

and Justice for All

Volunteer Lawyers
for Justice
Taking Cases. Changing Lives.

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

A Message from the Executive Director



Hello friends,

October is a big month for VLJ. On October 20th, we'll gather virtually to celebrate VLJ's 20th anniversary. The night will feature an inspirational spoken word performance from Sheika 'Purple' Norris, director of the NJPAC's Hip Hop Education Program. We'll also view a powerful testimonial from Michael—a VLJ client who cleared crushing medical debt by working with our bankruptcy program. Finally, we'll honor three giants in the legal field: Karen Sacks, Founding Executive Director of VLJ, Merck & Co., and Former US Attorney General, Loretta Lynch. Surely, this will be a

night that causes our collective passion for justice to burn brighter. Be sure to purchase your tickets.

The following week is National Pro Bono Week. Legal organizations across the county will draw attention to the need for pro bono help and will celebrate those who volunteer their time. We have a lot planned, including timely trainings to prepare volunteers to address the growing list of legal issues stemming from the pandemic. We are also asking the greater VLJ community to help us answer this question: "**justice is ___**"

We'd like you to tell us what justice means to you, and how pro bono work helps to achieve that justice. Please join us by sending a photo, video, voice recording, or email answering the prompt "[to aahiabor@vljnj.org](mailto:aahiabor@vljnj.org). [View all VLJ pro bono week activities here](#)

With a focus on justice, VLJ's Board of Trustees and staff finalized...

A New Mission Statement:

To Ensure Access to Justice for People Experiencing Poverty

As you can imagine, at an organization comprised mostly of lawyers, we had some spirited debates about the essence of VLJ's work and purpose. We aligned upon an ambitious mission that doesn't merely set out to provide free legal services, but strives to ensure justice is accessible to all.

The words "people experiencing poverty" were carefully chosen to emphasize our enduring belief in the agency our clients possess. We believe that poverty can and should be transitory. We believe that socioeconomic status should not limit one's access to justice. We believe that our work has a profound impact on individuals, families, communities, and generations. With this in mind, we fulfill our mission by mobilizing volunteers and staff to address critical legal needs and advance racial, social, and economic justice in New Jersey.

I hope October's activities and the revamped statement of our mission will inspire you to ask not only what justice means to you, but what you can do to help further justice in New Jersey.



VLJ Welcomes new Board Trustee Matt Clements!

Matt Clements is Senior Vice President, Head of Sales, Product and Client Experience at Columbia Bank. After spending years with larger, national banks, Matt decided to move to a smaller bank in 2019 to be able to better serve his community. As we continue to expand VLJ's services, we are excited to welcome a non-attorney voice to the Board and are grateful that Matt's financial experience will help VLJ to grow. We are so fortunate to welcome Matt Clements to the Board!



Please join us for our 20th Anniversary virtual Arts & Eats for Justice Gala on October 20, 2021!

ARTS & EATS FOR JUSTICE



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR JUSTICE

Wednesday, October 20th, 2021

JOIN US FOR A CELEBRATION
OF 20 YEARS OF EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE



HONORING



LORETTA E. LYNCH

Former U.S. Attorney General
Partner, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

KAREN SACKS

VLJ Founding Executive Director

Please join us online on **October 20th** from **7:30-8:30 p.m.** for VLJ's Virtual Arts & Eats for Justice gala. We will honor Former U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch, Merck, and Founding Executive Director Karen Sacks.

Purchase your ticket by October 20th to be entered into a drawing to win a 10.2-inch 256GB iPad!

An optional video networking session will take place after the event from 8:30-9:30 p.m. to connect with friends and colleagues.

**Raffle open to anyone who purchased a ticket for the event and anyone who donates \$100 on October 20, 2021. Raffle prize is not open to sponsors. A winner will be named on October 20th at the end of the virtual event*

[Click to Purchase Tickets or a Sponsorship](#)

October 2021 Volunteer of the Month: Debra Levin



October is National Domestic Violence Awareness month. During this time, as we collectively raise awareness of domestic violence issues, we are especially proud to recognize Debra Levin as our October 2021 Volunteer of the Month! Debra, a corporate associate at McCarter & English, is a dedicated volunteer with several VLJ programs, including the Human Trafficking Victims Legal Assistance program. In her work with survivors of human trafficking, Debra helps survivors clear criminal records that stem from victimization...

[Read More About Debra Here!](#)

David's Story: ReLeSe Program Client Testimonial

In 2003, “David” was arrested for purchasing marijuana. He was not jailed and was allowed to return home after being questioned and processed at the police station. Two years later, David pled guilty to “possession with intent to distribute”—a conviction that, according to his attorney, would make it easier for him to find a job...



[Read David's Story Here](#)

Thank You to our Interns!

This past summer VLJ welcomed an impressive group of interns. We have been thrilled to work with: Gina Riccardi, Derrick Neves, Grace Li, and Joseph Abadi.

Gina, one of our two Maida Fellows is a 3L at Rutgers School of Law. Gina worked with the trafficking and divorce programs. A big project she completed was an asylum brief in support of a labor trafficking victim.

Derrick, our second Maida fellow is a 2L at Rutgers School of Law. Derrick provided support to the South Ward Promise Neighborhood Program, Tenancy, and Release. Derrick worked working on a memorandum assessing the “compelling circumstances” standard of review now used in expungement cases.

Grace is a 2L at New York University School of Law has worked with tenancy and debt relief. Grace had the opportunity to engage in direct client work by assisting in intake interviews and is working on researching statutory relief remedies for debtors.

Yossi is a 2L at Columbia University School of Law worked with the



Yossi Abadi



Grace Li



Veteran's program as well as Children's Representation. Yossi helped VLJ prepare for a guardianship CLE in which he researched New Jersey adult guardianship law and prepared a checklist of the necessary forms to assist volunteer attorneys in preparing their cases.

Derrick Neves



Gina Riccardi

VLJ is so thankful to all the interns for their hard work and wishes them all the best in their future endeavors!

CELEBRATE
PRO BONO
www.celebrateprobono.org

National Pro Bono Celebration
October 24-30, 2021

Each year, the national Celebration of Pro Bono shines a spotlight on the amazing work done by lawyers, paralegals, and law students across the country. To celebrate, we've put together an amazing week of timely trainings —we'd also like you to help us celebrate by responding to the prompt "**Justice Is___**". Here's how you can participate:

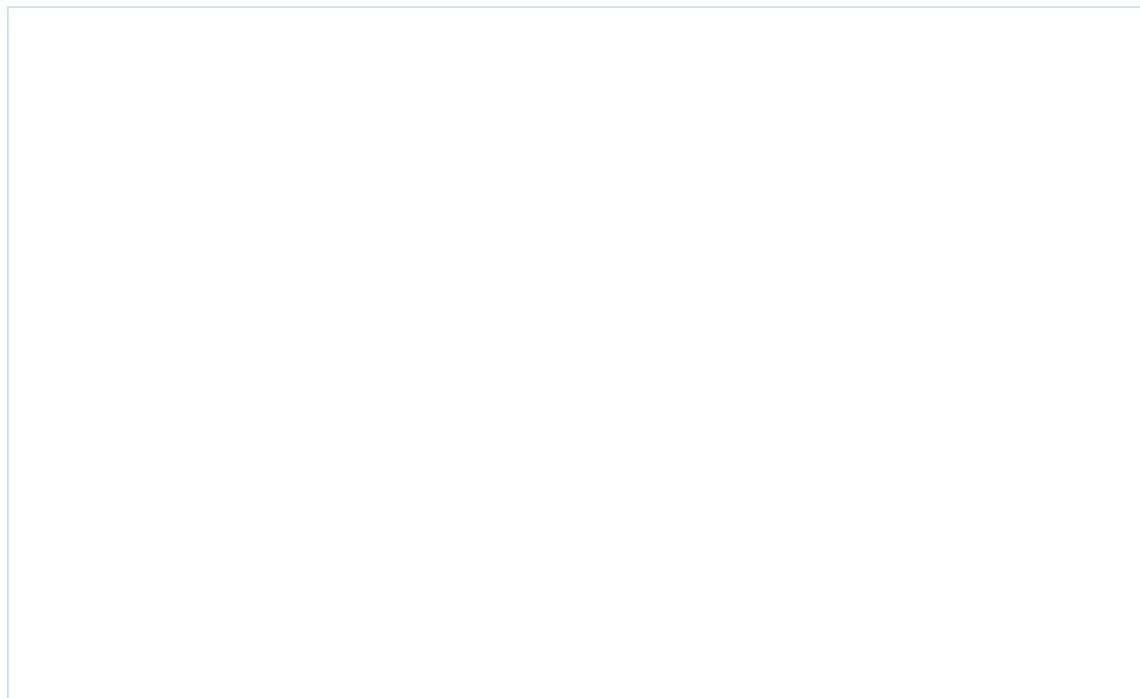
- Answer the prompt "Justice Is___" with a photo, video, voice recording, or email
- Email your answer to aahlabor@vljnj.org
- Follow VLJ on Facebook and/or LinkedIn and share the responses

We look forward to celebrating pro bono with you this year!

[View all VLJ Pro Bono Week Activities Here!](#)

In Other News

In case you missed it, check out recent media coverage of our work.





New Jersey Eviction Q&A Panel Discussion - Volunteer...

NorthJersey.com is hosting a monthly housing video series to provide advice from a panel of tenant law experts on affordable housing issues. In this video VLJ staff attorney Allison Nolan and fellow panelists discuss the following: What renters...

[Read more](#)
www.vljj.org



Follow us on LinkedIn

VLJ is on LinkedIn, and we look forward to connecting with you! Stay up to date on networking events and CLE trainings hosted by VLJ, learn from our staff on the issues impacting our client communities, and hear from VLJ staff, volunteers, and board members about what makes VLJ a great organization to be involved with. Connect with us NOW by clicking the logo below! [Follow VLJ on LinkedIn](#)

DONATE TODAY!

Help ensure access to justice by donating today!