

## A Message from the Executive Director



Hello Friends,

The VLJ community of advocates is making significant strides to advance justice in New Jersey. This newsletter highlights the volunteer work of Aaron Haier, at Paul Weiss, a lawyer who not only volunteers to help tenants facing eviction, but who also serves on VLJ's Generation Now young professionals committee. We also introduce a new feature that highlights our extremely talented staff—all defenders of justice. We kick things off with a profile of Allison Nolan, a fierce advocate for tenants; and how about all of her craft skills?

I thought I would spend most of my column quoting from a letter that a client wrote about his recent experience with volunteers from Prudential. He provides a perfect summary of why pro bono legal services are so vital.

"Growing up in Newark, NJ, my mother suffered from drug addiction, and I was in and out of foster care since 4 or 5 years old. When I graduated from high school in 1983, I joined the National Guard. But instead of pursuing a military career when I came home, I was pulled into the lifestyle I saw on the streets: fancy cars and money drew me into a bad environment. I spent time in jail and prison during the 1980s and 1990s until I realized that I had to change my life for my kids.

Thankfully a halfway house taught me the life skills that my parents weren't able to, and I went on to obtain my CDL license. I am an entrepreneur now with my own trucking company, and hope to expand my business through governmental contracts. I knew having a felony record would hold me back from my dreams, and I was grateful when I found Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ). VLJ connected me to Prudential volunteers who reviewed my case and explained to me that I was eligible for expungement. They then helped me to draft and file an expungement petition. I thought to myself, 'Wow, they are helping me out of their own good will!'

Clearing my record means clearing my name. It's important for me to be an example for my family. I've been married for 28 years, and have 8 children including 4 that we've adopted from foster care. I want to show them a blueprint for how to live life, not to follow the same route I did or cut corners. A lot of people don't have money to hire lawyers to represent them, and for Prudential volunteers to be willing to help others means a lot. Time isn't free. To say that I appreciate the lawyers who helped me is an understatement. Truthfully, even if my expungement doesn't get granted, just the effort that was put into helping me is appreciated. I know what I did in the past, and that I may have to live with it, but having an expungement would open a lot of windows for me. I thank Prudential for giving me that opportunity."

Taking cases and changing lives,

Colley Keenan

## Paul Weiss Associate Aaron Haier is VLJ's February Volunteer of the month!



This month, VLJ is excited to honor volunteer attorney Aaron Haier. Aaron is new to the VLJ volunteer scene, and we are immensely grateful to have him fighting for our tenancy clients. Aaron is an Associate in the Litigation department of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, where he works on a broad set of litigations, investigations, and regulatory matters for a variety of corporate clients.

Aaron is extremely passionate about serving his community and using his legal knowledge to give back. He is also a long-time housing advocate.

[...Click here to continue reading about Aaron!](#)

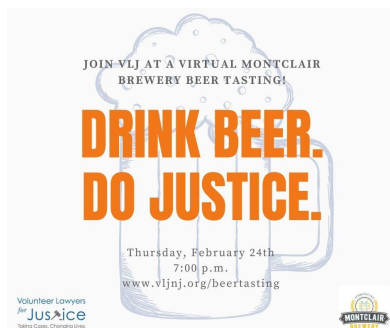
## Spotlight on Driver's License Restoration

It may seem obvious that if you lost your driving privileges, you would have difficulty traveling to work, taking your kids to school, picking up groceries or getting to a doctor's appointment. Depending on public transit, taxis and Ubers can be both unreliable and costly. But for Black and brown drivers, who are significantly more likely to be stopped, arrested, and convicted than white drivers, a suspended driver's license can mean so much worse than these inconveniences.

[...Read the entire client story here](#)

## Virtual Beer Tasting - Thank You!

Thank you for joining us at our virtual beer tasting event featuring beers from Montclair Brewery



We had a fun night of tasting beers from Montclair Brewery led by co-owner Denise Ford-Sawadogo.

If you couldn't make it to the event but still want to support VLJ, you can [donate here.](#)

## New Feature: VLJ Defender of Justice

Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ) is excited to take you behind the curtain to give you a closer look at the incredible staff members who make VLJ such an impactful force for justice in New Jersey. We are kicking off this new column with one of our most talented advocates, Allison Nolan.

Allison's trajectory at VLJ has been remarkable and in four



years she has grown into a leading expert in the state on tenancy issues.

[...Read more about Allison here!](#)

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## Gifts Update!

Thank you to the recent grantors and major donors to VLJ!

**AAML Foundation**  
\$5,000

**Gann Law Books**  
\$10,000

**BASF Corporation**  
\$15,000

**Impact100 Essex**  
\$10,000

**Bressler, Amery & Ross**  
\$15,000

**NJ Pandemic Relief Fund**  
\$350,000

**Columbia Bank**  
\$7,500

**Catherine Weiss**  
\$10,000

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## Welcome, Margo!

VLJ is pleased to welcome Margo Katz Rosenberg as a Staff Attorney on the Tenancy Program! Margo graduated Fordham University School of Law and worked at Sills Cummis Epstein & Gross P.C., before taking time away from the legal profession to raise her children. Before re-entering the legal field, she was very involved with her children's school and served as President of the Home and School Association. Margo lives in Alpine, NJ with her husband, three kids, and two dogs. She enjoys chocolate, bike rides, and going to the beach, and fun fact: she was a nationally ranked fencer! Welcome, Margo.

