

2017 YEAR IN REVIEW



FIFTY
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS IN 2018



LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND
ECONOMIC JUSTICE
Serving Greater Boston Since 1968

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MISSION AND HISTORY

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice promotes equal opportunity and fights against discrimination. We protect the rights of people of color and immigrants using creative and courageous legal action, education, and advocacy in collaboration with law firms and community partners. For over four decades, the Lawyers' Committee has worked to safeguard the civil, social, and economic rights of our constituencies. We handle impact litigation as well as legal actions on behalf of individuals. We also engage in community economic development, community education, and public advocacy.

Founded in 1968, the Lawyers' Committee was the first of eight local affiliates of the Washington-based Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, a national organization formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal representation to address racial discrimination. In 1973, the Lawyers' Committee became the first *pro bono* project of the Boston Bar Association and was the only Lawyers' Committee in the country affiliated with a major bar association. Although the organization is now separately incorporated with its own 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, the Lawyers' Committee continues to maintain strong ties with the private bar.

Membership by private law firms in the Lawyers' Committee still forms the working foundation of the organization. Member firms fund a significant part of our annual operating expenses and provide millions of dollars in *pro bono* legal services by co-counseling with the organization. In this way, the Lawyers' Committee has for decades harnessed the resources and legal talent of Boston's leading law firms to secure the civil rights of area residents.

The Lawyers' Committee has grown, adding new projects and initiatives to fit the changing face of discrimination. While working closely with an ever-increasing number of community partners, it has always remained true to its core mission to challenge discrimination.



Lawyers' Committee Staff (left to right): Priya Lane, Jennifer Navas Portillo, Laura Maslow-Armand, Oren Sellstrom, Oren Nimni, Ivan Espinoza-Madriral, Sophia Hall, and Matt Cregor.



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice, our mission is to promote equal opportunity and to fight against discrimination.

Over the past year, our staff has grown by 33%. Our legal warriors are filing more cutting-edge cases, expanding our network of community partners, and helping even more small businesses in minority and low-income communities.

To guide our work and ensure its sustainability, we embarked on a strategic planning process incorporating the perspective of our community partners and stakeholders. The result is a dynamic vision for driving the organization forward as we approach our 50th Anniversary in 2018.

Our work is having a powerful impact on the ground, and we have much to celebrate!

We were the first organization to bring the Trump Administration to court as part of our work defending sanctuary communities. We are in the forefront of protecting children and families from dangerous immigration raids and from the lawless Bristol County Sheriff who has threatened to send immigrants to build a border wall.

In response to an unprecedented wave of racial violence, we have been fighting hate crimes in our region, including Claremont, NH, where an 8 year-old was nearly lynched. We are also working with allies to protect our communities from the type of violent bigotry that erupted in Charlottesville, Virginia.

We are also engaged in groundbreaking civil rights cases, such as our lawsuit to protect Asian-Americans and Latinos from voter disenfranchisement in Lowell.

We are providing legal support to hundreds of small business owners in low-income communities through innovative programming like FoodBiz101, our accelerator for small businesses in the food industry, and landmark events like BizGrow, where we provided 150 small businesses with free legal support.

From our historic role in desegregating Boston's public institutions to our ongoing efforts to address 21st century civil rights challenges, we are thriving! Join us at one of our upcoming events to celebrate our legacy.

Here's to moving forward — without fail and without fear.

Iván Espinoza-Madrigal

Executive Director

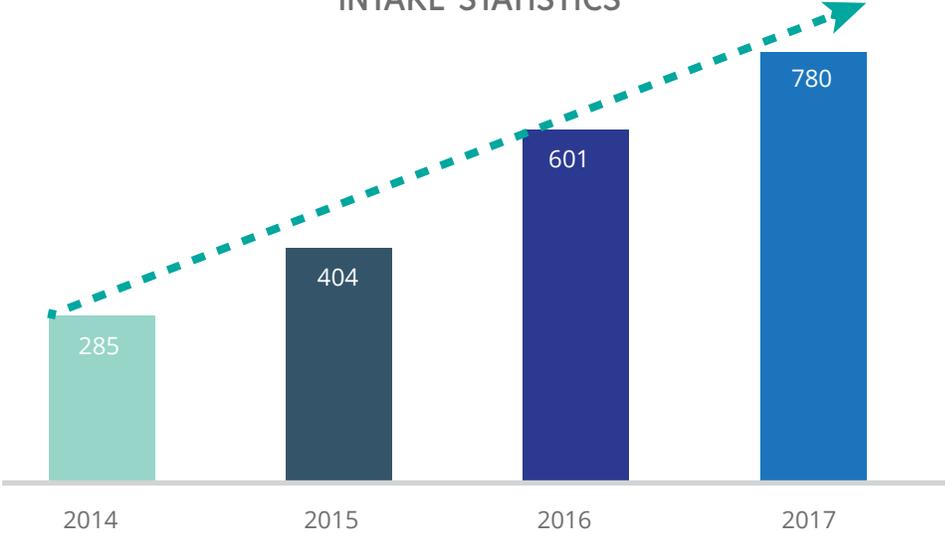
"The proof that one truly believes is in action."

BAYARD RUSTIN

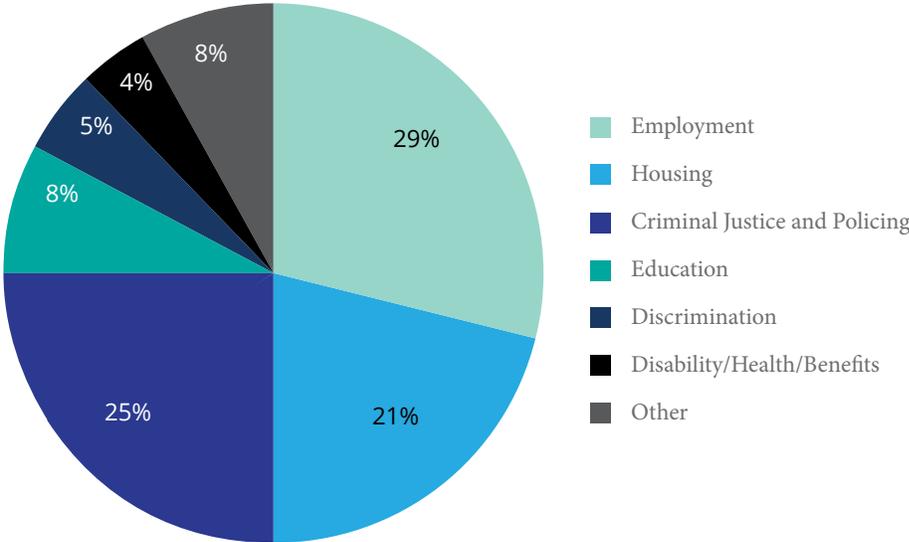
WHO WE SERVE

As the Lawyers' Committee increases its visibility in the community and as needs grow, the number of individuals contacting us for assistance has been increasing exponentially. We serve some of the most vulnerable populations in the Commonwealth providing representation, counsel, advice, and referrals on a broad range of issues faced by low-income, minority, and immigrant communities.

INTAKE STATISTICS



2017 INTAKE BREAKDOWN



A MULTIFACETED APPROACH TO TACKLING THE UNPRECEDENTED WAVE OF HATE

After an election cycle that normalized hate, the Lawyers' Committee has seen an enormous spike in reported hate crimes and acts of bias. In response, we are leading the way in a comprehensive strategy that educates and empowers victims of hate crimes. We produced bilingual know-your-rights palmcards that outlined effective strategies to respond to hate incidents. We have distributed over 10,000 of these palmcards to more than 100 grassroots organizations and have held dozens of trainings for community groups.

We have also mobilized rapidly to address specific hate incidents, including:

- Days after the violence at a white supremacist rally in **Charlottesville, Virginia**, a similar rally was announced for the Boston Common. The Lawyers' Committee immediately stood with other community groups to demand a comprehensive safety plan from the city and transparency from the police department, seeking to ensure that Boston did not become the next Charlottesville. On the day of the rally, we provided on the ground know-your-rights trainings for counter-protestors. The result was a hugely successful demonstration of the power of unity over divisiveness and hate, with a counter-protest that was peaceful and 40,000 strong.
- In **Claremont, New Hampshire**, a bi-racial eight-year-old boy was pushed off a table with a rope around his neck by White teenagers. Following reported comments by City officials that seemed to suggest a "boys will be boys" attitude towards the near-lynching, we demanded that the police department conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into this hate crime and hold the responsible parties accountable.
- When students of color at **Framingham State University** and **Rockland High School** were targeted with symbols of hate – racial slurs and swastikas – we immediately contacted school administrators to remind them of their legal duties to respond aggressively to root out such practices and to support students of color. We provided the schools with "best practices" on how to do so.

Intimidación, Hostigamiento y Acoso:

¿Está usted en riesgo?

¿Víctima o testigo de un crimen de odio?



LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE
Serving Greater Boston Since 1968

PROTÉJASE:

-  **¡SEGURIDAD!** Si se siente inseguro, aléjese.
-  **¡RESPONDA!** Si se siente seguro, responda con calma y firmeza para que sepan que el comportamiento no es apropiado.
-  **¡DOCUMÉNTALO!** Capture todos los detalles sobre lo que sucedió, incluyendo la fecha, hora, lugar e información de contacto de cualquier testigo.
-  **¡REPÓRTELO!** Dígale a las autoridades apropiadas. Llame al 911 si cree que está en peligro.
-  **¡BUSQUE AYUDA!** Comuníquese con el Comité de Abogados al **617-482- 1145** o en **www.lawyerscom.org**

Know-Your-Rights Palmcard in Spanish.

CITYLAB: AVERTING THE NEXT CHARLOTTESVILLE

"If these back-to-back rallies are any indication, this threat is metastasizing," said Ivan Espinoza-Madrigal of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice.

- In **West Springfield**, a Puerto Rican family – the only minority family in the neighborhood – found “go home” and “Trump” keyed into each side of their car. We immediately called for law enforcement officials to investigate the incident as a hate crime and have since worked with the family to ensure appropriate law enforcement response.

We also continue our advocacy to press Facebook and Twitter to be more aggressive and proactive in combatting hate speech on their platforms. We have engaged in productive dialogue with Facebook executives already and plan to continue our advocacy in this arena in 2018.

RECURSOS

Llame al 911 si cree que está en peligro.

Comité de Abogados para los Derechos Civiles y la Justicia Económica: (617) 482-1145 o www.lawyerscom.org

Línea Directa de Crímenes de Odio del Procurador General de Massachusetts: (800) 994-3228

El Comité de Abogados para los Derechos Civiles y la Justicia Económica es una organización sin fines de lucro formada para utilizar los recursos de la comunidad legal para eliminar la discriminación en Massachusetts.



LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND
ECONOMIC JUSTICE
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Bilingual tools to fight hate.

VOTING RIGHTS

In May 2017, together with our *pro bono* allies at **Ropes & Gray**, we filed a federal voting rights lawsuit on behalf of a diverse coalition of Asian-American and Latino residents of Lowell, alleging that the city's municipal election system discriminates against communities of color.

According to our lawsuit, the use of citywide at-large elections for all seats on the Lowell City Council and Lowell School Committee dilutes the voting power of minority voters in Lowell, violating the federal Voting Rights Act, as well as the U.S. Constitution. The complaint sets forth how although the city is approximately 49% minority, both its nine-member City Council and its six-member School Committee are all-white and have been so for virtually all of Lowell's history. In an at-large winner-take-all system such as Lowell's, 51% of the electorate can control 100% of the seats and win every election.

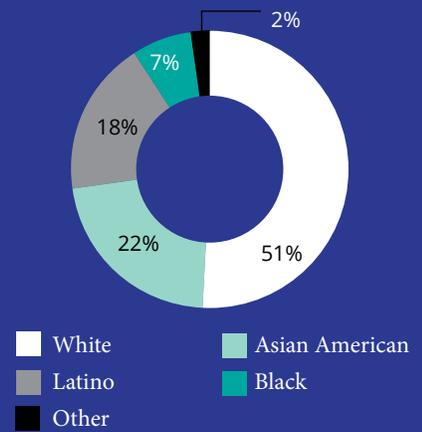
The suit also describes the city's "racially polarized voting," whereby the predominately white voting bloc consistently defeats the candidates preferred by minority communities. The complaint cites the example of the 2013 City Council election, which included two Cambodian-American candidates, who were favored by both Asian-American and Latino voters above all other candidates, ranking as these voters' first and second choice candidates, respectively. In contrast, they were the seventeenth and eighteenth choices (out of eighteen candidates) among the predominantly white majority voting bloc. As a result, neither won a seat. Similar voting patterns exist in School Committee elections.

The case is currently pending in federal district court, where the judge has already rejected the City's motion to dismiss. The lawsuit is believed to be the first of its kind in the country to be filed on behalf of a coalition of Asian-American and Latino residents.

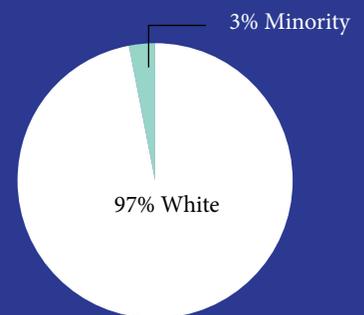


Voting Rights Community Forum in Lowell.

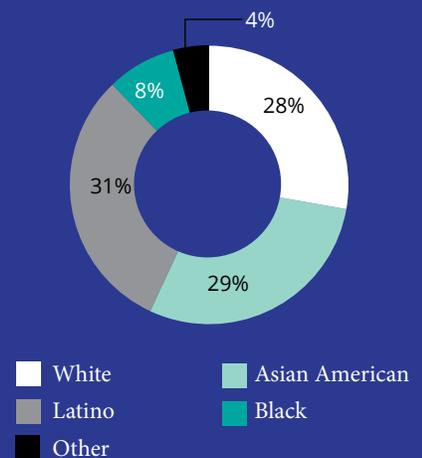
LOWELL POPULATION (2015)



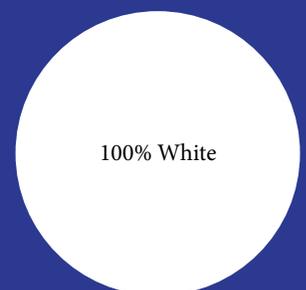
LOWELL CITY COUNCIL & SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2007-2015



LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS STUDENT POPULATION 2016-2017



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2007-2015



EDUCATION PROJECT

Since *Morgan v. Hennigan*, Boston's groundbreaking school desegregation case, the Lawyers' Committee has worked to protect the civil and educational rights of students in Massachusetts. Today, we continue our fight for equal educational rights by advocating for fair school discipline, promoting racial equity in school admission and funding, and protecting the educational rights of immigrant students.

BLACK GIRLS PUNISHED FOR BLACK HAIR IN CHARTER SCHOOL

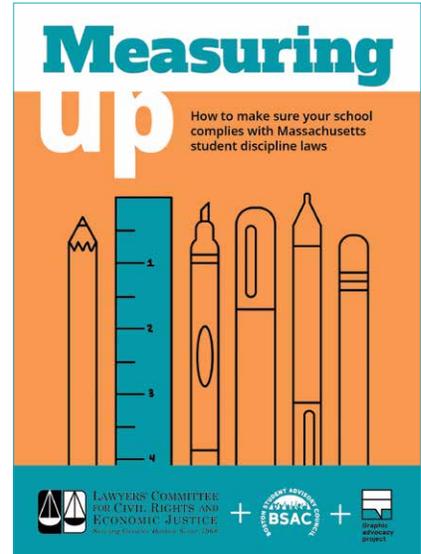
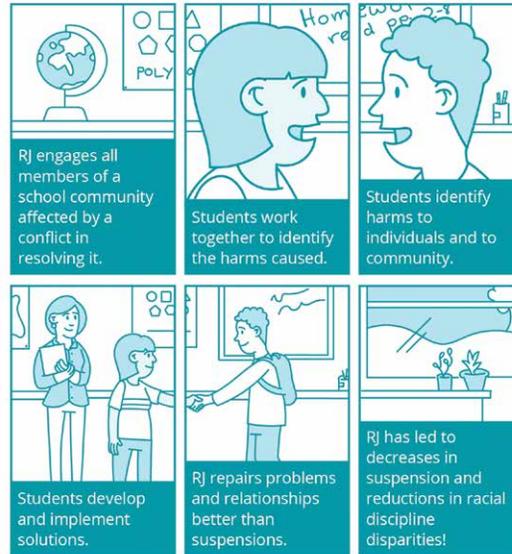


Mya and Deanna Cook at the Lawyers' Committee Annual Event on June 15, 2017.

Mya and Deanna Cook are Black twin sisters who were disciplined by Mystic Valley Regional Charter School for wearing hair extensions in their braids, a common Black hairstyle among several prohibited by the school's code of conduct. Together with their parents, the Cook twins called on the school to change their policy to stop targeting Black hairstyles. The school, one of a handful of majority White charter schools in the state, refused. Together with our *pro bono* partners at **Latham & Watkins**, the **NAACP Legal Defense Fund**, and the **ACLU of Massachusetts** – and in tandem with the **Massachusetts Attorney General's** own investigation of the policy – we successfully represented the Cook twins in securing the rescission of the school's discriminatory hair policy and the expungement of related disciplinary records. We continue to engage with the school to ensure a more welcoming and culturally responsive education for all its students.

Beyond Mystic Valley, the Lawyers' Committee and its *pro bono* partners at **Goodwin LLP** and **Nutter, McClennen & Fish** provided hundreds of students, parents, educators, and concerned community members with trainings on Massachusetts' new school discipline law, Chapter 222. The trainings were based on an illustrated, bilingual toolkit we created with the **Boston Student Advisory Council** and the **Graphic Advocacy Project**. We held these trainings where Massachusetts' suspension rates are highest, including in Springfield, Holyoke, Fall River, Lawrence, Lowell, Boston, and Chelsea.

Restorative Justice (RJ)

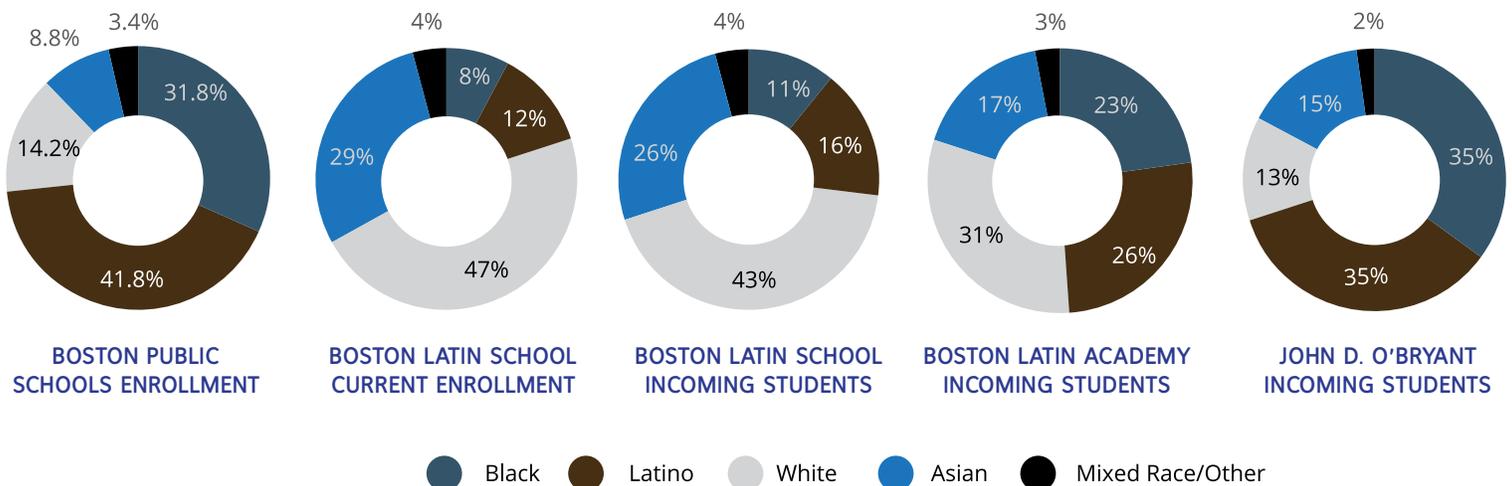


Illustrations from our new school discipline toolkit.

FOSTERING RACIAL DIVERSITY AT BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL AND FIGHTING TO PRESERVE IT AT HARVARD

Boston's exam schools, the top schools in our city, have long been held out as the merit-based means of upward mobility for the children of Boston's working class families. But when our complaint on racial harassment at **Boston Latin School (BLS)** resulted in a federal civil rights violation last year, many questioned when and how Boston's exam schools, particularly BLS, came to look so different from the rest of Boston Public Schools (BPS) in terms of the students they serve.

In May, the Lawyers' Committee released *A Broken Mirror: Exam School Admissions Fail to Reflect Boston's Diversity*, together with the NAACP – Boston Branch, Massachusetts Advocates for Children, the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts, and the ACLU of Massachusetts. The report highlights disparities in exam school admission along race and neighborhood lines and calls for citywide review of our exam school admissions policy.



BOSTON LATIN NEEDS MORE DIVERSITY

BOSTON GLOBE
EDITORIAL

“We know the harm racial isolation causes,” says Matt Cregor, of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice. “When you’re made to be the only person in the room of a certain color of skin or national origin, that’s a tremendous burden.”

Since May, the Lawyers’ Committee and our partners have been holding public forums on exam school admissions across Boston’s neighborhoods so that we, as a city, can develop better means for valuing and evaluating all of our students.

Meanwhile, the Lawyers’ Committee, together with our *pro bono* partners at **Arnold & Porter**, **Asian Americans Advancing Justice**, and the national **Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law**, continue our representation of students of color in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, a lawsuit challenging Harvard’s use of race in its admissions policy. The suit was brought by the same group behind the unsuccessful challenges to affirmative action in the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Fisher v. Texas* cases. In 2017, the court dismissed *Students for Fair Admissions*’ claims related to the “Mismatch Theory” — the idea that affirmative action harms students of color — which was the subject of our *amicus* brief in this case as well as in *Fisher II* in the last Supreme Court term. The discovery phase of the case will continue into 2018.

ENSURING SCHOOL FUNDING EQUITY

The Lawyers’ Committee represents students of color, students with disabilities, and English language learners, together with the **New England Area Conference of the NAACP**, the **NAACP - Boston Branch**, and the **Boston Education Justice Alliance** in *Doe v. Peyser*, a lawsuit that seeks to eliminate Massachusetts’ cap on charter schools. In 2016, we successfully argued for dismissal of the suit at the Superior Court level, and in 2017 we continued our advocacy when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court took up the appeal. **Anderson & Kreiger**, our *pro bono* partner on the case, presented oral argument before the Supreme Judicial Court, explaining that the cap was necessary to preserve educational opportunities for students like our clients in traditional public schools, citing evidence that charter schools divert millions of dollars from traditional public schools each year, yet serve proportionately far fewer students with disabilities and English language learners and impose harsher discipline on students of color. The Supreme Judicial Court heard the appeal amidst news that Massachusetts had levied a record campaign finance penalty upon the group behind an expensive but unsuccessful ballot initiative that similarly sought a way around the cap. The ballot initiative fared worst in Massachusetts’ communities of color.

PROTECTING THE EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Thirty five years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* that undocumented students have a “fundamental interest” in a public education that cannot be denied on the basis of immigration status. Amidst the panic sparked by federal executive orders on immigration enforcement and a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Agency raid targeting Massachusetts, the rights protected by *Plyler* are being threatened. Thanks to research conducted by **Choate, Hall & Stewart, LLP**, the Lawyers’ Committee has been providing technical legal assistance to schools and agencies working to protect and fulfill students’ *Plyler* rights. Together with the **Greater Boston Latino Network**, **META, Inc.**, the **Center for Law and Education**, and **Rom Law, P.C.**, the Lawyers’ Committee is working with local school districts to strengthen their protection of undocumented students’ educational rights.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Boston is unfortunately not immune to the disturbing national pattern of police officers shooting and killing Black men – and of local prosecutors failing to hold them accountable. In October 2016, Boston police officers killed **Terence Coleman**, a young Black man with mental illness, after his mother Hope Coleman called for medical assistance. We immediately called for an independent investigation, concerned that any investigation by the District Attorney would be tainted by inherent bias. Together with *pro bono* counsel from **Fick & Marx LLP**, we represented Ms. Coleman during the District Attorney’s investigation into the killing, which ended with a recommendation against criminal charges. We now expect to represent Ms. Coleman as she turns to civil litigation remedies.

The Lawyers’ Committee also took a stand against discriminatory policing in Massachusetts and effectively demonstrated how to bring community voices into the courtroom. Representing 19 wide-ranging community groups, we filed an amicus brief in the Supreme Judicial Court in *Commonwealth v. Buckley*, a case concerning the legality and reach of pretextual traffic stops. Our amicus brief detailed how pretextual traffic stops result in discriminatory enforcement and racial profiling, and we urged the Court to curtail their use. A decision has yet to be issued, but it was clear from oral argument that we had successfully focused the Court on the civil rights implications of the case, as the Justices repeatedly referenced our brief in questioning counsel.



Lawyers’ Committee Attorney Sophia Hall discussing police accountability.

EMPLOYMENT

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

The Lawyers' Committee continues to be the leading voice calling for diversity in public employment – and bringing that battle to the courthouse where necessary.

Enhancing diversity is a critical component of the solution to the tension between minority and immigrant communities and the police departments. One of the key ways in which police departments hinder diversity and damage community trust is by “bypassing” candidates of color who apply to be police officers – *i.e.* removing them from the civil service list in favor of lower-ranking candidates. Bypass cases that we are currently pursuing include:

- With *pro bono* support from **Birnbaum & Godkin**, we are litigating in Superior Court over the decision of Boston Police Department (BPD) to bypass a highly-qualified Black man. Despite references – including from other City departments – uniformly describing our client as someone whose “character and judgment are unquestionable,” BPD bypassed him because of an isolated 14-year-old matter that was continued without a finding and a stale driving record.
- In a similar case, another Black man was bypassed for the position of police officer because of one arrest when he was 18 years old. The client has no criminal record and has served as a police officer for Boston College and the Boston Housing Authority. We have filed an appeal to the Civil Service Commission, and plan to challenge BPD’s decision and seek discovery to further shine light on the closed-door bypass procedure.

We also continue our representation of Black police officers challenging discriminatory practices in Brookline (co-counseling with **Fair Work, Inc.**) and in Boston (co-counseling with **WilmerHale** and in conjunction with the **Massachusetts Association of Minority Law Enforcement Officers**), and work with the **Boston Society of Vulcans** on issues of firefighter diversity.

Together with **Foley Hoag**, we are also litigating a case against the Massachusetts Trial Court, seeking to ensure that documents showing the diversity – or lack thereof – of Court personnel are open to the public. The case, which is currently pending before the Supreme Judicial Court, has already resulted in the release of significant data demonstrating the barriers faced by employees of color – particularly women of color – in the Trial Court Security Office. The attention brought by the case has also surfaced numerous disturbing incidents of racial animus within the court system, including use of racial slurs and demeaning comments based on national origin. As a result of our advocacy, the **U.S. Attorney’s Office** has opened an investigation into civil rights violations, and we continue to work with our allies in the **Massachusetts Minority Court Officers Association** to press for reforms that would increase equal opportunity for employees of color.

IMMIGRANT WORKERS FACING DISCRIMINATION

For the last several years, the Lawyers' Committee has advocated on behalf of immigrant workers facing discrimination in the workplace. In 2017, we saw several successful settlements to those matters.



- In July 2017, the Lawyers' Committee with *pro bono* support from **Krokidas & Bluestein LLP** successfully settled a lawsuit on behalf of two seasonal cemetery workers who endured discrimination by their supervisor and retaliation when they applied for the next season. In addition to securing money damages for our clients, we successfully achieved structural changes that will create a pipeline of information to seasonal workers who want to become full-time employees.
- In September 2017, with *pro bono* support from **Fair Work P.C.**, we successfully settled a lawsuit on behalf of a Latina custodial worker who was sexually harassed by her supervisor. In addition to paying money damages to our client, the employer agreed to send its head of Human Resources to anti-discrimination training.
- In October 2017, with *pro bono* support from **WilmerHale**, we received a favorable decision from the MCAD following a public hearing, awarding our client substantial damages for sexual harassment. Our client is a 24 year-old kitchen worker from El Salvador whose supervisor at Strega Waterfront restaurant made numerous sexually-charged remarks to her, creating a sexually hostile work environment. Like many low-income workers in this situation, our client felt powerless to act, but has found vindication in the MCAD ruling.

DISCRIMINATORY BACKGROUND CHECKS

Co-counseling with **Fair Work, P.C.** and the **Law Offices of Howard Friedman, P.C.**, we filed an MCAD complaint against Amazon for its discriminatory employment practices that bar qualified individuals from being delivery drivers based not on job performance, but rather solely on past contact with the criminal justice system or stale driving records. In the Boston area, these new policies resulted in the mass termination of dozens of Amazon drivers, primarily Black and Latino. In our MCAD complaint, we point out that due to over-policing and over-incarceration in communities of color, unnecessarily stringent background checks disproportionately affect Black and Latino individuals and violate anti-discrimination laws.

CIVIL RIGHTS GROUP SUING SHERIFF FOR IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT RECORDS

BOSTON GLOBE

“The public has a right to know how this Sheriff is attempting to enforce federal immigration law, how scarce taxpayer dollars are being squandered, and whether he is engaging in racial profiling of immigrant and minority communities,” said Sophia Hall, a staff attorney for the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice.

PROTECTING IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Since the 2016 election, immigrants in the United States are in a more precarious position than ever. With increased raids and threats to end programs like DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), the fight for immigrant rights is front and center. The Lawyers’ Committee has continued to aggressively and strategically advocate on behalf of immigrant communities and is developing creative responses to meet new challenges.

SANCTUARY CITIES

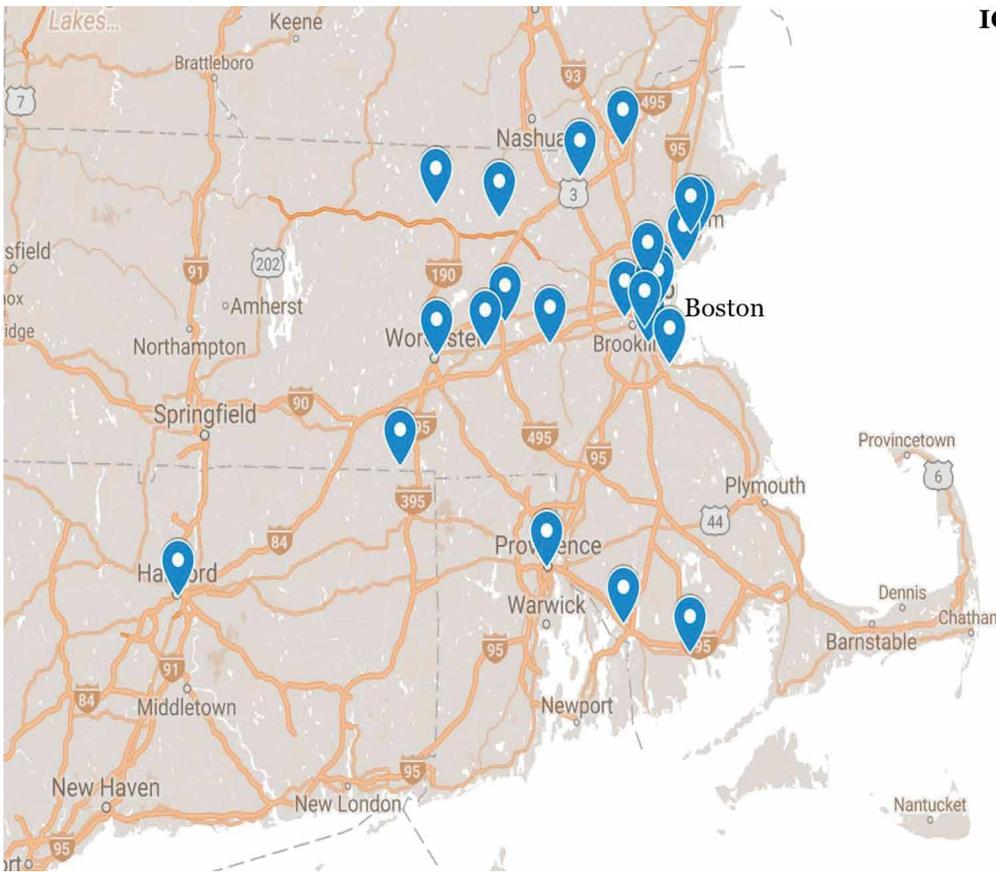
In February 2017, together with our *pro bono* partners at **Goodwin LLP**, we were the first organization in the country to sue the Trump Administration on behalf of sanctuary communities. Our federal lawsuit – brought on behalf of the cities of **Chelsea** and **Lawrence** and in partnership with the **Chelsea Collaborative** – challenged the constitutionality of Trump’s Executive Order targeting sanctuary cities, and a federal judge in San Francisco subsequently entered a nationwide injunction against the Executive Order. Our lawsuit provides a model of rapid and effective resistance to the Trump Administration’s immigration policies that can be replicated in other jurisdictions.

BRISTOL COUNTY

In Massachusetts, we have our own version of Sheriff Joe Arpaio: Bristol County Sheriff Thomas Hodgson. We are holding this rogue sheriff accountable for entangling his officers in federal immigration enforcement. With *pro bono* support from **Foley Hoag LLP**, we sued Sheriff Hodgson in May 2017 to compel the disclosure of public documents he was withholding regarding his virulently anti-immigrant policies and his collaborations with ICE. We continue to monitor his office’s activities to guard against impermissible discrimination against immigrants, unconscionable detention conditions, and unconstitutional local-federal entanglement.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

Since February 2017, we have conducted dozens of technical assistance workshops and trainings for hundreds of youth, parents and families in immigrant communities in the Commonwealth. These know-your-rights workshops are designed to increase community-wide legal literacy on issues ranging from rights during immigration raids to assistance for those experiencing instances of hate. In this manner, we are moving beyond cases that set legal precedent to working in partnership with grassroots groups to develop “community precedent,” including technical training for people of color and immigrants to advocate for themselves in response to an unprecedented wave of hate and discrimination.



ICE Targeted Courthouses

- Ayer District Court
- Boston Municipal Court
- Brighton District Court
- Chelsea District Court
- Derry District Court
- Dorchester District Court
- Dudley District Court
- East Boston District Court
- Essex County Superior Court
- Fall River District Court
- Fitchburg District Court
- Framingham District Court
- Hartford Superior Court
- Lawrence Juvenile Court
- Lowell District Court
- Lynn District Court
- Malden District Court
- Marlborough District Court
- Nashua Superior Court
- New Bedford District Court
- Peabody District Court
- Providence Municipal Court
- Quincy District Court
- Roxbury District Court
- Westborough District Court
- Worcester District Court

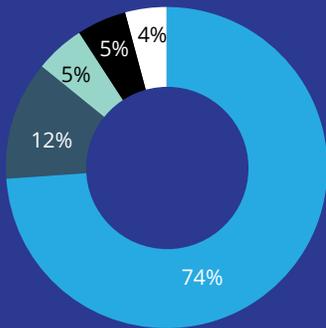
Courthouses targeted for ICE enforcement.

IMMIGRATION RAIDS AND DETAINERS

In 2017, our Supreme Judicial Court issued a powerful decision in *Lunn v. Commonwealth*, holding that state law provides no authority to arrest or hold an individual solely for federal civil immigration purposes. The backlash has been swift: Governor Baker has threatened to overturn the ruling legislatively, and the Trump Administration has explicitly targeted Massachusetts for increased immigration raids as a result. In this climate, we are experiencing a tremendous demand for our work from a growing network of community partners.

One area of particular concern is ICE enforcement at and around courthouses – a practice that has a chilling effect on the administration of justice. The practice is also largely hidden from public view. For that reason, in 2017, we filed public records requests with both ICE and the Massachusetts Trial Court, to gather evidence on this practice. The results are troubling, showing numerous courthouses where ICE enforcement is occurring and an increase in targeting of individuals with low-level offenses. We have called upon the Trial Court to publicly denounce ICE’s focus on courthouses, which deters immigrant communities from seeking justice, and we will continue to monitor this trend as we move into 2018.

CREATE YOUR OWN JOB DEMOGRAPHICS



SMALL BUSINESSES SERVED



ECONOMIC JUSTICE PROJECT

The Economic Justice Project (EJP) provides minority, immigrant, and low-income entrepreneurs and small business owners with free legal assistance, business support, and education. EJP furthers our vision of economic empowerment in disadvantaged communities by helping individuals develop sustainable businesses and achieve economic self-sufficiency. By connecting low-income entrepreneurs to law firms providing *pro bono* legal services, we work to close the opportunity gap. In 2017, we served over 350 entrepreneurs and small businesses. Over half of these businesses are women-owned, and approximately 90% are minority-owned. These businesses are the economic engines fueling the growth of our Commonwealth.

INDIVIDUAL REPRESENTATION

Through the generous *pro bono* work of our partner law firms, we match small business owners with attorneys who provide them with the free transactional legal assistance they need for their businesses to grow. Common small business concerns include entity registration and formation, contract issues, intellectual property, and employment issues.



Priya Lane, Economic Justice Project Director, and Teresa Maynard, owner of Sweet Teez Bakery, discuss Food Biz 101 on NECN's "The Take with Sue O'Connell".

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

At the heart of any successful business is a well-informed owner, armed with the business legal knowledge to effectively operate and sustain a small business. Partnering with **Latham & Watkins** and **Roxbury Community College**, we held three sessions of our flagship seminar, **Create Your Own Job**. Designed to introduce fundamental business topics to aspiring entrepreneurs, this seminar offers classes on entity formation, business planning, public speaking, marketing and social media.

We also once again held three sessions of our **Access to Business Law** seminar, a ten-week seminar program structured to tackle various types of legal issues small businesses



Spring 2017 Food Biz 101.

face while operating and growing. Weekly workshops cover topics such as employment, taxes, and intellectual property and are taught by attorneys from **Latham & Watkins**, **WilmerHale**, **Goodwin LLP**, and **Chu, Ring, & Hazel**.

In 2017, EJP also hosted ten subject-specific workshops developed with industry experts and community partners. Some notable examples include an intellectual property workshop series with **Foley Hoag**, an employment workshop with **Nixon Peabody** and **Commonwealth Kitchen**, and a series on how to finance your business with **Mass Growth Capital Corporation**, **ACCION**, **Eastern Bank**, **Boston Private**, **Nixon Peabody**, and **Boston Impact Initiative**.

EJP has continued to assist food entrepreneurs through its unique accelerator **Food Biz 101**. In partnership with **Commonwealth Kitchen** and **Goodwin**, Food Biz 101 is a 12-week seminar designed to help aspiring food entrepreneurs launch their businesses. In addition to general business law topics, this seminar covers food-specific topics such as food safety, labelling regulations, and dealing with distributors. The class culminates in a pitch competition where participants have the opportunity to share their business ideas with industry experts.



Entrepreneurs and mother/daughter team Jameel Moore and Arianna Dupont pitch their business, Ari's Bake Shop.

PROGRAM OFFERS SMALL BUSINESSES LEGAL HELP

BAY STATE BANNER

"A promising sign for Boston's business community is the number of entrepreneurs who come to the Lawyers' Committee seeking help."

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Arts, Culture and Entrepreneurship Series.

EJP has continued expanding into industry-specific areas after the success of our Food Biz 101 series. In 2017, we launched our **Arts, Culture, and Entrepreneurship** series. In partnership with **Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)** and **Goodwin LLP**, this four-week series prepares entrepreneurs in the cultural economy to successfully monetize on their art and limit liability, making their dreams a reality.

BIZGROW

On July 13, 2017, we launched an inaugural event for small businesses called **BizGrow**. Held at **Suffolk Law School**, BizGrow was a full-day technical assistance conference for minority, immigrant, and women entrepreneurs. Thanks to our sponsors and to the many *pro bono* attorneys who participated, the event was tremendously successful. Approximately 150 small business owners and entrepreneurs attended 15 workshops on business and legal issues led by industry experts. Each entrepreneur also had an opportunity to meet one-on-one with attorneys specializing in a variety of small business concerns, including entity formation, commercial lease review, and intellectual property.



Entrepreneurs at BizGrow.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

FAIR HOUSING

In 2017, we reached a groundbreaking settlement in a federal Fair Housing Act case, holding a major multi-state rental company responsible for remedying tenant-on-tenant racial harassment.

The case, which we co-counseled with **Foley Hoag**, arose out of egregious racial harassment suffered by our clients, a Black family, at the hands of a neighboring tenant. We filed suit in federal court, alleging that the landlord had failed to adequately protect our clients from this harassment.

As part of the settlement we reached, the landlord agreed to modify its fair housing training materials for new and current employees to address the issue of tenant-on-tenant discrimination and harassment. The landlord also agreed to pay damages to our clients and to implement a policy requiring property managers to report all allegations of tenant-on-tenant discrimination or harassment to regional management and requiring management to investigate such allegations.

The settlement represents one of the first of its kind to hold a landlord responsible for remedying tenant-on-tenant racial harassment. It covers more than 30,000 rental properties along the East Coast, benefiting not only the family that we directly represented, but thousands of renters of color for years to come.

TRANSPORTATION JUSTICE

In 2017, we continued our efforts to secure equitable access to public transportation for underserved communities in Massachusetts, working in close partnership with community organizations such as the **Greater Four Corners Action Coalition** and the **Fairmount Indigo Coalition**. We successfully called for a federal investigation into a string of cancellations on the Fairmount line, which disproportionately impacted communities of color and low-income, transit-dependent residents. The federal intervention and resulting media attention largely ended the practice.

More recently, we have raised concerns about the proposed Foxborough extension of the Fairmount Line, which residents fear will result in express suburban commuter trains that skip urban stations used primarily by minority and immigrant passengers. We have submitted a comprehensive public records request to the MBTA requesting the immediate disclosure of information concerning the proposed extension of the Fairmount Line to Foxborough including access to demographic data on transit users, and information concerning the racial and economic impact of the Fairmount Line service modification.

LAWYERS WANT INVESTIGATION INTO FAIRMOUNT LINE SERVICE

BOSTON GLOBE

“The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice requested a review of the recent cancellations on the Fairmount line, which runs through Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester on its way to South Station.”

MEDICAL LEGAL PARTNERSHIP

Since 2003, the Lawyers' Committee has partnered with Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) to provide legal assistance to low-income patients receiving treatment at the HealthCare Center in Chelsea.

A staff attorney from the Lawyers' Committee is on-site Mondays and Fridays, meeting patients at scheduled times who have been referred by their health care provider. The focus is on the most vulnerable patients, including those with disabilities and those threatened with eviction or wrongfully denied public benefits. In collaboration with the health care team, the attorney engages in a broad range of advocacy: representing patients in court; negotiating with recalcitrant landlords; advocating before administrative agencies for public benefits – all with the aim of improving health outcomes by addressing related legal needs.

In 2017, we have responded to the growing needs of our clients by expanding our hours, and we are serving a record number of clients:

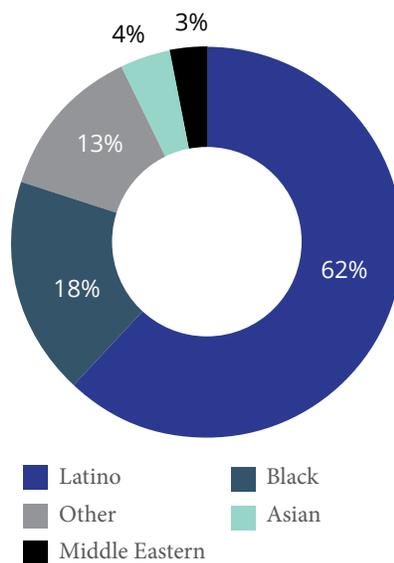
- We handled 564 appointments, involving 378 new clients or claims.
- We secured disability benefits for 32 children and adults, bringing much-needed economic support to low-income households.
- 16 families avoided eviction after negotiation with landlords.
- 13 persons became naturalized United States citizens.

We also secured guardianships for incapacitated adults and obtained child support orders against non-custodial parents. Together with our partners at MGH, we are addressing the complex interactions between race, immigration status, poverty, healthcare, and the law.

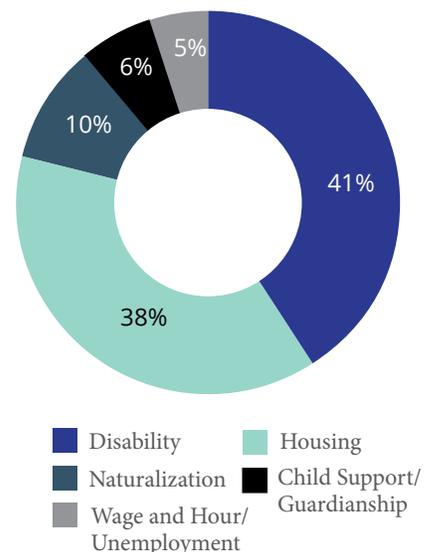
TOTAL NUMBER OF NEW MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP CLIENTS



DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN



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EDWARD J. BARSHAK FUND FOR JUSTICE

On April 27, 2016, the Lawyers' Committee launched a campaign to establish the Edward J. Barshak Fund for Justice to provide dedicated resources for our anti-discrimination work. We plan to replenish the fund when we win cases with attorney fee awards. In this manner, the fund will continue to support our work for decades to come. As of November 1, 2017, we have raised \$166,000. We are proud to acknowledge our supporters.

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Iván Espinoza-Madrugal, *Executive Director*

Iván joined the Lawyers' Committee in April 2015. Previously, he was the Legal Director of the Center for HIV Law and Policy; a staff attorney at Lambda Legal and MALDEF; an associate at Fried Frank LLP; and a judicial law clerk in the U.S. District Court, S.D.N.Y., and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Iván is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and NYU School of Law. The National LGBT Bar Association has recognized him as one of the Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40, and he received the OUTLaw Alumnus of the Year Award from NYU School of Law. In November 2017, he will receive the Boston Bar Association's Beacon Award.



Oren M. Sellstrom, *Litigation Director*

Oren joined the Lawyers' Committee in September 2015 and oversees the organization's legal work. Previously, he served as Legal Director for the Lawyers' Committee affiliate in San Francisco, California. He has also worked as a legal services attorney, and he served as a judicial law clerk in the U.S. District Court, N.D.Cal. He is a graduate of Haverford College and Harvard Law School.



Matthew Cregor, *Education Project Director*

Matt joined the Lawyers' Committee in January 2014 and works on a variety of education matters including school discipline, special education, and student assignment. Previously, Matt served as a staff attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Matt is a graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center.



Laura Maslow-Armand, *Health Disparities Project Director*

Laura joined the Lawyers' Committee in 2003. She served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights and Public Charities Divisions. Laura is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School. She coordinates the Lawyers' Committee's Medical-Legal Partnership with MGH in Chelsea.

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Priya Lane, *Economic Justice Project Director*

Priya Lane was appointed the Director of the Economic Justice Project in 2016 after serving the organization as a staff attorney, fellow, and intern. Priya leads LCCR's work providing free legal support to minority, immigrant, and low-income entrepreneurs and small business owners. She conducts workshops and legal clinics, provides one-on-one legal consultations, and matches business owners with *pro bono* attorneys for individual representation. Priya is a graduate of Hood College and Northeastern University School of Law.



Sophia Hall, *Staff Attorney*

Sophia L. Hall joined the Lawyers' Committee in 2016. She works in a variety of legal areas, including voting rights, police accountability, education, and housing. Previously, Sophia served as a Staff Attorney with the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, providing *pro bono* legal representation to residents of the Commonwealth living with HIV/AIDS. Sophia is a graduate of Emory University and Boston College Law School.



Oren Nimni, *Civil Rights Fellow*

Oren joined the Lawyers' Committee as a Civil Rights Fellow in 2017. Previously Oren was a partner at Community Law Office. He also worked with the Prison Litigation Assistance Project. Oren served as a steering committee member of Law for Black Lives and on the board of the National Lawyers Guild. He is currently the legal editor of *Current Affairs* magazine. He is a graduate of Brandeis University and Northeastern University School of Law.



Jennifer Navas Portillo, *Paralegal*

Jennifer joined the Lawyers' Committee as a paralegal in May 2017. She coordinates the Lawyers' Committee's intake process and community outreach efforts. Prior to joining the Lawyers' Committee, Jennifer was a paralegal with Goddard, Scuteri & Delaney, and served as an AmeriCorps Legal Advocate at Northeast Legal Aid. She is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

OUR MISSION, VISION AND CORE VALUES

MISSION

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice fosters equal opportunity and fights discrimination on behalf of people of color and immigrants. We engage in creative and courageous legal action, education, and advocacy, in collaboration with law firms and community partners.

VISION

Everyone has equal opportunity to thrive and advance.

CORE VALUES

- **Collaboration and Partnerships**

We believe in building bridges between diverse constituencies, forging strong partnerships with community allies and law firms, and exercising leadership in areas where we have unique expertise.

- **Respect for Clients and Communities**

We promote the well-being of our clients and their communities. We respect them, their dignity, and their self-determination.

- **The Power of Public Engagement**

We value public engagement as a means of amplifying the voices of the communities we serve.

- **Diversity**

We believe the civil rights movement must be diverse in every respect. We value the insight and credibility that diverse perspectives bring to our organization and long-term effort for social change.

- **Courage, Commitment, and Action**

We value the courage and commitment shown by our staff, partners, and clients to take on challenging issues, often against established interests, in our shared mission to foster equal opportunity and fight discrimination.

- **Creative Use of the Law to Promote Equality**

We value creativity and expertise in the use of our legal system to achieve social justice and equality.

“The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated.”

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY, 1963



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