Parole Preparation Project Draws 80 Volunteers

BY MICHELLE LEWIN

The Parole Preparation Project of the Mass Incarceration Committee continues to work in collaboration with people serving life sentences across New York State who seek parole release. In May, Michelle Lewin, one of the members of the Project’s coordinating committee, was given the Law Student Recognition Award at the NYC Chapter’s annual Spring Fling. Here is an excerpt from her acceptance speech:

“A year after working with our very first applicant, we have almost 80 active volunteers who are working alongside 30 people inside, all of whom are serving life sentences. So far, five people have been granted parole out of the twelve who have gone before the Board.

As proud as I am of the work we and our volunteers have done, and the work we will continue to do, I don’t want to overemphasize our role as advocates. One of the most sacred principles of the project is that people on the inside are the experts. Their experiences, their discoveries and their struggle make them so, and it is our job and our responsibility as people on the outside to listen. It is also our job to lift up their voices and amplify them, in whatever ways we can.

It is also our job as advocates to recognize that we have so much to learn. As a Project, we imagine that this learning takes place through relationships based on collaboration and solidarity. It happens by getting to know people in real ways, by spending time in the visiting room, on the phone and with people’s families. It happens by working alongside and not for or on behalf of someone. It happens when you begin to develop relationships of care, communication, trust and sometimes even love.

Ultimately, fighting for the release of people incarcerated is deeply important work for so many reasons. At its root it is about freeing people from institutions that devastate the minds and bodies of those it imprisons, because regardless of the harm someone has caused, no one deserves to be subjected to such abuse and isolation.

It is also about initiating the long process of restoring families and communities that have been devastated by the system. It is about challenging the racism, classism, transphobia, and other oppressive structures that got us here.

Finally, this fight is deeply important because it is about bringing people home who are ultimately the leaders of this movement to end mass incarceration. We need the brilliant jailhouse lawyers, activists and organizers who are at the forefront of this struggle out here with us, so they can direct us and show us the way.

It is my deepest hope that this project can be a small part of building a mass movement to abolish prisons. To end incarceration altogether. To end the inhumane and racist practices of the state. To end the stigmatization of people inside and out. To bring people home.

It is also my hope that this project will be a small part of a movement that is based in love, generosity of spirit, collaboration and most of all, lifting up the voices of those behind bars. The voices of people inside are loud and clear and it’s our job to listen.”

Questions about the Project? Email nlgnycppp@gmail.com
President’s Column

BY ELENA L. COHEN

Thank you to all who attended and supported the Chapter’s 2015 Spring Fling! This year, we were delighted to honor our “Champions of Justice,” Soffiyah Elijah, Daniel L. Meyers and Michael Steven Smith and law student Michelle Lewin. As we heard from their friends, families, co-workers and clients, the work of our honorees has been monumentally inspiring, and I am in awe of all of their accomplishments.

It was also my pleasure to reflect upon the amazing work of our committees. Within the past year, the Chapter’s Mass Defense Committee mobilized dozens of Legal Observers for the #BlackLivesMatters protests in December, arranged representation of those arrested. Ben Meyers, one of the Mass Defense Committee Co-chairs, testified at the New York City Council hearing against the proposed formation of a new Strategic Response Group to handle future demonstrations or “civil disorders,” as it would suffocate political dissent, especially among those New Yorkers already most susceptible to police attention.

Our Animal Rights Activism Committee coordinated a standing-room only panel entitled “Justice for All? Race, Class, Gender, Disability, and Animal Liberation,” exploring how specie-sim and non-human animal exploitation intersect with other forms of oppression. The committee also released a second edition of the Guild’s 1970’s Social Justice Cookbook, addressing a variety of food justice issues, including environmental issues, sustainability, affordable access to healthy food as a right and not a privilege, and animal liberation. Featuring recipes from National Lawyers Guild members as well as former and current political prisoners, the cookbook is for sale on our website.

Our NextGen committee organized two well-attended encryption software trainings, and organized a weekend Zen retreat in Maine. Our Labor and Employment Committee hosted CLEs on winning workplace justice for campus workers, organizing the public sector and safety and health issues for workers, and supported lawyers and legal workers employed at MFY Legal Services in their strike and demand of a contract for the new Strategic Response Group to handle future demonstrations or “civil disorders,” which the Chapter’s committees work everyday to continue the Guild’s struggle for social justice, both in New York City and well past our borders.

I am also extremely proud of the New York City Chapter for continuing to consider how animal issues fit within the Guild’s struggle against all forms of oppression, no matter how societally entrenched. Tonight’s second-annual vegetarian Spring Fling, along with our vegan holiday parties, is a meaningful and concrete reflection of these efforts, and reflects the Guild’s historic place on the cutting edge of social justice. I continue to be honored to be the President of this organization as it works through how we can recognize and work to end all exercises of power backed by violence.

We also took time at the event to reflect on the passing of Allan Botshon. A member of the NYC Chapter since 1953, Allan was a great supporter of the Guild, as well as Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, the Rosenberg Fund for Children, and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, among others. He loved the chapter and the Guild for its outspoken commitment to social struggle and the practice of people’s law. Allan, and the Guild comrades of his generation who have passed, will be forever missed.

I would also like to thank our sponsors of the event, Beldock Levine & Hoffman, Rankin & Taylor, and Martin R. Stolar, for their continued support of the NYC Chapter and their tireless dedication to justice. Last, and certainly not least, I would like to thank the members of this year’s Spring Fling committee for the immense amount of work they have put into planning the gathering, in particular our Executive Director Susan Howard, and to the Riverside Church for hosting us. It was a truly wonderful and inspirational evening, and I look forward to Building the Guild with all of you, for years to come!
What Did Herman Wallace Dream of During 41 Years in Solitary? A House

BY MICHAEL STEVEN SMITH
Reprinted with permission by The Indypendent (www.indypendent.org)

You walk through the main door of the Brooklyn Public Library’s Central Branch and it hits you: a jail cell. It is a full-scale reconstruction of Herman Wallace’s 6-by-9-foot cell, right there in the lobby. It is part of the exhibition, “The House That Herman Built,” and it gets better.

Herman Wallace spent a U.S.-record-setting 41 years in solitary confinement in that cell in the infamous Angola prison in Louisiana.

In 2003 Brooklyn-born visual artist Jackie Sumell, then an art student in California, asked Herman, a Black Panther prison activist and member of the Angola Three, “What kind of house does a man who has lived in a 6-foot-by-9-foot cell for over 30 years dream of?” Their exchange resulted in a collaboration that transformed both their lives and produced this internationally renowned exhibit, as well as a book and a documentary film.

It gets better when you walk past the jail cell to a model of the house where he wanted to live, which he designed with Jackie’s help. It’s lovely and open, with views of the sky, exposed spaces, vegetable and flower gardens and green trees. And showing Herman’s sense of humor, it has a swimming pool with a black panther in tile at the bottom.

There are two phones attached to the cabinet displaying the model house. You can listen to Herman speaking from the prison: He tells you all about the house, taking special pride in mentioning the stand-alone guest room for his visiting friends and comrades. Listening, you really get to like him. You want to learn more about him, about what he thought and read and how he kept it together all those many years alone in a cell so confining that he says it was like being locked in a bathroom.

Herman, Albert Woodfox and Robert King were framed and charged with murdering a prison guard. Herman lived 41 years in solitary, until a brave judge reversed his sentence and ordered a new trial based on the exclusion of women from the jury. He was released and died three days later. King got out in 2001; Woodfox’s conviction was overturned this February, but he is still inside pending the state’s appeal.

The balcony of the library has display cases containing some of his 12-year-long correspondence with Sumell. She wrote and visited Herman over the years, and worked with him to realize his ideas. Getting out of prison and dying a free man was a triumph of Herman’s will to live, and with Sumell’s help, his dream has been realized, if only in model form thus far. Sumell is currently raising the funds to construct the house life-size in New Orleans.

Herman was self-taught, a poor kid from New Orleans’s Ninth Ward. He came to understand, along with America’s most famous intellectual Albert Einstein, that socialism is humanity’s attempt “to overcome and advance beyond the predatory phase of human development.”

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On display at the library is Herman’s hand-written reading list, which constitutes a real treasure to enhance our understanding of the world and how to change it. It includes, among others, the speeches of Malcolm X; Frantz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth; Woman’s Evolution, the great work by pioneering feminist anthropologist Evelyn Reed; and Democracy and Revolution, by the late philosopher and historian George Novak.

That the Brooklyn Public Library would put on this show destroys the notion that librarians are a timid lot. They took a risk promoting a “convicted cop killer,” and a Black Panther no less. In doing so they distinguished themselves by taking on the racists and the promoters and apologists of mass incarceration and prolonged solitary confinement, a form of torture.

The show is being used to educate people through accompanying library programs about the 80,000 prisoners, including children, who are held in solitary confinement today in America’s prisons. The confinement of 2.3 million people has put the United States in the lead throughout the world, where, although it makes up only 6 percent of the world’s population, it has managed to lock up 25 percent of the world’s prisoners.

Herman’s steadfastness and spirit is contagious. It will be good for your soul. This exhibition closed June 5, 2015 but if there are other opportunities to see it, you should go.

Michael Steven Smith is a New York City attorney and author. He is a co-host of the WBAA radio show “Law and Disorder” and the co-editor of Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA.
IN MEMORIAM: ALLAN BOTSHON
A Life of Just Causes

BY SUSAN HOWARD

Allan Botshon, 1926-2014 was a quiet hero. Not one to boast of his work, seek notoriety or acclaim, Allan preferred to work in the background, and lived his life for just causes, both great and small, and always on the right side of history. Though Allan had a small practice that never saw great financial rewards, when he passed away last fall, he left the chapter a financial legacy greater than anyone in the history of the Guild.

Allan was born on the 4th of July, 1926 in Portsmouth Staten Island, moving to Brooklyn when he was still a child. His mother was a homemaker and his father had trained to become a druggist. Allan grew up in the era of Hoover, Roosevelt, the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War & WWII, Al Capone, the Hindenburg, Amelia Earhart, & Superman. His experience as a child of the depression and in the fight against fascism framed his political and personal life.

Allan entered Dartmouth College at 16, but left a year later to enlist in the Army and serve in WWII in a medical battalion. Earning accolades and a Victory Medal, Allan was honorably discharged at the end of 1946 and shortly thereafter entered Yale Law School. In 1956, as a 3L, Allan organized a forum at Yale on the Federal Loyalty-Security Program, entitled “Science and Freedom”, and invited renowned chemist and peace activist Linus Carl Pauling to speak.

After graduating, Allan returned to New York and joined the NLG-NYC chapter. After admission to the bar in 1957, like many Guild members of that era, Allan, along with his schoolmate Eric Schmidt, a lifelong chapter member, opened a storefront law office to serve the legal needs of poor people, before the era of community based legal services offices. The law office of Schmidt & Botshon at 170 Rivington Street, was on the Lower East Side, at that time still a low-income, immigrant community. Allan had fond memories of listening to Schmidt struggle to converse with clients who spoke only Yiddish. Allan’s many clients included Lynne’s Stewart former husband, who came in seeking a divorce. During the divorce proceeding, Allan, Lynne, and new partner Ralph Poynter became fast friends.

After closing the law office in the 1980’s, Allan started a general practice with Maria Liz in West Chelsea, with a major focus in immigration law. The firm still carries his name.

Allan was ever present at chapter events, and enjoyed attending our Holiday parties, annual Chapter Dinners and Spring Flings. Allan traveled to Cuba on a NYC Chapter trip in 1979, and to Namibia as a Legal Observer with the International Association of Democratic Lawyers in 1989.

I first met Allan in 2006, shortly after I became the chapter’s staff coordinator. In an effort to revitalize the chapter, I sent a letter to every member, past and present, for whom I had contact information. Allan had fallen off the membership rolls, but responded by contacting me to introduce himself, and rejoined the chapter. Over the years we became good friends.

In 2007, Allan called to offer the chapter a charitable gift annuity (a gift to an organization that pays the donor income during the donor’s lifetime). Allan good naturedly urged the chapter to try to meet the same, or better investment returns as those offered by the United Jewish Appeal! With the help of then chapter president Danny Meyers, and assistance from a Guild-friendly financial advisor, we were able to match the UJA's dividend rate. I received a call from Allan every year thereafter, with another offer of a charitable gift annuity. “It’s Botshon Time”, Allan would say, to begin the conversation.

On July 4, 2014, we had a small birthday celebration for Allan at a newly opened outpost of the Grand Central Oyster Bar near his home in Brooklyn. Allan, who was very frugal in his personal life, was extremely generous to his friends. He persevered that no glass or plate remain empty. It was a wonderful evening that Allan thoroughly enjoyed, full of laughter, good food and birthday wishes.

Allan passed away on August 11, 2014 and was interred with honors at Calverton National Cemetery.

Allan’s support for the chapter did not end with his passing. He left a transformative bequest that will provide support for the chapter, and the national NLG, for years to come.

Allan loved to tell stories. He loved the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, as his mother had, and the Oyster Bar at Grand Central, as had his father. Allan greatly admired Royal W. France, former NLG Executive Secretary who defended the NLG and others before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) during the McCarthy era. He greatly admired the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and wished he had been old enough to join. He supported the Rosenberg Fund for Children, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, and the NLG-NYC.

Allan loved classical music, traveling, cherrystone oysters and gin with two olives. He loved the chapter and the Guild for its outspoken commitment to social struggle and the practice of people’s law. Allan, and the Guild comrades of his generation, provide an example and a foundation on which today’s work for justice continues.

Allan at the Spring Fling, 2013.
Jill Humphries Aids Baltimore Legal Defense

BY JILL HUMPHRIES

A. OVERVIEW

This summary report covers my activities as a member of the Baltimore Legal Defense Committee (BLDC) from April 27 – May 20, 2015 with the intent of submitting a full report at a later date. An NLG-NYC member contacted me on Thursday, April 23 to ask if I could travel to Baltimore to assist the legal team with legal observer training and monitor actions. I arrived to Baltimore on Monday, April 27 to work with the Baltimore Legal Defense Committee (BLDC). I received financial support from multiple authors, Mutant Legal Collective, the Baltimore United for Change Coalition, The Center for Constitutional Rights, and the NLG-NYC Chapter. The description of the components of my work follows:

Baltimore United for Change Coalition & The Baltimore Legal Defense Committee

The legal defense team is a collaborative effort between Baltimore United For Change Coalition (BUCC), a collective of local Baltimore community organizations and the Baltimore Legal Defense Committee, drawn from Black Lives Matter movement attorneys, law students, and legal workers.1 Nicole Lee, human rights attorney, was invited by BUCC to coordinate legal support and to set-up a rapid response legal system (RRLS) at their offices located at 325 N. Holliday, Baltimore. As a prior Ferguson Legal Defense member, she invited me and other participants including Purvi Shah, Director of the Bertha Institute for Justice, and staff attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), to work on the Baltimore Legal Defense Committee. The leadership team, working closely with BUCC, drew from lessons learned during their Ferguson experience to develop an infrastructure to coordinate, organize, and manage legal support. One of the team’s objectives is to build community capacity to respond proactively and more effectively in providing legal support during uprisings. Members from the legal community are being requested based on their expertise rather than their organizational affiliation to provide technical assistance while leveraging their organizational resources to accomplish the task of setting up a rapid response legal hub.

B. IMPLEMENTATION

Managing Human Resources

Prior to my arrival the BLDC had already begun conducting legal observer trainings and establishing a jail support system. Part of my role in collaboration with other BLDC members was to conceptualize and implement an integrated volunteer database and scheduling system for legal observers and jail support, in addition to setting up a rapid response legal observer hub. In contrast to how NLG-NYC collects and organizes arrestee information and the attorney database defendant attorney matching process, these functions were integrated into the database and managed by jail support coordinators. Moreover the Baltimore Public Defenders Office provided legal support for the majority of arrestees. As a liaison I also connected BLDC with the National Conference of Black Lawyers network2 to identify additional Black attorneys and resources throughout the region.

The Need for a Flexible Legal Observer Hub

The National Lawyers Guild Legal Observer (LO) organizational structure works well because there is an existing legal observer culture, a close working relationship with activist organizations, prior knowledge of actions, and police knowledge of the role of NLG observers (see Table 1). In the Baltimore context none of these factors existed. Moreover, we were operating in an uprising or rebellion environment—an organic and unexpected gathering of people expressing rage against an unjust system. This unique situation required a more flexible organizational structure and approach, embedding community residents into the decision-making structure of our legal observer hub.

Legal Observer Training and & Deployment Activities

I worked in conjunction with Marques Banks, a 2L student from Catholic University who had already begun organizing local

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1 http://www.fergusonlegaldefense.com/baltimore

2 National Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL) website http://www.ncbl.org

Table 1.
A Comparison Between the NLG Legal Observer Organizational Structure and the Rapid Response Legal Observer Hub

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Lawyer Guild Legal Observer Organizational Structure</th>
<th>Rapid Response Legal Observer Hub</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal Office</strong></td>
<td><strong>Legal Observer Hub</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Environment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political Environment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Existing legal observer culture</td>
<td>• No existing legal observer culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationship with activist organizations</td>
<td>• No relationship with activist organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prior knowledge of actions</td>
<td>• No prior knowledge of actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Police knowledge of the role of NLG observers</td>
<td>• Police have little to no knowledge of the role of NLG observers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Protest / March Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>Traditional Protest &amp; Uprising Context</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activist organizations contact legal office</td>
<td>• Community members embedded into the Hub identify and map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Legal office sends out LO request</td>
<td>• neighborhood actions / hotspots in order to prioritize the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• LOs confirm assignment and show up at action</td>
<td>• allocation of human resources e.g., LO teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• GroupMe LO members</td>
<td>• Assignment and deployment of LO teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach &amp; Public Education</strong></td>
<td>• GroupMe LO team captain text loop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public Education Know Your Rights Outreach</td>
<td>• GroupMe general LO member text loop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach &amp; Public Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public Education Know Your Rights Outreach</td>
<td>• Public Education Know Your Rights Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pass out Know Your Rights booklets at actions / uprisings</td>
<td>• Pass out Know Your Rights booklets at actions / uprisings</td>
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</tbody>
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SPRING-SUMMER 2015  NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD-NYC NEWS • WWW.NLGNYC.ORG • 5
The reemergence of Black led organizing and the provision of legal support to Black communities poses a new opportunity for progressive national law organizations such as the ACLU and the National Lawyers Guild to learn how to build more effective relationships based on solidarity with a Black movement. These opportunities were not taken advantage of as experienced by me in the National Lawyers Guild. This requires a different understanding of their role and approach shifting from a top down, directive, and closed network, to open to receiving directions from Black led leadership, embracing a more collaborative / supportive role, and sharing of resources and networks. One such example of this misalignment expressed itself through the NLG-Maryland Chapter that played a minor role in the BLDC. While the NLG-Maryland Chapter leadership expressed interest in wanting to participate in the collaborative there was a disconnect between their expressed interest and actions of understanding how to work with a primarily progressive professional Black led and female leadership. The multifaceted structural and cultural manifestations embedded within the national structure of the Guild and mirrored at the Chapter level hindered their ability to be effective in this capacity. More specifically the dues paying structure creates a barrier for some Black lawyers, law students and legal workers to join because of how employment and wage discrimination works within the legal profession.

Regardless of the Guild’s progressive mission the organizational culture privileges white men and subordinates others. This contrasted with BLDC’s Black, female centered / egalitarian self-determining approach to Black determination. I encountered some of the same dynamics with other Guild Chapter members whom I met while playing a leadership role as the lead legal observer trainer and LO field coordinator. I often encountered questions whether I knew certain NLG-NYC chapter members. As the only African American female legal observer over a 10-year period with NLG-NYC I was very familiar with my “differential status position” and the “vetting” and “qualification checking” process exhibited by some white and male Guild members. It is these types of behaviors and practices that dissuade the involvement and the retention of Black and female and other non-dominant social group identities as Guild members.

To the extent that the Guild and local chapters want to play a role in this emerging movement requires the organization to exam-
### Table 2. Incident, Police Tactics & Equipment / Use of Military Grade Weapons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Police Tactics</th>
<th>Equipment / Military Grade Weapons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date: Monday, April 27, 2015</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Location: North and Pennsylvania</strong>&lt;br&gt;At approximately 6:10pm the police line parted and a black SUV with tinted windows pulled up. The police turned on a Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD)(^5) at 6:11pm and turned it off at 6:18pm. A loud &amp; piercing sound was emitted onto the protestors.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Extendable batons&lt;br&gt;• ¾ body shields&lt;br&gt;• Pepper spray&lt;br&gt;• Tear gas&lt;br&gt;• Armored vehicles&lt;br&gt;• Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At approximately 6:28pm / 6:42pm the police began spraying protestors with orange pepper spray.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>At approximately 6:32pm-6:33pm the police ordered the protestors to “move back,” tapping their batons against their shields. They created a corridor for fire trucks to enter to put out the CVS fire. I asked Jenny Egan, Public Defender if the “move back” order was a formal dispersal order or just a command / directive? She said it was not a dispersal order but rather a general order whereby people were not subject to arrest.</strong></td>
<td><strong>This is one of several tactics used by the Baltimore Police to control &amp; command protestors:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>“Tap-Tap Move Back”</strong> command tactic to intimidate and control movement of protestors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) The ACLU has litigated the use of LRAD. See [http://www.dailyreportonline.com/id=1202578346323/ACLU-settles-2-more-Pittsburgh-G20-suits-for-215K#ixzz3ammWa7R0](http://www.dailyreportonline.com/id=1202578346323/ACLU-settles-2-more-Pittsburgh-G20-suits-for-215K#ixzz3ammWa7R0).

### Table 3. Legal/Bail Support for Baltimore Statistics\(^6\)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bail amount target</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of bail money raised to date</td>
<td>$112,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate number of arrests(^7)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people bailed out by our bail fund(^8)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people bailed out by other means</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people still in jail</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest bail amount</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest bail amount</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) This does not include the 100s that were released on exception release or the 100s that were released on recognizance (ROR).
THANKS FOR MAKING THIS YEAR’S SPRING FLING SUCCESSFUL AND INSPIRING

Honoring the 2015 Champions of Justice
Soffiyah Elijah • Daniel L. Meyers • Michael Steven Smith
Law Student Recognition Award: Michelle Lewin
The Great Rent Wars New York, 1917-1929

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

Robert Fogelson’s 442-page tome (Yale Press 2013) deserves its title. WWI made construction materials scarce, while new arrivals to the city resulted in a shortage of 80 – 100,000 apartments in New York City by the end of 1919. The state legislature’s first response to the crisis was the Ottinger law which invalidated any lease that wasn’t filed with the county clerk. The effect was to make a one-year lease “a mere scrap of paper,” and to permit rent to be increased on each month merely upon demand. Tenants lived in dread of the first of the month.

The second response by the legislature was to authorize summary proceedings. This 1920 statute allowed the eviction of non-paying tenants without having to go through the expense and uncertainty of an ejection. The author says that by mid-February of that year, more than 30,000 summary proceedings had been brought in New York City. Then, as now, a tenant who fails to pay rent in full generally is evicted within three months, even with a jury demand. In those days, tenants and possessions would be put on sidewalk.

What Robert Fogelson’s book lacks in focus and analysis, it makes up in detail. It is essentially about the social movement that demanded rent control and achieved it from 1920 until 1929 when it was phased out, only to be revived under emergency tenant protections laws during WWII.

The demand for rent control was first made in a series of rent strikes in 1904, when the consequences were swift and dire. A second wave began in December 1907 during a nationwide depression. Organized out of the Socialist Party headquarters on Grand Street, the strikes quickly spread from the Lower East Side to Brownsville and Harlem, then Hoboken, Jersey City and Newark.

Meanwhile, landlords organized to shed their responsibility to provide heat after the record-cold 1918 winter. Four thousand tenants in the Bronx got a notice from the landlords that said in essence, “Your rent pays for the rooms you occupy. Not for steam heat or hot water. Agree to this or vacate.”

Although it is hardly his focus, one reading of the history is that Socialists were instrumental in organizing tenants to demand rent control. And vice versa, that the tenant’s movement was the real target of the 1919 Red Scare. At the time, New York had five Socialist Assemblymen, one Senator and one Judge. Literally two hours after the opening of the 1920 session, Thaddeus Sweet, a Republican from Oswego County, and the Speaker of the Assembly, summoned the five Socialists to the rostrum and called for an investigation by the Judiciary Committee. Two months later, over the objections of the likes of Charles Evans Hughes and A. Mitchell Palmer, they were expelled, only to be re-elected to their seats in November.

Even without the Socialist Assemblyman, the clamor for rent control was unstoppable. Moderate Democrats were pronouncing that if nothing is done to end rent profiteering by May 1, there would be “a social eruption beyond anything the city had ever experienced.”

Judges charged the worst landlords, “You are creating Bolsheviki all over the Bronx and you know it.”

Like our present governor, Alfred E. Smith was an opportunist, dressing up his ambitions with liberal feminism. He unwittingly opened the door for passage of tenant protections by calling for a special session in the summer of 1919 for the purpose of ratifying the Nineteenth Amendment, just passed by Congress on June 4th. While in the City, the sidewalks grew so cluttered with possessions of the dispossessed, “there was not traffic room for a sparrow,” the pressure on elected representatives was so great, they dared not vote against tenants. Later sessions repealed the Ottinger law and froze rents in existing buildings until November 1, 1922. New structures of four or more units were exempt from coverage. To the horror of the real estate industry, the state made it a civil offense, punishable by fines, to cut off heat or hot water. The only exceptions to rent control were for demonstrably “undesirable tenants.”

The Real Estate Board of New York immediately prepared constitutional challenges. The author’s best contribution is his tracing of the challenges through the Appellate Terms, the Appellate Division, the Court of Appeals and federal court. Ultimately, the New York courts found that dwelling units were property “affected with a public interest,” rejecting claims of deprivation of due process and impairment of contract. Since the state created the summary proceeding, it could amend or abolish it.

The US Supreme Court heard a New York case together with a challenge to the District of Columbia rent commission, created by Congress. Over the dissent of the future anti-New Deal judges, the high court upheld rent control, framing the question as follows: “Whether Congress is incompetent to meet [the housing emergency] in the way in which it has been met by most of the civilized countries of the world.”

As we used to say in the Madison [Wisconsin] Tenant’s Union, “All revolutions begin with tenants freezing their asses off in winter.” Thanks to the Real Rent Reform campaign who organized civil disobedience, participated in by Bill Perkins, Dick Gottfried, Jumaane Williams and other electeds, we not only secured a zero increase from the RGB this year, but modestly strengthened the regulatory framework. That the Republicans put forward a straight, 8-year extender of the rent regulatory framework. That the Republicans put forward a straight, 8-year extender of the rent control, that demand was the first to come off the table.

In the words of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, the new rent laws had taken “the ‘lord’ out of landlord.”

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Vieques 12 Years Later: Justice Delayed Is Justice Denied

BY NATASHA LYCIA ORA BANNAN
Associate Counsel at LatinoJustice PRLDEF and NLG President-elect

Twelve years ago if you happened to be standing at the top of Monte Carmelo in Vieques, Puerto Rico, you would notice something different. Perhaps you would notice the collective sigh of relief, of hope, of victory. Or that the wave of visitors being arrested and detained in mass had eased after the United States finally decided to close its military base that had been used for bombing practice. However, standing there today you may still see bombs exploding as the result of detonation, or hear that local lands remain in federal hands or notice that the ferries from Vieques to mainland Puerto Rico are full of Viequenses seeking health services, many for complicated and serious illnesses. Over 70 years after the arrival of the Navy in Vieques, some have called the compounded and continuous human rights violations on the island a crime against humanity.

On May 1, 2003, the United States Navy finally closed its naval base, the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Area in Vieques after 60 years of using the island to carry out military practices that included live target practice involving bombing and the use of biochemical agents such as Agent Orange, depleted uranium, napalm and white phosphorus. The Navy’s arrival in 1941 lead to mass displacement and the expropriation of about 75 percent of the island. For decades, Viequenses were exposed to toxic chemicals, including heavy metals, that have contaminated their bodies, land and water. The April 1999 killing of David Sanes, a civilian guard on duty in the Naval base, by a 500 pound errant bomb set off a wave of protests, civil disobedience and arrests by thousands of Puerto Ricans and visitors from across the world who said “basta ya!” to the military legacy and toxicity of the Navy’s presence and activities. After several years of consistent protests and visits by prominent figures, the U.S. government finally succumbed to international pressure and closed the base.

While many remember that victorious moment, the modern-day realities facing Viequenses are less known. The people of Vieques continue to suffer from disproportionately high rates of grave illnesses, including cancer, hypertension, kidney failure, asthma and other respiratory illnesses. The level of health services in Vieques remains what it was twelve years ago. A small percent of the lands controlled by the federal government have been returned to local control, while the overwhelming majority were merely transferred from one federal agency to another.

As a result of the extreme health and environmental damage caused by the Navy’s practices, Vieques was declared a Superfund site by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2005, meaning the site requires a special protocol for cleanup and decontamination procedures because of its level of toxicity. Despite such protocols, the Navy and its contractor, CH2MHill, engage in the use of open-air bombing as a means of detonating found munitions. They also engage in the questionable practice of open-air burning of vegetation as an economical means of finding munitions, both of which have been criticized as exacerbating existing environmental and health damage. There exists no adequate civilian oversight mechanism for a community of dominant Spanish speakers who have been isolated and disengaged from participating in the cleanup process and understanding its ramifications.

The United States has consistently maintained a position of non-liability for its actions in Vieques. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, part of the Center for Disease Control, has been heavily criticized by scientists and Congress alike for its “finding” of no “credible scientific evidence” to support a relationship between decades of military toxic use and civilian health consequences and environmental damage. The Navy continues to insist that open-air detonation of bombs does not contribute to air pollution since the chemicals released are already naturally occurring; however they are quick to caution residents and visitors not to approach or touch such munitions. They have been suspected of engaging in open-air burning of vegetation to quickly locate munitions at a fraction of the cost, an act that the EPA has said would be unlawful under local law (the Navy has admitted that even tearing up the dense vegetation to clear the remainder of the debris would hurt the nature reserve, much less burning it). In the many lawsuits filed against the United States, including one by LatinoJustice years ago, the government has consistently asserted the antiquated defense of sovereign immunity, insisting their actions are justified by national security reasons and therefore not subject to judicial scrutiny. There are no longer domestic forums available for Viequenses to seek justice, which is why we have asked the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an autonomous organism and quasi-judicial human rights body of the Organization of American States, to look into the situation.

After almost 75 years of exploitation, the people of Vieques have been very clear in their demands: return of all federally controlled lands to the people and municipality of Vieques; adequate and thorough decontamination of all land and water; demilitarization of their land; and locally controlled development. None of those demands have yet been met in full. Just this month, a group of independent scientists met in Puerto Rico to discuss their ongoing concern regarding the state of health and environmental damage in Vieques. And their concern is well-founded - the Navy estimated that they have so far removed 90,000 munitions items; 40,000 of which have been destroyed through demolition. However it has been estimated that the cleanup could take another 14 years, and even then the Navy presumes that not all munitions will be found, “regardless of the level of cleanup.” Instead, the Navy has proposed posting warning signs or fencing off areas from the public, which would limit any continued on page 17...
The Mass Incarceration Committee’s Parole Preparation Project has hired two summer interns: Lindsay Infantino and Ketienne Telemaque.

Chapter past-president Gideon Oliver was an attorney on scene at the NYC Trans Day of Action on June 26 on Pier 45 at Christopher Street in Manhattan. “Proud to have provided some legal support for Trans Day Trans and gender non-conforming people of Action in NYC since 2005.”

On May 30 the first ever US-based national march calling for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera was held in Harlem. People from across the country, including Oscar’s daughter, lawyer, activists and celebrity artists gathered and marched to call upon President Obama to pardon Oscar, who began his 34th year in prison on May 29. The National Lawyers Guild has long supported the freedom struggles of the political prisoners from Puerto Rico, which remains a colonized nation. Other supporters included NYC Council Speaker Melissa Mark Viverito, Congress members Nydia velázquez and Angelé Agüero, and former Governor Aníbal Acevedo Vila.

The NLG-NYC endorsed the NYC Cannabis Parade on May 2 to demand a legal market for cannabis in New York City, and an end to the use of drug laws as tools for social control and mass incarceration. “In support of cannabis legalization, a free society, human rights, and planetary survival.”

California Governor Ronald Reagan granted 575 clemencies; NY Governor Andrew Cuomo has granted zero clemencies. The chapter endorsed the April 18 Candles for Clemency Candle Light Vigil at Governor Cuomo’s home in Mt. Kisco.

Former Political Prisoner Jake Conroy on Activism, Repression, and Imprisonment was co-sponsored by the Animal Rights Activist Committee on April 12 at The Base, the anarchist social center on Myrtle Avenue in Brooklyn. Conroy, a co-founder of Ocean Defense International who helped lead the first ever disruption of a whale hunt in US coastal waters, spoke on “navigating living a life branded as a terrorist in post-9/11 society”.

The chapter endorsed the April 10 march from the Harlem State Office Building to St. Mary’s Church on West 126th Street as part of the NYC Day of Action for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Mumia is the NLG’s Jailhouse Lawyer Vice President. He has been denied a decent diet, urgent medical treatment, and communication with his family and attorneys. Because his case involved the death of a police officer, Mumia has been unable to obtain impartial review of the blatant misconduct by the trial judge and prosecutor in his conviction and sentence. Bob Boyle is one of his attorneys: “The immediate relatives of a prisoner have a right to know the medical status of their loved ones in the case of hospitalization; and all prisoners have a right to communicate with their attorney, especially in case of an emergency. That my client and his family have been deprived of these rights is a constitutional violation.”

On April 10 the Labor & Employment Committee and the NLG Chapter at NYU School of Law hosted a panel discussion on the legal struggles and successes of campus workers: Schooling the University: Winning Workplace Justice for Campus Workers. The speakers covered the rights of interns; organizing student athletes, graduate students, adjuncts, and faculty; and international-student worker rights.

The CUNY Law School chapter sponsored a day-long training Challenging FOIA/FOIL Noncompliance: Workshop and CLE on April 4. A follow up to CUNY NLG’s earlier FOIA/FOIL Explained: a practical guide to an impractical system, the program included discussion about the legal and political implications of government noncompliance to FOIA/FOIL requests; and networking among activists and the legal community to build solidarity across issues, social movements, and legal processes involving FOIA/FOIL. CUNY Law Students for Justice in Palestine co-sponsored.

NYU Law School’s Student Animal Legal Defense Fund and the NLG-NYC Animal Rights Activism Committee co-sponsored From Corporate Law to Climbing Barbed Wire: How Open Rescue Exposes Violence, Saves Animals, and Inspires Change on April 3 at NYU’s Vanderbilt Hall. Direct Action Everywhere (DXE) co-founder Wayne Hsiung, once a corporate attorney and Northwestern law professor, described sneaking into animal farms with a camera in the dead of night, and rescuing animals from nightmarish abuse. “Truth Matters. It’s not Food. It’s Violence.”

The Next Gen Committee took advantage of the free admission on Friday evenings at the Asia Society museum to check out the new exhibition of Buddhist art from Burma on March 27.

The chapter’s executive committee held a welcome party for new NLG national office
**GUILD IN ACTION**

Continued from previous page

executive director Pooya Gehr and the national office staff on March 16. Aberdeen Jabara and Holly Maguigan hosted.

The chapter’s Environmental Justice Committee participated in a program on March 16 at DC37 AFSCME's headquarters on Barclay Street: Our City, Our Climate: A Forum on NYC Climate and Environmental Legislation. People’s Climate Arts, Rising Tide and other NYC climate groups focused on community-based climate change proposals, pending council resolutions, how to influence the legislative process, and how to organize to promote the climate change agenda.

The Cardozo School of Law NLG chapter co-sponsored a CLE Policing, Conflict, and Change on March 12 in Cardozo’s Moot Court Room. Panelists included chapter member Joshua Moskovitz and Chicago chapter member Flint Taylor. It was an all-day event including four panel discussions of the state of policing today, the development of Fourth Amendment jurisprudence, the consequences of over-policing, and potential avenues for reform.

On March 12 at NYU Law School’s Vanderbilt Hall, the chapter presented US-Cuba Relations: What Does “Normalization” Mean?, a look at what’s behind the new policy, what it means on a political and economic level, as well as for people-to-people relationships, political prisoners in Cuba, and Cuban support in the African Diaspora. Panelists included Michael Krinsky and Michael Steven Smith. Kerry McLean moderated. Guests included representatives from Cuba’s UN delegation and the Federation of Cuban Women.

On March 2 the NLG-NYC Animal Rights Activism Committee presented an event on intersectionality and animals: Justice for All? Race, Class, Gender, Disability, and Animal Liberation at NYU Law School. “Is animal rights a feminist issue? If we deny animals rights because they lack the abilities humans possess, are we being sexist? Does supporting animal liberation detract from human liberation struggles? Or could it help human rights causes?” NLG President-elect Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan moderated. Co-sponsors included the chapter’s Muslim Defense Project and Next Gen, Environmental, and Labor & Employment Committees; plus the Student Animal Legal Defense Funds from NYU, CUNY, Brooklyn, and Pace Law Schools.

The chapter sponsored its annual Anti-Oppression Training for the executive committee on February 28 at the Judson Memorial Church on Thompson Street in Manhattan.

On February 26 the CUNY Law NLG chapter presented Connecting Struggles: The Intersection of Black Lives Matter and Palestine Solidarity as part of the 11th annual Israeli Apartheid Week from February 26 through March 13 “to raise awareness about Israel’s apartheid policies towards Palestinians, and to build support for the growing nonviolent Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign.” The panel featured the voices of two community organizers from each of these movements. CUNY Law Students for Justice in Palestine co-sponsored. 3L Rebecca Arian was one of the organizers.

The Brooklyn Law School NLG chapter sponsored Broken Windows & Broken Courts: Is there Justice in Summons Court? on February 26. The panel included past chapter President Gideon Oliver, and focused on due process violations, a lack of individualized justice, the extreme racial disparities of the people brought into Summons Court, and the many ways that Summons Court interacts with broken windows policing.

The Next Gen Committee held a Cryptoparty on February 13 (Friday the Thirteenth: What Could Possibly Go Wrong?) at Babycastles on West 14th Street in Manhattan. “Encryption instruction. Party. Edutainment. Potential freaky hijinks. Bring your laptop-smartphone-other device, your desire to encrypt your emails and chat (or desire to know why you should), your ppg key if you already have, your tech security questions, passwords and knowledge, your friends that you want to communicate securely with.”

The NLG-NYC Chapter purchased a bloc of tickets for the opening weekend of the new documentary film “1971” on February 8 at Cinema Village in Manhattan. Calling themselves the Citizens’ Commission to Investigate the FBI, eight ordinary citizens broke into an FBI office in Media, PA in 1971. They removed every file in the office, yielding a trove of damning evidence. The most significant revelation was the existence of COINTELPRO, the FBI’s, secret illegal program of surveillance and disruption of US political groups. Those responsible never revealed their identities until this film. Following the screening, film director Johanna Hamilton joined the audience for a Q&A.

On February 5 the Rutgers-Newark NLG chapter held its 3rd Annual Arthur Kinoy Awards. Honorees were Lennox Hinds, Professor of Criminal Justice at Rutgers-Newark and a close associate of the National Lawyers Guild; and Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union.

Susan Howard, Colleen McCormack-Maitland, Danny Meyers, and Marty Stolar staffed the chapter table at the NYU Career Fair on February 6 & 7.

The Mass Incarceration and Anti-Racism Committees presented a CLE Parole Prep Basics: New York State’s unjust parole system and what advocates and attorneys can do about it on January 28 at NYU School of Law. “Please join us for an evening of learning about the Kafkaesque NYS Board of Parole. This training and CLE will introduce participants to the Parole Preparation Project, where we pair volunteers with people seeking parole to work together to prepare the best possible parole packet and successfully interview with the Board.” Scott Paltrowitz, Andrea Bible, Nora Carroll, and Michelle Lewin were among the presenters.

The chapter endorsed the protest demonstration on January 26 at the Sheraton New York Times Square, which was the site of ongoing secret negotiations for the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a pro-corporate, pro-fossil fuel, pro-Big Pharma, anti-labor trade bill.

On December 17 Governor Cuomo’s administration announced that it would ban hydraulic fracking in New York State. In June 2014 the NY Court of Appeals had upheld the right of a municipality to ban such drilling.

Joel Kupferman, of the NLG Environmental Justice Committee: “Huge victory but the enviro-justice & climate justice struggle must continue as well the Guild’s essential participation. The Committee and its members have been an integral part of the struggle, out in the forefront testifying, litigating, advocating, and offering counsel to many individuals and organizations. The Mass Defense Committee has also been there, legal observing at numerous demos and rallies.”

The NYC Safe Energy Coalition celebrated that evening at the offices of the New York Environmental Law and Justice Project on Park Place in Manhattan.

As part of its militarized response to First Amendment-protected activity, the New York City Police Department has deployed military-grade sound cannons against the people who protested the grand jury’s decision not to bring criminal charges in the death of Eric Garner after a confrontation with the police on Staten Island. The “long-range acoustic devices (LRADs)” can emit repetitive blasts at a volume of up to 152 decibels (85 decibels is the danger level). On December 12 Gideon Oliver, Elena Cohen and Mark Taylor wrote to the NYPD on behalf of some of the injured protesters. They demanded that the department terminate the use of the LRADs pending its response to previous FOIL requests about their utilization. Elena appeared on public radio station WNYC to discuss the issue. http://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/12/15/national-lawyers-guild-challenges-nypd-use-sound-cannons-against-peaceful-protesters
Garner Case Settled

On July 13 the family of Eric Garner reached a settlement with the City of New York to resolve a wrongful-death claim over his killing by the NYPD last year on Staten Island. Mr. Garner, who was unarmed, was approached by several policemen who accused him of selling untaxed cigarettes, and restrained him using an illegal chokehold, which caused his death. The City agreed to pay $5.9 million in damages. The family also resolved, for an undisclosed amount, all claims against Richmond University Medical Center in Staten Island for the negligence of the EMTs who responded to the scene and did nothing. The settlement came a few days before the anniversary of his death, which the family had set as a deadline before filing suit. Jonathan Moore represented the Garner family.

The London Review of Books published an article by Chase Madar on July 2 in which he describes how “the weaponisation of human rights – its doctrines, its institutions and, above all, its grandees – has been going on in the US for more than a decade.” http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n13/chase-madar/short-cuts


In October 2013, a class action was filed in the SDNY representing 8,500 Haitians killed and 700,000 sickened by the cholera epidemic that followed the earthquake in 2010. The suit alleges that cholera was introduced to Haiti by the recklessly unhygienic practices of the United Nations peacekeepers, and demanded the installation of water and sanitation infrastructure to control the epidemic. In January 2015, the court held that the UN enjoys nearly absolute legal immunity and dismissed the case. On June 3 the NLG's Environmental Justice Committee, filed an amicus brief on behalf of the plaintiffs in May 2014.

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On May 19, Bina Ahmad was a member of a panel that discussed strategies and tactics for activists affected by surveillance and policing. It was part of a six-program series New Topics in Social Computing: Resistance under Surveillance organized by Eyebeam, a Brooklyn not-for-profit art and technology center. Bina is a member of the chapter’s executive committee and NLG National Co-Vice President. Listen: https://soundcloud.com/eyebeamnyc/new-topics-in-social-computing-resistance-under-surveillance

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Lamis Dekk appeared at the Al Quds Conference and Dinner on May 16 at the SF/ Bay Area Muslim Community Association in Santa Clara, CA. She discussed Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), Palestine in the media, and organizing locally for Palestine. “Zionists don’t only use warfare against our people, they use lawfare.” The event was sponsored by the Council on American-Islamic Relations and American Muslims for Palestine. Al Quds is the Arabic name for the city of Jerusalem.

Demonstrators arrested while protesting the police killing of Eric Garner in July 2014

Continued on next page
Communications Workers of America Local 1180, argued that salaries for those members had been held well below the inflation rate since 1978, while the senior supervisors, often white males, were promoted into higher-paying titles. Yetta Kurland was one of the attorneys for the workers.

The Real Rent Reform Coalition and more than 40 city and state elected officials gathered for a forum on New York Rent Laws and our Housing Crisis at the 1199 SEIU auditorium on West 43d Street on April 30. Tim Collins, tenants’ attorney and former Executive Director of the NYC Rent Guidelines Board, was a featured speaker.

On April 24, Aaron Frishberg, Kerry McLean, and Steve Teich represented the chapter at the tribute to Lennox Hinds on the occasion of Stevens, Hinds & White's move from its historic brownstone on 111th Street in Harlem. Lennox is the permanent representative to the United Nations for the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, Professor in the Program in Criminal Justice at Rutgers University, and a world-renowned criminal defense and international human rights lawyer whose clients have included Nelson Mandela.

How Can Radical Legal Work Support Radical Activism? was the theme of the NLG's Northeast Regional Conference at Western New England School of Law in Springfield, MA on April 17-19. Bina Ahmed, Lauren Gazzola, and Rachel Meeropol appeared on a panel which discussed “Should the NLG and radical social justice movements include animal rights?”

Albert Victory was convicted in 1968 of a traffic dispute-related killing of an NYPD officer, which he insists was committed by his mentally disturbed co-defendant. In 1999 on his fourth attempt, he was granted parole. Phone records indicate that after a press inquiry from Court TV, state officials immediately conspired to revoke his parole. Victory maintains that because of his reputation as a “cop killer”, the officials falsely claimed that the parole board was unaware that Victory had briefly escaped from prison in 1978. On April 17, the Second Circuit reinstated Victory’s due process claims that his parole was rescinded on a false basis. The court said that it is axiomatic that conspiracies are secretive and are rarely proven by direct evidence, and that by failing to consider the parole officials’ phone records the district court had failed to draw all inferences in Victory’s favor.

Myron Beldock represented Mr. Victory.

Brooklyn Law School’s NLG chapter and its Public Service Office presented A Celebration of Progressive Lawyering on April 15 in the law school’s Subotnick Center. Robert Boyle and 3L Lauren Price, as well as The Bronx Defenders, were the honorees.

The Hand That Feeds, a documentary film about the successful campaign to organize Hot & Crusty, a popular Upper East Side bakery café, played at the Village Cinema between April 3 and April 9. Undocumented immigrant workers faced sub-legal wages, dangerous machinery, abusive managers, and a two-month lockout. Lawyers battled in back rooms and Occupy Wall Street protesters took over the restaurant, while a picket line divided the neighborhood. Jeanne Miler and Ben Dictor and Maria Chickedantz from Eisner & Associates, represented the workers. http://www.thehandthatfeedsfilm.com/

Tamar Kraft-Stolar was a presenter at a CLE program sponsored by the New York Women’s Bar Association on March 19 at NYC Civil Court on Centre Street. The subject was “Women in Prison: Before, During, After.” Tamar is Women in Prison Project Director at the Correctional Association of New York.

Jonathan Stirling-Uss presented a CLE on Emerging Issues in Cybersecurity, Legal Ethics, and Technology at CUNY School of Law on March 17. “All practice areas are impacted by the new political and technological reality of multi-state mass surveillance technology. This CLE will assist attorneys in understanding how to ethically engage with information technology in this new and challenging climate.” The program was co-sponsored by The Constitutional Communications Project and the Bertha Justice Institute at the Center for Constitutional Rights.

On March 17 at Cardozo Law School, Chapter President Elena Cohen moderated a discussion: The Intersection between Anti-Gay Bullying, Domestic Violence, and Animal Rights. “Would you be surprised to learn that gendered oppression, such as domestic violence and discrimination against LGBT-identifying people, is linked to the mistreatment of nonhuman animals?” The event was hosted by the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF).

Joel Kupferman and Kerry McLean chaired a session on tools for change at the People’s Climate March Coalition forum Our City, Our Climate on March 16 at the headquarters of DC 37 AFSCME on Barclay Street in lower Manhattan. Their topic was “A Citizen’s Toolkit for Legislative Action” focusing on using creative direct action to change the agenda and enact legislation needed to lower NYC’s greenhouse gases. “At the People’s Climate March last September 400,000 people demanded world leaders act on the severity of the global climate crisis. New York City’s elected leaders know they too are called upon...
to do the right thing.”

The 59th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was held in March in New York City. One of the events was a panel moderated by Kerry McLean at the UN Church Center which addressed gender-based violence (GBV) in Haiti. Violence against women and sexual exploitation of girls is a problem in many countries around the world. In Haiti the problem is exacerbated by poverty, social stigma, widespread insecurity, attitudes of police officers, and lack of public education about sexual violence. The panel discussed tactics for combating GBV in Haiti, and strategies for partners and allies to support advocacy in Haiti.

As part of its “First Wednesday” series, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) sponsored a Q&A on March 4, with CCR staffer Lauren Gazzola, who discussed her experience as a longtime animal rights activist. Lauren served 52 months in Danbury federal prison on charges that she “conspired” to publish a website that advocated and reported on protest activity against a notorious animal testing lab in New Jersey. Lauren has been a client in two of CCR’s cases involving the federal Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA), part of the government’s “Green Scare” which has increased repression of animal rights and environmental activists by criminalizing First Amendment-protected advocacy and punishing non-violent civil disobedience as “terrorism.” The event was held at the Von Bar on Bleecker Street in Manhattan.

On March 3, the New York Times published a letter from Soffiyah Elijah, Executive Director of the Correctional Association of New York, calling for the closing of Attica Prison: “The Correctional Association of New York has been monitoring prison conditions for 170 years. In the past year, the Correctional Association has visited Attica four times. We interviewed dozens of people incarcerated there, and received letters from almost 100 people. Nearly every person reported frequent brutal beatings by staff members. The time to shut down is long overdue. The inhumanity and brutality … cannot be ignored. In our own backyard the most atrocious things are being done to members of our society by people who are paid with our tax dollars.”

NLG President-Elect Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan is an organizer of 34 Mujeres NYC x Oscar, which holds 34-minute actions on the last Sunday of every month as part of the movement for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, who has been in federal prison for 34 years. On February 22 they held their monthly rally and cultural presentation at Teatro SEA Latino Theatre, part of the Clemente Soto Velez cultural center on the Lower East Side. They have also held events in the Bronx, Sunset Park, Washington Heights, and East Harlem. ¡Hasta su regreso! Until his return!

A celebration of the one year anniversary of Lynne Stewart’s release from prison was held at St. Peter’s Church on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan on February 20. Lynne is dedicated to continuing the work of bringing all political prisoners home. “It’s time to set them all free!”

On February 12, The Correctional Association of New York, a criminal justice policy and advocacy organization, released Reproductive Injustice: The State of Reproductive Health Care for Women in New York State Prisons, a five-year study, based on in-person interviews with over 950 incarcerated women and 1,500 mailed-in surveys. Tamar Kraft-Stolar is director of the Correctional Association’s Women in Prison Project and the author of the report. Among the findings:

• Many pregnant women receive insufficient food and sanitary supplies, substandard reproductive health care, and face serious delays in accessing GYN services.

• Pregnant women in solitary confinement face particularly egregious conditions. They often have difficulty accessing doc-

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Moxie!

Name: Moxie Catherine Taylor
Parents: Stephanie Morin Taylor and Mark Taylor
DOB: 2/1/2015
Weight: 8 lbs. even
Length: 20 inches
Fun Fact: Moxie was the name of Stephanie’s parents’ band when she was growing up outside of Boston. It’s also a soda and an adjective meaning “chutz-pah” ;)

Eva Lucia

Name: Eva Lucia Pena Rankin
Parents: Former EC Co-VP David Rankin and former EC member Alexandra Goncalves-Pena
DOB: January 16, 2015

Louise-Constance

Name: Louise-Constance Kurzen
Parents: Maria Chickedantz and Charles-Henry Kurzen
DOB: 11-22-2014
Location: Beth Israel, Manhattan
Etc.: Very healthy and bubbly!!! Her older brother Henry is very proud to be a big brother!
Vieques

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potential use of the land and relieves them of any responsibility for possible ecological damage that may surface in a toxic site left contaminated and unattended.

Concretely, the United States must be held accountable for its actions that have intentionally violated the most fundamental human rights of the people of Vieques and have led to loss of life and compromised health. The United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization has consistently called for an adequate decontamination effort in Vieques and return of the lands to local control. This past week, several members of Congress called for the U.S. to reexamine its efforts and commitment to the people of Vieques. There have been renewed calls by the scientific community to ensure that the U.S. adequately funds a full and complete decontamination effort in Vieques, not just a cleanup (the Navy has consistently stated that for ten years it has spent close to $20 million per year in Vieques, yet “cleanup” has not necessarily meant “decontamination”). And the people of Vieques have consistently demanded that their own government of Puerto Rico address and remedy the lack of adequate health services in Vieques, which forces residents to spend hours and sometimes days traveling to the main island to seek healthcare. Despite a resolution from the Puerto Rican House of Representatives reaffirming their commitment to justice in Vieques, residents have yet to see concrete actions taken on their behalf.

The United States, which was one of only four countries that recently opposed the United Nations General Assembly’s fifth resolution on depleted uranium, has yet to put forward or implement a comprehensive plan that would adequately address the health, environmental, land use and economic concerns residents of Vieques have that stem from decades of military use and abuse. In 2013, Congress approved legislation that asked the Navy to make public and easily accessible historical records on the use, type and frequency of munitions used in Vieques, a request that has still not been satisfied.

In 2008 when then Senator Obama was campaigning, he pledged to “closely monitor the health of the people of Vieques and promote appropriate remedies to health conditions caused by military activities conducted by the U.S. Navy on Vieques.” Today, seven years after that promise and 74 years after the invasion of the Navy in Vieques, justice remains delayed and denied. The “appropriate remedies” mentioned by Obama must mean economic, environmental and health justice with the full input and participation of the people of Vieques. And not in several years when yet another generation will struggle with high rates of asthma, respiratory illnesses and developmental and learning disabilities (known side effects of exposure to mercury), as young Viequenses currently do. The United States and the government of Puerto Rico must look beyond the bare minimum required to “cleanup” Vieques, and instead must adequately fund, support and facilitate a full decontamination and health effort. Anything less is ineffective and unjust. After decades of battling the residual toxicity left behind, residents demand a true “paz para Vieques”, which is only possible through justice.