellows worked on a Street Law project, and conducted legal research in order to create Know Your Rights materials designed for movement organizers and activists. These materials include research on political prosecution of activists, COVID-19 emergency orders, resources for civil rights litigation, know-your-rights guides for gender justice movements, and a workers rights guide.

(Left) 2020 Leonard Weinglass Fellow Zsea Bowmani
NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD
2019 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME
- Grants and Contributions: $386,045
- Membership Dues: $124,464
- Convention Revenue: $100,375
- Merchandise Revenue: $5,947
- Royalties and Publications: $7,209
- Other Revenue: $12,406
Total Revenue and Support: $636,446

EXPENSES
- Program Services: $468,228
- Management and General: $119,541
- Fundraising: $77,122
Total Expenses: $664,891

NET ASSETS
- Without donor restrictions: $271,727
- With donor restrictions: $71,667
Total Net Assets: $343,394
Established in 1937, the National Lawyers Guild is the nation’s oldest and most extensive network of social justice activists working within the legal system.

Under the leadership of an elected National Executive Committee, the Guild has 195 chapters covering states, cities and law schools throughout the nation, and 14 national committees or projects working on a wide range of legal and political issues.

The NLG National Office is the administrative hub of the entire Guild—connecting our members, chapters, committees, and projects. National Office staff coordinate national legal support for protests, organize students across the country, produce educational resources, coordinate the annual convention, organize national campaigns, and provide support to Guild members and entities.

The financial statements for the National Lawyers Guild on the facing page are for the NLG National Office and do not include or reflect the accounts and activities of NLG local chapters.
INCOME
Grants and Contributions  $640,413
Investment Income  $382,078
Total Revenue and Support  $1,022,491

EXPENSES
Grants  $909,916
Other Program Services  $33,495
Management and General  $56,321
Fundraising  $40,078
Total Expenses  $1,039,810

NET ASSETS
Without donor restrictions  $3,616,248
With donor restrictions  $852,320
Total Net Assets  $4,468,568

NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD FOUNDATION
2019 FINANCIAL STATEMENT
The National Lawyers Guild Foundation (NLGF) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. All contributions to the NLGF are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law. A copy of the NLGF’s latest financial report may be obtained, upon request, from us or from the New York State Attorney General’s Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, 3rd Floor, New York, New York 10271.
THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!
We rely on the generosity of individuals like you.

**Make a one-time donation**

Go to [nlg.org/donate/nlgf](http://nlg.org/donate/nlgf) to make a tax-deductible donation to support legal activists working to make direct change for social justice. Gifts of any amount make a huge difference to our work!

**Become a sustainer**

Making a monthly donation is an easy way to pledge your commitment to the Guild. Your recurring contributions provide a steady source of support while saving time, fees, and resources.

**Remember the Guild in your will**

By including the National Lawyers Guild Foundation, Inc. in your will or trust, you can memorialize a lifetime of people’s lawyering and guarantee that your voice for human rights over property interests will carry on.

**Name the Guild as a beneficiary**

By naming the Guild as a primary or secondary beneficiary on your life insurance or retirement plan you can support the Guild’s work to advance human and civil rights while providing for your loved ones.

**Give a gift of stock**

Make a contribution to the Guild with stock or mutual fund shares instead of cash and save on capital gains taxes.

For more information please contact [nlgfoundation@nlg.org](mailto:nlgfoundation@nlg.org)
President
Elena Cohen

Executive Vice President
Ken Montenegro

Treasurer
Amreet Sandhu

National Legal Worker
Vice President
Sarah Coffey

National Student Vice Presidents
Cait De Mott Grady
Luna Martinez

Regional Vice Presidents
Juan-Carlos Chavez (Northwest)
Reighlah Collins (South)
Colleen Flynn (Far West)
Nate Fox (Northeast)
Justice Gatson (Midwest)
Kathleen Garbacz (Mid-Atlantic)

Scott Kampas (Midwest)
Aneesha Khan (Mid-Atlantic)
Yoana Kuzmova (Northeast)
Rachel Lang (Northeast)
Annie Martinez (Southwest)
Shahily Negron-Falcon (Northeast)
Darren O’Connor (Southwest)
Liliya Oliferuk (South)
Raymundo Rojas (Tex-Oma)
Megan Rue (Tex-Oma)

COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Anti-Racism
Kira Kelley
Ashlyn Ruga

Disability Justice
Katie Tastrom (through July 2020)

Housing
Anthony Prince
Sarah White

International
Suzanne Adely
Jackelyn Mariano
Jeanne M irer

Labor & Employment
Sarah David Heydemann

Mass Defense
Jude Ortiz

Military Law Task Force
Aaron Frishberg

Queer Caucus
Michael Galvan
Jaelyn Miller

NATIONAL POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT
Executive Director
Rachel Pickens

* The National Executive Committee (NEC) is the governing body of the NLG. Members of the 2020 NEC served until at least October 2020, when newly elected officers took over.
NATIONAL OFFICE

Executive Director
Pooja Gehi (through November 2020)

Director of Communications
Tasha Moro

Director of Education and Research
Traci Yoder

Director of Mass Defense
Tyler Crawford (through May 2021)

Director of Membership
Lisa Drapkin

Director of Operations
Kimmie David

Program Assistant
Charlie Blodnieks

NLG FOUNDATION
Managing Director
Daniel McGee

NLG FOUNDATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
Bruce Nestor

Treasurer
Jeff Petrucelly

Asst. Treasurer
Judy Somberg

Joelle Eliza M. Lingat
Elena Cohen
Barbara Dudley
David Gespass
Tim Hoffman
Karen Jo Koonan
Rebecca Sherman
Bobby Shukla
Sandra Tsung