

**URBAN  
JUSTICE  
CENTER**

**2018  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**



# OUR WORK

## \$10 MILLION+

in taxpayer money saved by our work

## 15,869 PEOPLE

impacted by our direct legal services

## 2,000 CALLS+

taken on our hot and warm lines

## 10,516 CASES

cases closed

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# OUR STRATEGY



Friends,

This has been a dark year for our country, and for the world. I won't sugarcoat it: I believe our democracy is endangered. New regimes of cruelty are tearing families apart at our borders, while the old signs of fascism have gained new life in streets and statehouses around our great country. But in the face of these terrible forces, new forms of resistance are blossoming, and the Urban Justice Center is dedicated to helping them grow. For the last three decades, we've supported cutting edge legal projects, but today, we've made it our official mission:

*We provide a platform for dynamic advocates to fuel social change, leading the way for a just, fair, and decent society.*

What does this mean? Well, for one thing, it means that we are gearing up to launch up to five new Projects in 2019, each focusing on an underserved community in danger. Through our new Social Justice Accelerator, we're inviting the next generation of change makers and thought leaders to become part of the Urban Justice Center. We're also helping some of the Projects we've nurtured throughout the years spin off and become full-fledged organizations of their own. Although they will no longer be under our roof, we know that the Community Development Project and the International Refugee Assistance Project will continue to do incredible work, and we are excited to stand beside them in doing it.

It also means that we've embraced a new look, as you'll see throughout these pages. As our long-term supporters, you'll be some of the first to get a peek at our new logo, colors, and design. We were guided through this process by incredible pro-bono work of the branding firm Superunion, and I'm certain you'll love the results as much as we do.

Of course, this new look doesn't mean that the core of our services has changed. We still defend the individual rights of our clients, be they survivors of intimate partner violence or homeless LGBTQ youth. We are still building inclusive communities, empowering people around the city (and the country) to come together and fight for their rights. And we're still pursuing the long game of systemic change in order to make our government uphold the rights that each of us are promised in the Constitution: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In the face of impending fascism, justice is just us – the community of those who will step up and resist. We're so glad to have you on our side. Thank you for your support yesterday, today, and most crucially, tomorrow.

Doug Ladson  
Executive Director

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Doug Ladson. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent 'D' and 'L'.





**DEFENDING  
INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS**



**“ I DO NOT KNOW HOW  
TO THANK VAP ENOUGH  
FOR STICKING WITH  
ME AND BEING A HUGE  
PART IN THIS.**

**NEVER DID I THINK I  
WOULD WIN.”**

Heath Phillips

Veteran Advocacy Project client Heath Phillips

## SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

In 1989, 17-year-old Heath Phillips was a fresh-faced Naval recruit, eager to serve his country. Once on his assigned ship, however, he was sexually and physically assaulted by a group of six other sailors. Despite repeated reports to his superiors, Heath was given no support or chance to transfer. After 48 days of unending assault, he escaped – only to be arrested, returned, and assaulted again. Four more times, Heath ran away only to be returned to his attackers. Heath went AWOL one final time, beginning nearly two decades of alcohol abuse and PTSD, with no support from Veterans Affairs.

After nearly ending his life, Heath got sober. Unlike many survivors of sexual violence, he began to tell his story publicly. Advocating for survivors became his mission.

Three times he applied to have his discharge status upgraded, so he could access the life-saving services he desperately needed; three times, the Navy denied him. That’s when Heath became a client of our Veteran Advocacy Project, who worked with him for years on a fourth application, and finally convinced the Navy that he deserved an honorable discharge. Thanks to Heath’s persistence (and the assistance of our lawyers and advocates), justice was finally served.





**BUILDING  
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY**

# ADVOCATING FOR ASYLUM

Long before the Trump administration began their cruel policy of separating asylum-seeking children from their parents, our Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) was providing representation to families in some of the most ignored areas in the country. Without representation, according to one study, asylum seekers win their cases less than 3% of the time.

ASAP knew that many Americans want to help immigrants fleeing danger, so based on their experience, they developed a guide: “Vindicating the Rights of Asylum Seekers at the Border and Beyond: A Guide to Representing Asylum Seekers in Expedited Removal and Reinstatement of Removal Proceedings.” This guide is yet another way in which ASAP is strengthening the country-wide community of progressive advocates, while protecting marginalized immigrants at the same time. By empowering asylum seekers and their supporters, ASAP is building a powerful coalition to resist the Trump administration’s attacks on vulnerable families.



ASAP client, Sandra, and her child whose asylum petition was successful

**“EVERY DAY, I GO TO ASAP’S ONLINE COMMUNITY AND LOOK AT THE QUESTIONS MOTHERS ARE POSTING.**

**GETTING AN ANSWER FROM ASAP’S ATTORNEYS MAKES US BELIEVE THAT THERE IS HOPE.”**

Andrea, ASAP Client





**FUELING  
SYSTEMIC CHANGE**



# OPPOSING PRISON PROFITEERING

**“ INCARCERATED PEOPLE RELY ON PHONE CALLS TO CONNECT WITH LOVED ONES. PROFITING OFF THAT BIT OF HUMAN CONNECTION IS COLD AND DEHUMANIZING.**

**TO BE PART OF THE TEAM RESPONSIBLE FOR RESTORING THAT LOVE IS RIGHTEOUS. IT MAKES ME FEEL I DIDN'T FORGET THOSE I LEFT BEHIND.”**

Lawrence Bartley,  
CAP Program Assistant

For years, prisoners in New York City have been charged exorbitant fees to make phone calls, creating millions of dollars in profit not just for prison telecom companies, but also for our city government, which raked in over \$5,000,000 annually on the backs of imprisoned people and their communities. To those in jail, these calls are a literal lifeline; to our government, they are an easy way to turn a quick buck.

Or at least they were until earlier this year, when our Corrections Accountability Project (CAP) – in concert with a coalition of concerned organizations – helped to pass critical legislation mandating that all calls from city jails be free, and prohibiting the city from profiting off them. Now New York City is the only jurisdiction in the nation to ban this cruel form of prison exploitation. This will save low-income communities of color in New York nearly \$10,000,000 a year, but the true measure of success is knowing that imprisoned people will no longer be isolated from their loved ones and their only means of support, simply because they can't afford the price of a phone call.



CAP Program Assistant Lawrence Bartley with CAP Director Bianca Tylek (right)

# SOCIAL JUSTICE ACCELERATOR

## SOCIAL JUSTICE'S CUTTING EDGE

Next year, we are excited to launch our Social Justice Accelerator (SJA), which will provide dynamic advocates with a home from which to create new and unique social justice interventions. The new ideas promoted by these advocates will change our world for the better. But they need a place to start – a safe home from which to grow; mentors to motivate them when the work is most difficult; and a network of like-minded allies to support them every step of the way.

That's where we step in. For years, we have informally worked to uplift passionate leaders with bold visions for social justice - people like Coco Culhane, who was driven to create our Veteran Advocacy Project when she learned the staggering statistic that 20 United States veterans die by suicide every day, and Becca Heller, who was recently awarded a MacArthur Genius Grant for her groundbreaking work on behalf of international refugees.

With the SJA, we are excited to institutionalize this part of our mission, and fuel the next generation of social change agents. Recipients will be announced in February 2019. Stay in the loop by visiting [accelerator.urbanjustice.org](http://accelerator.urbanjustice.org).



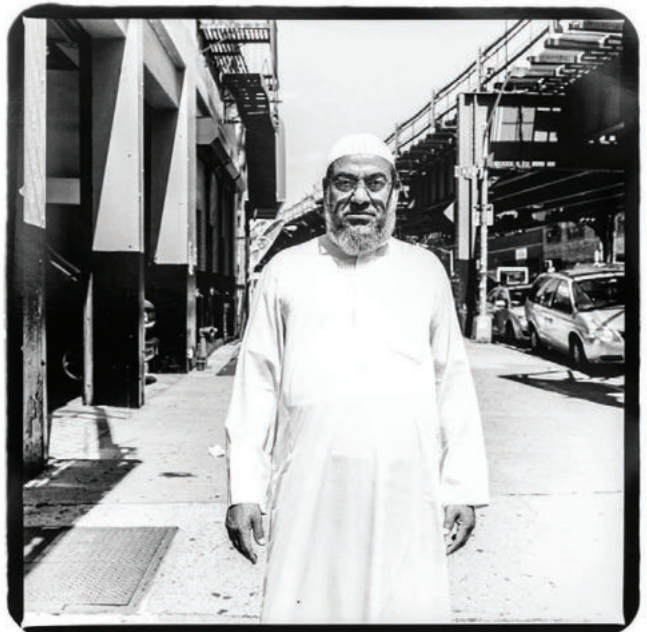


# ART AT UJC: JEROME AVENUE WORKERS PROJECT

The beautiful bordered black & white images throughout this report were taken by the incredible photographers of the Jerome Avenue Workers Project, an initiative of the Bronx Photo League at the Bronx Documentary Center.

The Bronx Photo League is made up of 16 Bronx photographers committed to documenting social issues and change in the borough. This exhibition celebrates the workers and trades people of Jerome Avenue, one of our city's few remaining working class neighborhoods where many still make a living in small shops and factories, or repairing automobiles. For more information about the Bronx Documentary Center, please visit [bronxdoc.org](http://bronxdoc.org).

Earlier this year, UJC was honored to exhibit the original photos in our office via Art@UJC, our ongoing series of social justice related art exhibits. If you or someone you know is interested in exhibiting with Art@UJC, please contact [art@urbanjustice.org](mailto:art@urbanjustice.org).



*Jerome Avenue Workers Project, in order of appearance in the report:*

“Bella Santiago Rodriguez” by Edwin Torres

“Richard Vidal, Francisco Vidal, Ivan Sanchez and Janet Sanchez”  
by Netza Moreno

“Gino Matías” by Jesus Emmanuel

“Oswaldo” by Michael Kamber

“Rebecca” by Adi Talwar

“Quranic Teacher” by Edwin Torres



# BUILDING OUR PRESENT

Are you passionate about social justice, and looking to meet other like-minded New Yorkers – while doing some good in the process? Join our Young Professional Network!

The YPN are passionate individuals who support our mission to fuel social change. Together, they help plan the UJC's yearly summer gala, Night Out; they help strategize the topics for our Speaker Series events on critical legal topics; and much more. This year, for the first time ever, they even fielded a team in the TCS New York City Marathon.

To get involved, visit [ypn.urbanjustice.org](http://ypn.urbanjustice.org).



# BUILDING OUR FUTURE

Give a gift that lasts for generations to come, and costs nothing today: many UJC supporters leave gifts in their wills to leave an extraordinary legacy of good, and ensure our mission will continue for years and years to come. Plus, writing an up-to-date will gives you peace of mind and security for yourself and your loved ones. To make it easier, we've partnered with the folks at FreeWill.

Get started today at [freewill.com/ujc](http://freewill.com/ujc).

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# OUR 2018 INITIATIVES

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## **ASYLUM SEEKER ADVOCACY PROJECT**

works to end wrongful detention and deportation of women and children in the US.

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

strengthens the impact of grassroots organizations.

## **CORRECTIONS ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT**

works to eliminate the influence of commercial interests on the US criminal legal system.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT**

protects the rights of domestic violence survivors to allow for a self-determined and safe future.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT**

promotes recognition and implementation of the full spectrum of human rights in the United States.

## **VETERAN ADVOCACY PROJECT**

provides free legal services to low-income veterans.

## **INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROJECT**

provides hope and help to the world's most vulnerable refugees.

## **MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT**

works to enforce the rights of low-income New Yorkers with mental health issues.

## **PETER CICCHINO YOUTH PROJECT**

provides legal representation to homeless youth in NYC, with a focus on the needs of LGBTQQ youth.

## **SAFETY NET PROJECT**

works to ensure access to public benefits for low-income New Yorkers.

## **SEX WORKERS PROJECT**

provides legal & social services, advocacy, education, and organizing for the human rights of sex workers.

## **STREET VENDOR PROJECT**

works to correct social and economic injustice faced by NYC street vendors.

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