

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



**THE CENTER ON
RACE
INEQUALITY
& THE LAW**
NYU SCHOOL OF LAW

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ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

LETTER FROM THE FACULTY DIRECTOR

The last year at the Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law brought with it a host of opportunities to advance racial justice in the face of unprecedented challenges to the rule of law and persistent threats to the existence of America's multiracial democracy. As the year draws to a close, I am proud to share all that we were able to accomplish in the course of carrying out our mission to confront and upend the array of American laws, policies, and practices that lead to racial oppression and injustice. We remain steadfast and unwavering in our efforts to illuminate the history and impact of racism on law and society, to find solutions to the injustice it causes, and to take action to advance freedom and fairness, for everyone.




VINCENT M. SOUTHERLAND
Faculty Director

Our 2024-2025 Annual Report details our efforts across each of our substantive areas of focus. We have continued to challenge harmful racial narratives, while forging a vision of a more just world. Our work to highlight, resist, and eradicate the racism and animus that infects the criminal legal system has grown, bolstered by our commitment to dismantling systems and institutions that foster harm and injustice in the name of public safety. Our work at the intersection of race and technology has expanded, as we continue to support partners across the social and racial justice landscape, building power and community while advancing racial justice and disrupting the threats posed by algorithmic bias and mass surveillance through our Technology and Racial Justice Collaborative, led by our Technology and Racial Justice Collaborative Fellow, Nina Loshkajian. And our social and economic justice work has been anchored by a new Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative, a partnership with the Guarini Center on Environmental, Energy and Land Use Law and with the generous support of Marie Napoli LLM '01 and Paul Napoli. Our Initiative for Community Power, led by its founding Director, Andrew Friedman, trains the next generation of social justice advocates in community organizing and power building, in line with its mission to create a more equitable, democratic, and racially just society. Our approach has been comprehensive—leveraging research, litigation, advocacy, education, and community organizing. Through these efforts, we have forged partnerships across the social and racial justice landscape and created opportunities to build transformative power, while working to advance racial justice at the local, state, and national level.

Our work is driven by the dedication of our tremendous staff, student fellows, and supporters. Alongside Nina Loshkajian and Andrew Friedman, Staff Attorney Tasleemah "Tolu" Lawal, Legal Fellow Djuna Schamus, and Distinguished Scholar in Residence Justine Olderman continue to play absolutely critical roles across the Center's portfolio of work. Our student fellows remain essential to our legal and advocacy throughout the year. This year Marianne Engelman-Lado joined us to direct our Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative following her service as Deputy General Counsel for Environmental Initiatives in the Office of General Counsel and as Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator in the newly launched Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights at

¹ This Annual Report covers the Center's activities from September 2024 through September 2025. Last year's Annual Report can be found [here](#).



the Environmental Protection Agency. Jason Williamson, our Executive Director since 2021, departed to lead the National Center for Law and Economic Justice. Under Jason's outstanding leadership, the Center experienced exceptional growth, as he brought to bear a keen legal acumen and dedication to racial justice that enhanced our work and our base of support. Patrice Sulton, previously the founder and Executive Director of the DC Justice Lab, succeeded Jason as Executive Director and will play a pivotal role in the Center's continued evolution. Patrice joins the Center in the midst of a distinguished career as an advocate, lawyer, educator, and catalyst for change. She will cultivate a bold and compelling vision for the future of the Center's work. And finally, Layla Al, our former Operations Coordinator, enrolled in law school, following a productive time at the Center to ensure that all of our work and the logistics that support it were top notch. Her successor, Kyla James, transitioned into the Operations Coordinator role seamlessly, taking on tasks large and small to ensure our collective success.

I am excited about the work ahead and the opportunities that 2026 will present. The onset of a racial justice retrenchment demands that we not only respond to the forces of division and oppression, but that we craft the future we deserve. As the poet, educator, and activist Audre Lorde reminds us, *"Sometimes we are blessed with being able to choose the time, and the arena, and the manner of our revolution, but more usually we must do battle where we are standing."* In the year ahead we will continue to battle racial injustice, remain focused on our core areas of work, and build on the momentum of our efforts to date. In doing so, we draw inspiration from the words of Professor Derrick Bell, one of the architects of Critical Race Theory, who described the legacy of those advocates for freedom and justice who came before us and all they undertook to: *"mak[ing] something out of nothing. Carving out a humanity for oneself [by deploying] imagination, will, unbelievable strength and courage. Beating the odds while firmly believing—knowing intimately—that all those odds are stacked against them."* Following the example of those who came before us, we will *"remind the powers that be that out there are persons like us who are not only not on their side but determined to stand in their way."*

Thank you for your continued engagement and unwavering support. We invite you to explore the full report to learn more about our work, and look forward to your continued partnership as we work to build a more just future for all.

With appreciation,



Vincent M. Southerland

ABOUT THE CENTER ON RACE, INEQUALITY, AND THE LAW

STAFF, 2024-2025²

Faculty Director

Vincent M. Southerland

Executive Director

Jason D. Williamson

Director of the Environmental & Climate Justice Initiative

Marianne Engelman-Lado

Director of the Initiative for Community Power

Andrew Friedman

Distinguished Scholar in Residence

Justine Olderman

Staff Attorney

Tolu Lawal

Technology & Racial Justice Collaborative Fellow

Nina Loshkajian

Legal Fellow

Djuna Schamus

Operations Coordinator

Layla Al

Kyla James

2023–2024 Paul Weiss Fellows

Sunzida Ahmed ('26)

Ernesto Casillas ('26)

Caitlyn Fernandes ('25)

Mugdha Gurram ('26)

Mahalia Mathelier ('26)

Makena Mugambi ('26)

2025 Summer Legal Interns

Amanda Howerton-Fox ('27) - Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University

Nikki Bayat ('27) - NYU School of Law

Vienna O'Brien ('27) - NYU School of Law

2025 Summer Undergraduate Intern

Keenahnee Ephraim



Jason D. Williamson joined the Center as Executive Director in June 2021 and concluded his tenure in August 2025. During his four years of leadership, he oversaw the Center's growth, including the creation and expansion of new initiatives such as the Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative and the Race & Technology Collaborative. The Center strengthened its partnerships with community-based organizations, deepened its advocacy for racial justice and against state violence, and expanded its interdisciplinary collaborations across NYU. His work and legacy will be continued and built upon under new leadership in the latest fiscal year, with Patrice A. Sulton appointed as his successor.

²Staff during the September 2024 - September 2025 reporting period

WHAT IS THE CENTER ON RACE, INEQUALITY, AND THE LAW?

Four centuries of racism and systemic discrimination have left an indelible mark on the architecture of American society. The legacy of slavery and Jim Crow remains with us, as racism continues to shape the way policies are developed and applied at all levels of government and in the private sector. Indeed, the racism that permeates our present-day legal system has deep roots. It infiltrates our laws, institutions, and systems, resulting in enduring racial inequities throughout every domain and institution in this country—from the criminal legal system to housing, infrastructure development, technology, education, and the environment.

In this context, the Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law at New York University School of Law was established to address the laws, policies, and practices that perpetuate racial oppression and marginalization. By documenting the history of racism in America; elevating the stories of those affected by race-based inequality; supporting community-based efforts to fight back against discriminatory policies and practices; challenging unjust government action through litigation; representing individuals seeking release from incarceration; and rigorously applying a racial lens to analyze unremitting disparities across multiple sectors of our society, we identify actionable, forward-looking solutions to address the injustices caused by structural racism.

The Center envisions a world in which laws, policies, and legal practices are applied fairly and equitably to all people. This will be achieved when:

- Communities of color transform racial narratives and are active contributors in the movement toward racial justice in the legal system.
- Understanding the law through the lens of race and inequality becomes a fundamental component of legal education in the United States.

- Legal practitioners, policymakers, teachers, advocates, and the public are catalyzed to combat institutional racism and work to create a fair and just legal system; and
- Unjust laws, policies, and practices are challenged, reformed, or abolished through legal action, advocacy, organizing, public education, research, and/or training.

HOW WE WORK

The Center works in four key ways:

1. Driving the narrative

The Center leverages its expertise to produce content that addresses the historical, empirical, and pervasive character of racial bias in the legal system. We research the nuances that drive racial disparities in the law—from in-depth historical reporting to rigorous legal examinations and complex data analysis. We publish original materials and promote the work of others in the field to enrich the discourse and present actionable solutions for system actors and policymakers to draw upon. We provide space for people and communities of color to tell their stories of oppression and resistance at the intersection of race and the law.

2. Challenge current policy and practice through research, litigation, and advocacy

We challenge institutions and systems that perpetuate racial injustice by taking legal action. As a key part of our strategy, we use our expertise, research, and advocacy to support legal actions that provide individual redress and build momentum for scalable reform.

3. Education and training

We provide education and training to actors at all levels—from law students to practicing attorneys to the general public—on the history of racism and its impact on the contemporary legal system. We infuse law school curricula with principles of racial justice and work to ensure that legal education is informed

by an understanding of the history of race and white supremacy in America, as well as by the voices of impacted people and communities. We collaborate with a robust network of partners at universities across the country to share lessons learned, develop curriculum together, and host joint meetings.

4. Convening

We convene community and civic leaders, advocates, practicing attorneys, academics, formerly incarcerated people and their families, and the broader public to facilitate productive discourse about racial disparities in the law. We host roundtable discussions and community conversations to gather input and explore solutions to reduce racial disparities and achieve just outcomes for all. We invite experts to present their emerging research and host a range of public events, including film screenings and moderated conversations focused on pressing issues of racial justice.

THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The Center's thematic priorities fall within the following areas:

- Criminal Legal System
- Race & Technology
- Social and Economic Justice
- Race and Legal Education

STAFF



Vincent M. Southerland
Faculty Director



Jason D. Williamson
Executive Director



Andrew Friedman
Director, Initiative for
Community Power



Marianne Engelman-Lado
Director, Environmental &
Climate Justice Initiative



Justine Olderman
Distinguished Scholar
in Residence



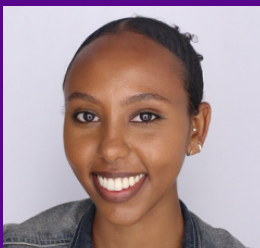
Tolu Lawal
Staff Attorney



Nina Loshkajian
Technology & Racial Justice
Collaborative Fellow



Djuna Schamus
Legal Fellow



Layla Al
Operations Coordinator



Kyla James
Operations Coordinator



RACE AND THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

The Center's work at the intersection of race and the criminal legal system focuses on addressing the racially-biased exercise of discretion in the system and confronting the taint of racial inequality that drives injustice and unfairness at every stage of the criminal process. Our work includes advocacy to advance parole justice, both on an individual level and more broadly; efforts to identify and resist the harmful use of technology in the criminal legal system; litigation to challenge the denial of competent counsel for indigent people accused of crimes across the country; and public education through workshops, symposia, panels, speaking engagements, trainings, and other events to bring attention to the inequality that continues to permeate the system.

PAROLE JUSTICE

The parole system provides a particularly stubborn example of how discretion invites biased decision-making and drives mass incarceration. As a member of the Steering Committee for the [People's Campaign for Parole Justice \(PCPJ\)](#), the Center works to significantly reduce the number of people in prisons across the state of New York by advocating for policy changes that prioritize the release of aging prisoners and make the parole hearing process fairer

and more humane. The Center's former Executive Director, Jason Williamson, also serves on the PCPJ Commissioner Subcommittee, which focuses on identifying and advocating on behalf of candidates to fill vacant seats on the Parole Board. In particular, the Subcommittee works to encourage the governor to appoint more underrepresented community members and formerly incarcerated individuals to serve on the Board going forward. The Center's Staff Attorney, Tolu Lawal, serves on the Fundraising Subcommittee as well as the Culture and Values Subcommittees. The Fundraising Subcommittee is responsible for managing and planning the campaign's finances, while the Culture and Values Subcommittee focuses on building generative and restorative practices that provide the campaign with tools to navigate complex organizational and interpersonal dynamics within the coalition, ultimately fostering stronger internal systems to support the work.

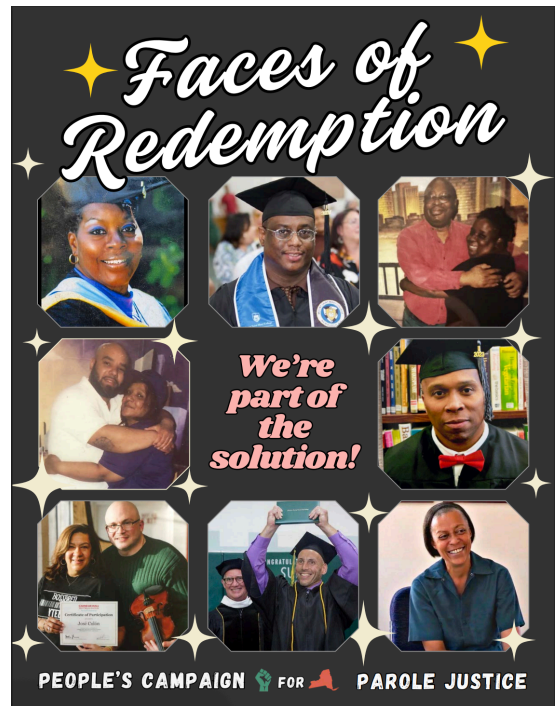
The Center also works to diagnose and address the causes of racial disparities in parole hearing releases through rigorous data analysis and research. By unpacking the root causes of disparate outcomes that result from the current process, we aim to develop viable solutions that address racial disparities in the decision-making process and, ultimately, to reduce the prison population in New York State and beyond.

Over the last year, the Center continued its work in the parole justice space, partnering with local organizations, such as the [Release Aging People in Parole \(RAPP\) Campaign](#), and a host of organizations working in coalition through PCPJ to advance reforms throughout New York. Policy proposals that the Center supported include an expansion of parole eligibility for elderly incarcerated individuals (the Elder Parole Bill) and a reworking of parole release standards to better account for the growth that a person may undergo while incarcerated (the Fair and Timely Parole Bill). The Center supported numerous PCPJ advocacy efforts to engage parole system actors and policymakers.

In partnership with the [Parole Preparation Project](#), the Center also continued to expand the scope of our parole hearing preparation services.

Additional parole-centered work included:

- The Center was a key force behind planning and executing Advocacy Days at the New York State Capitol in Albany to push for the passage of the Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Bills throughout the 2024-2025 cycle. With the help of the Center's strategic planning, and the provision of resources and materials, PCPJ was able to transport hundreds of people to Albany this year to support the call from formerly incarcerated New Yorkers, family



"Faces of Redemption" is the 3rd volume of its annual appreciation booklet honoring incarcerated community members.

members, and community organizations to create meaningful parole opportunities to bring our elders (and all others languishing in prison) home.

- In 2025, the Center helped design and publish the third volume of its annual appreciation booklet. This edition, "[Faces of Redemption](#)," honors incarcerated community members who are the hearts and souls of their families and the



Parole Justice Advocacy Day, January 2025

faces behind the urgent call to pass the Fair & Timely Parole and Elder Parole Bills.

- In 2024-2025, the Center represented five clients in preparation for their parole release determinations. We were fortunate to play a role in bringing two of them home to their families and communities, and we continue to await parole decisions for the remaining clients. Following their release, the Center also provided legal reentry support to ensure a smooth and successful transition back into their communities.



2025 State Courts Organizing Network Convening

ADVOCACY

CARE Coalition

The Center joined the CARE Coalition, a collection of organizations led by New Hour for Women and Children—Long Island to pass the Compassion and Reproductive Equity (CARE) Act, a bill to ensure that incarcerated pregnant people, mothers, and babies receive adequate pre-, post-, and perinatal care while inside New York State prisons and jails, and to ultimately fight for the dignity and rights of all pregnant and birthing people behind bars.

Vote NYC Jails

The Center joined the Vote in NYC Jails Coalition to demand that the New York City Board of Elections (BOE) and the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) invest in and commit to ensuring that all people incarcerated in NYC jails have their ballots cast and counted. The Coalition—which worked tirelessly to support voters on Rikers Island this year—is composed of the Legal Aid Society, LatinoJustice, the League of Women Voters, and several other organizations committed to ensuring that folks in NYC jails are enfranchised.

13th Forward

The Center is a member of 13th Forward, a coalition of advocates, grassroots organizations, and impacted people working to end exploitation and brutality within our prison labor system through the passage of the No Slavery in NY Act and the Fairness and Opportunity for Incarcerated Workers Act.

Shut Down Attica

The Center partnered with [Alliance of Families for Justice](#), [Release Aging People in Parole \(RAPP\) Campaign](#), and the [Advancement Project](#), as part of the statewide [Shut Down Attica](#) campaign, which demands the permanent closure of the New York State Attica Correctional Facility. Attica has a notorious history of violence, including the 1971 uprising that resulted in the loss of 43 lives, as well as a continued record of abuse and human rights violations. In 2024, the Center submitted a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request to the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) seeking detailed records on the current conditions at Attica, which are essential to document ongoing harm and advance the Shut Down Attica campaign. We are currently awaiting DOCCS's response and the release of these materials.





Staff Attorney, Tolu Lawal, speaking at Netroot Nations Convening in August 2025 on a panel "Beyond Review: How State Courts Can Stop the Erosion of Our Rights."

Right to Counsel NYC Coalition

The Center supports the [Right to Counsel NYC Coalition](#) (RTC) in its campaign to establish a Right to Counsel for all tenants facing eviction in New York State. RTC is a tenant-led coalition that stops evictions, strengthens tenants' rights, and transforms housing courts across the state. Our fellows and interns conducted legal and factual research to identify potential funding sources for eviction defense and other programs that expand access to legal representation for New Yorkers, to equip the coalition with the information needed to advance statewide Right to Counsel in the upcoming legislative session.

ABA Public Trust Committee

The Center participated in the ABA Public Trust Committee, where our former Executive Director, Jason D. Williamson, served as co-chair and worked on developing ABA-endorsed guidelines for fair and just parole systems.

Additional advocacy-centered work included:

- The Center supported the [Theater of Change](#), an activism initiative created by the [Broadway Advocacy Coalition](#) (BAC) and the Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia Law School that brings together theater artists, law and policy students, and professionals. The initiative directly impacts change agents with first-hand experience of systemic inequities to develop arts-based strategies for social change. Our staff attorney, Tolu Lawal, facilitated programming for the [Formerly Incarcerated](#)

[College Graduate Network](#) (FICGN) during the 2024-2025 cycle.

- In 2024-2025, the Center collaborated with NYU's [Prison Education Program](#), a cross-university initiative providing free liberal arts education to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students. Through this partnership, the Center provided PEP parole-related legal support, while PEP provided reentry legal support.
- In 2025, our staff attorney Tolu Lawal was tapped to participate in [re: power's State Courts on the Power Map](#) program, which strengthens the capacity of directly impacted and BIPOC organizers to understand and engage state courts as sites for advancing racial, gender, and reproductive justice. Tolu served as a trainer within the cohort of 25 participants, supporting her three-person pod in their development as leaders in state court advocacy.
- In June 2025, the Center contributed to the [People's Parity Project's Unf*ck the Law 2025 convening](#), a national gathering of progressive law students, attorneys, and advocates dedicated to "unrigging the law and building a legal system that values people over corporate profits." Our staff attorney, Tolu Lawal, was invited to speak on the importance of state courts and state court advocacy.
- The Center was represented at [Netroots Nation 2025](#), held August 2025 in New Orleans, where our staff attorney, Tolu Lawal, spoke on the panel ["Beyond Review: How State Courts Can Stop the](#)

Erosion of Our Rights.” The session explored the power of state supreme courts to interpret their constitutions independently of federal review and the role state courts can play in protecting fundamental rights amid ongoing federal rollbacks.

- The Center supported the Disciplinary Hearing Representation Project, a student-led initiative working in partnership with the Prisoners’ Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society, which provides representation to incarcerated individuals facing Tier III disciplinary hearings in New York State. Center staff shadowed and supported student advocates and provided direct representation for a number of incarcerated individuals at their hearings, helping to secure the dismissal of some of the most serious charges that individuals were facing.
- Following the enactment of New York’s HALT Solitary Confinement Act, the Center supported ongoing efforts to challenge violations of the law by assisting the National Center for Law and Economic Justice and Legal Aid Society’s Prisoners’ Rights Project with legal and factual research related to DOCCS’ continued use of solitary confinement. Center staff supervised student fellows researching legal issues arising from DOCCS’ practices, including alleged noncompliance with HALT and work stoppages by correctional staff, to strengthen litigation and advocacy aimed at enforcing the statute’s protections.
- In 2025, the Center supported Brooklyn Defender Services in an asylum and cancellation of removal case by providing a letter of support documenting the applicant’s long-standing ties to the United States and the impact of racialized over-policing on Black boys and men, offering context in support of release and immigration relief.

PUBLIC DEFENSE REFORM

While prosecutors and judges may wield the most power within the criminal legal system, the Center believes that the role of public defenders is too often overlooked, despite the outsized impact they can have on the process. Indeed, the vast majority of people accused of crimes across the country cannot afford to hire a private attorney and, as a result, must rely on public defenders to represent their interests and support them through what is often a harrowing and stressful experience. And yet, public defense systems throughout the United States are routinely underfunded and under-resourced, often leaving poor—and disproportionately Black and Latinx—people to fend for themselves, without the legal representation to which they are entitled under the Constitution. The Center seeks to reverse this longstanding trend by working with impacted people, communities, and system stakeholders in specific jurisdictions to address the issue through public education efforts, policy advocacy, and litigation.

LITIGATION

Hannah, et al. v. State of Oregon

In May 2022, the Center joined the Oregon Justice Resource Center and the law firm of Levi Merrithew Horst PC, in filing a class action lawsuit challenging the state’s failure to provide counsel to hundreds of indigent criminal defendants across Oregon. Due to the state’s ongoing shortage of defense attorneys tasked with representing poor people accused of crimes, many accused have been left without access to a lawyer for months at a time, often while sitting in pretrial detention. To make matters worse, Black and brown people caught up in the criminal system have been disproportionately impacted by the public defense crisis, just as they are by every other failing of the criminal legal system. As such, the Center filed suit on behalf of four named plaintiffs, representing the class of indigent accused who awaited counsel and alleging state constitutional violations of both their right to counsel and their right to equal protection under the law. Within days of filing the

civil case, the named plaintiffs were provided with attorneys in their individual criminal cases. The original lawsuit was later voluntarily dismissed and re-filed with a new set of plaintiffs. The case is currently on appeal.

Thomas v. Evers

In September 2022, the Center joined Winston & Strawn LLP, the Wisconsin Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers to file a class action lawsuit against state officials in Wisconsin for their consistent failure to provide lawyers to the criminally accused within a reasonable time after initial appearances have occurred. Wisconsin's ongoing crises around attorney shortages, inadequate budget allocation, attorney pay, attorney attrition, and various other issues have all contributed to a constitutional emergency, where hundreds, if not thousands, of people languish in legal limbo (and sometimes in jail) without legal representation. The Center filed suit on behalf of eighteen named plaintiffs, representing people accused of crimes from across the state who had not been assigned counsel within 14 days of their initial appearance. The case is currently pending.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Kenneth Thompson Lecture

The sixth annual [Kenneth P. Thompson '92 Lecture](#), held February 2025, featured a discussion with Susan Friedman, the inaugural administrator of the New York State Commission on Prosecutorial Conduct, and Nicole Smith Futrell, a professor at the City University of New York School of Law and co-founder of Accountability New York. The discussion, moderated by Zimroth Center at NYU Law Executive Director Courtney Oliva, explored the challenges and possibilities of building meaningful accountability within prosecutorial offices. Friedman and Futrell shared insights on the challenges and opportunities for strengthening prosecutorial accountability, underscoring both the cultural resistance to

oversight and the need to confront perceptions of prosecutorial infallibility to enable meaningful systemic review. This lecture series, co-hosted with the Peter L. Zimroth Center on the Administration of Criminal Law, honors former Brooklyn District Attorney Kenneth Thompson's legacy of advocacy and reform within the prosecution function.

AMICUS BRIEFS

Throughout 2024 and 2025, the Center joined several amicus briefs addressing critical civil rights issues: In June 2025, the Center joined an amicus brief before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit in **Jones Eagle LLC v. Ward**, supporting a constitutional challenge to Arkansas' alien land laws, Act 636 and Act 174. The brief argues that the laws discriminate on the basis of race and national origin, conflict with federal immigration law, and revive a legacy of exclusionary land restrictions historically used to target Asian immigrants. The case highlights the discriminatory enforcement of these statutes, including the investigation of a U.S. citizen of Chinese origin despite clear proof of his citizenship. The brief urges the Court to affirm the injunction blocking the laws and reject policies that echo unconstitutional alien land bans of the early 20th century.

The Center was a signatory to an amicus brief before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit in **Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians v. Howe**, supporting a petition for rehearing en banc. The brief challenged a panel decision that eliminated private enforcement of the Voting Rights Act, arguing that preventing individuals and civil rights organizations from bringing Section 2 lawsuits would leave communities across the Eighth Circuit without recourse against racially discriminatory voting laws.

The Center joined an amicus brief in **Washington v. Trump** in April 2025, opposing an executive order attempting to eliminate birthright citizenship. The brief maintained that the Fourteenth Amendment's Citizenship Clause guarantees citizenship to



Faculty Director, Vincent Southerland, Susan Friedman, Nicole Smith Futrell, and Courtney Oliva at the 6th annual Kenneth P. Thompson Lecture.

all persons born in the United States and that abandoning this principle would undermine constitutional protections and leave millions, especially children of immigrants, vulnerable to statelessness and discrimination.

In April 2025, the Center signed onto amicus briefs addressing executive orders that targeted law firms for their legal advocacy. The briefs supported major law firms, including **WilmerHale, Jenner & Block, and Perkins Coie**, that faced retaliation from the Trump Administration for engaging in civil rights and voting rights advocacy. The briefs argued that such governmental retaliation violates the First Amendment and threatens the independence of the legal profession by chilling attorneys' ability to challenge unconstitutional policies.

The Center also signed onto an amicus brief challenging an executive order singling out **Susman Godfrey** for its civil rights work. The brief asserted that punishing law firms for protected legal advocacy undermines core constitutional protections, deters public-interest litigation, and erodes the rule of law by discouraging attorneys from representing clients opposing government overreach.

In August 2025, the Center joined an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in **Chiles v. Salazar**, supporting Colorado's ban on conversion therapy for minors. The brief highlighted the state's authority to regulate harmful medical practices, documented the

psychological and physical dangers of conversion therapy, and emphasized the need to protect LGBTQ youth from coercive interventions based on discredited and discriminatory practices.

In November 2024, the Center submitted an amicus brief to the New York State Court of Appeals in **People v. Willis** in support of Appellant McKenzie Willis' petition to vacate an aggravated unlicensed operation conviction that the Center contends was the result of racialized policing. The brief grounds the history of discriminatory policing and pretextual stops in New York State and its relationship to the State's driver's license suspension regime.

In October 2024, the Center joined an amicus brief with the Juvenile Law Center in **State of New Jersey v. Sammy Moore** before the Superior Court of New Jersey. The brief challenged a life sentence imposed on an individual who was 19 years old at the time of the offense, arguing that the sentencing court improperly relied on the debunked "superpredator" myth to enhance the sentence. The brief traced the racist origins of the superpredator theory, documenting how it emerged from centuries of dehumanizing stereotypes about Black people and led to sweeping legislative changes in the 1980s and 1990s that disproportionately harmed Black and Brown youth. The brief urged the court to recognize that relying on this materially false, racially fueled rhetoric to sentence an adolescent violated due process and fundamental fairness, and requested a hearing to correct the illegal sentence.



RACE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Center engages in advocacy, research, and public education to mitigate the harm of algorithmic tools in criminal and civil domains. The Center's work in this area seeks to apply a racial justice lens to the development, design, implementation, and oversight of technological tools that surveil individuals and communities and tools that analyze datasets to identify patterns used to inform forecasts about people or places. The Center is a member of several coalitions in this space and has participated in a number of public-facing events to advance racial justice in this area.

Technology and Racial Justice Collaborative (TRJC)

Across the country, the proliferation and use of emergent technology, surveillance tools, artificial intelligence, and risk assessment instruments deployed in the criminal legal system have harmful and racially disparate impacts in communities of color. In many ways, the age of mass incarceration has begun to morph into the age of surveillance and criminalization. While the racially disparate impact of some of these algorithmic tools, like facial recognition technology, is becoming more widely known, many of these new tools lack data about efficacy and transparency about the technology used to develop them.



Given the host of civil liberties, civil rights, privacy, and racial justice concerns posed by biometric and predictive technologies in the criminal legal system, in 2023 the Center sought to better understand how a diverse group of researchers and advocates are addressing the challenges these advanced technologies pose. To do so, we spoke with researchers and advocates across the country to identify the specific challenges they are facing in their work and the resources and learning opportunities they need to strengthen their collective impact.

In the summer of 2024, after nearly two years of intensive research and development, the Center officially launched the Collaborative.

TRJC Quarterly Newsletter

The TRJC launched its [quarterly newsletter](#) in May 2024, providing a range of resources, including legislative updates, feature articles, event updates, training opportunities, campaign information, and publications from our partners. Since the launch, we have successfully published five editions, each widely circulated to provide relevant information to individuals and organizations working at the intersection of race, technology, and the criminal legal system. Each issue includes four main sections: announcements, legislative updates, feature articles, and updates from the field. Together, these editions have achieved significant reach and helped to bridge gaps in knowledge-sharing amongst advocates.

TRJC Legislative Bill Tracker

Launched in August 2024, [TRJC's legislative bill tracker](#) has become an essential resource, providing comprehensive information on more than 2,000 state and federal bills related to law enforcement technology, data privacy, and surveillance. Developed in response to the need for a centralized tool to monitor policies related to police technology, surveillance, and privacy, the tracker continues to grow in depth and usability. We refined the model used to identify and categorize bills to ensure that all relevant legislation is captured and that the information is presented clearly and effectively. New bills are added each month and existing bills are updated twice monthly to ensure the tracker reflects the most current information. The tracker is a helpful way for organizers and others to monitor what bills are being considered in their state, or by Congress, in order to identify where to take action in building campaigns in support or opposition.

TRJC Interactive Online Community

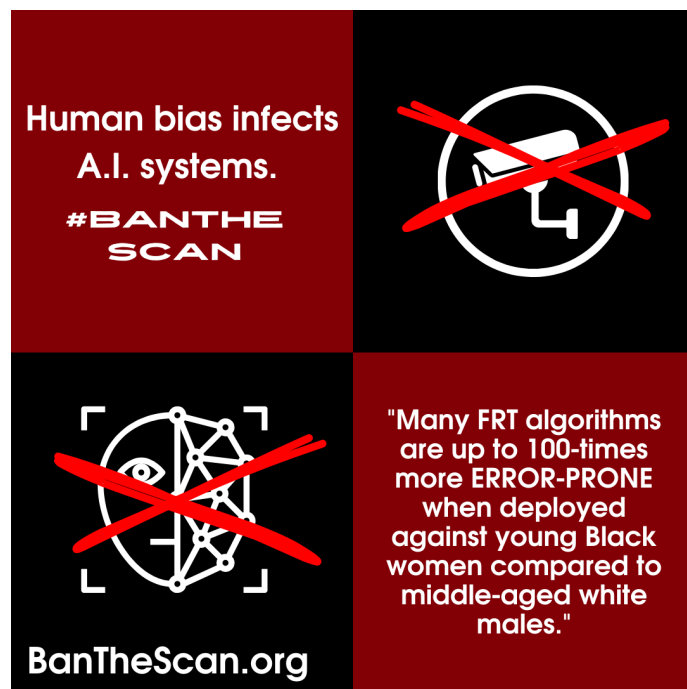
In February 2025, TRJC launched an interactive online portal to serve as a centralized clearinghouse for community engagement. We curate content, recruit users, and organize events to strengthen connections among advocates who rely on the bill tracker and related resources. The platform now hosts a number of users who can access a library of reports, tools, and discussions. The public-facing landing page features the bill tracker, while the private member space offers additional resources and opportunities for users to share information, ask questions, participate in conversations, and build meaningful networks across the broader community focused on law enforcement technology, data privacy, and surveillance.

Strategic Communications and Messaging Training

At the Center, we recognize that the challenges we and our partners grapple with don't exist in isolation. The forces supporting policies that drive racial inequity often make use of deep societal narratives to justify broken approaches that disproportionately impact communities of color. It is crucial that we can counter these narratives.

In 2024, we partnered with Fenton Communications, a social change communication agency, to engage a group of partner organizations in a series of programs designed to help organizations advance their work by understanding and overcoming the deep narratives used to oppose sensible controls on law enforcement, surveillance, and prosecution.

Our strategic communications efforts with Fenton continued in 2025. Together we conducted a two-part messaging training in the spring focused on navigating the challenges of the current political environment. The trainings explored how narratives take shape, the dominant narratives that influence public understanding of law enforcement and surveillance, and strategies to counter harmful messaging. They also introduced longer-term approaches for promoting narrative change, including those addressing the increasing use of AI technologies by law enforcement.



Additional race and technology advocacy work

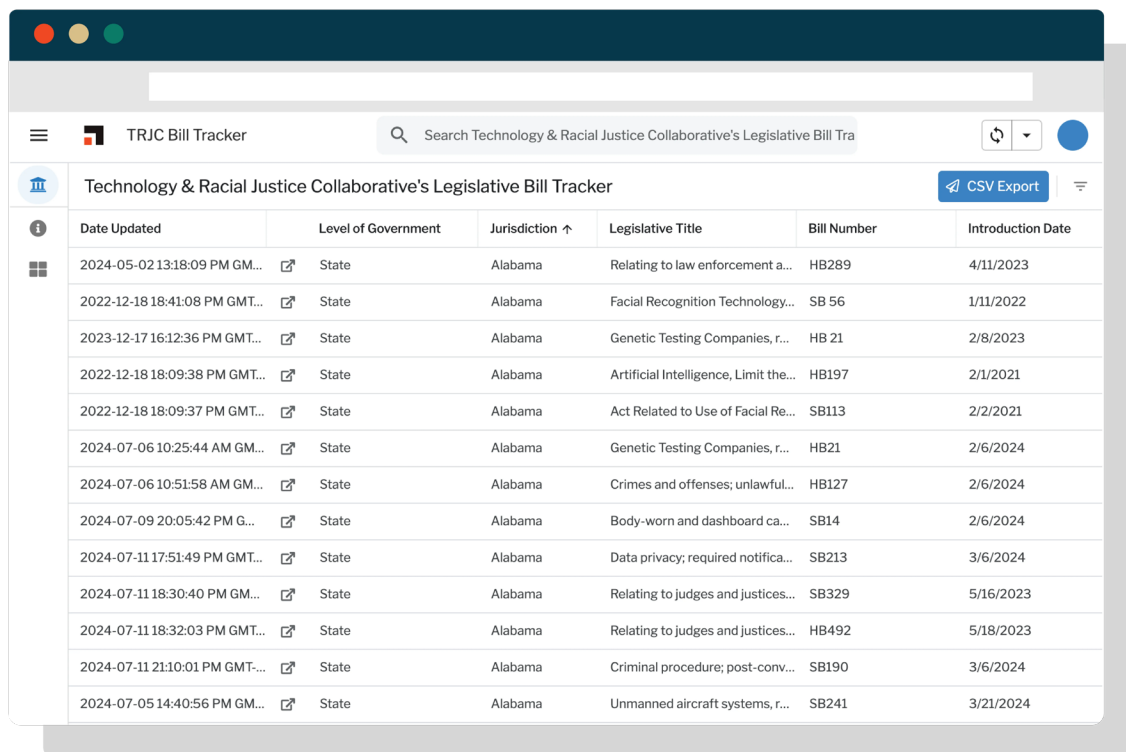
- The Center is a member of the Steering Committee of the Ban the Scan coalition, which is working to ban facial recognition and other biometric surveillance in New York City and New York State. At the city level, the coalition supports Introductions 425 and 217 which, if passed, would

significantly limit harmful biometric monitoring across the city by banning the use of facial recognition technology in residential buildings and places of public accommodation. At the state level, the coalition is pushing for the passage of a package of four bills that would ban biometric surveillance in four contexts: in residences, in places of public accommodation, in schools, and as used by law enforcement. The state bill banning use in schools, S3827, made progress when it passed in the Senate in June 2025.

- In 2025, the Center played an active role in the Privacy NY coalition, convened by the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (S.T.O.P.), which advocates against harmful NYPD surveillance practices. On April 10, 2025, the New York City Council passed Introductions 168 and 480 to strengthen the Public Oversight of

Surveillance Technology (POST) Act by closing major loopholes in the law. Our TRJC Fellow, Nina Loshkajian, provided testimony in support of these reforms.

- In 2025, the Center participated in monthly meetings hosted by the Police Tech Working Group.
- In 2025, the Center represented the Collaborative Research Center for Resilience in an Article 78 proceeding challenging the New York City Procurement Board's attempt to change procurement protocols without proper public notice, in violation of the Open Meetings Law. Filed in January 2025, the petition highlighted the risks posed by the proposed changes and received print coverage at the time of filing.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the TRJC Bill Tracker application. The header includes a search bar with the text "Search Technology & Racial Justice Collaborative's Legislative Bill Tra". Below the header is a table titled "Technology & Racial Justice Collaborative's Legislative Bill Tracker" with a "CSV Export" button. The table has seven columns: "Date Updated", "Level of Government", "Jurisdiction", "Legislative Title", "Bill Number", and "Introduction Date". The table contains 14 rows of data, all for the State of Alabama.

Date Updated	Level of Government	Jurisdiction	Legislative Title	Bill Number	Introduction Date
2024-05-02 13:18:09 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Relating to law enforcement a...	HB289	4/11/2023
2022-12-18 18:41:08 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Facial Recognition Technology...	SB 56	1/11/2022
2023-12-17 16:12:36 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Genetic Testing Companies, r...	HB 21	2/8/2023
2022-12-18 18:09:38 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Artificial Intelligence, Limit the...	HB197	2/1/2021
2022-12-18 18:09:37 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Act Related to Use of Facial Re...	SB113	2/2/2021
2024-07-06 10:25:44 AM GMT...	State	Alabama	Genetic Testing Companies, r...	HB21	2/6/2024
2024-07-06 10:51:58 AM GMT...	State	Alabama	Crimes and offenses; unlawfu...	HB127	2/6/2024
2024-07-09 20:05:42 PM G...	State	Alabama	Body-worn and dashboard ca...	SB14	2/6/2024
2024-07-11 17:51:49 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Data privacy; required notifica...	SB213	3/6/2024
2024-07-11 18:30:40 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Relating to judges and justices...	SB329	5/16/2023
2024-07-11 18:32:03 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Relating to judges and justices...	HB492	5/18/2023
2024-07-11 21:10:01 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Criminal procedure; post-conv...	SB190	3/6/2024
2024-07-05 14:40:56 PM GMT...	State	Alabama	Unmanned aircraft systems, r...	SB241	3/21/2024



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Race shapes the social and economic well-being of communities in countless ways. Among other things, the racial composition of a community impacts the quality of education that children receive, access to safe and affordable housing, the level of pollution, and other environmental hazards to which people are exposed. People of color are often disadvantaged by racial dynamics and public policies that have created hostile environments around them and perpetuated the legacy of slavery and white supremacy in America. The Center challenges racial inequality and advance distributive justice and equal opportunity in housing, education, transportation, and multiple sectors of civil life to ensure that all people can enjoy just and equitable living conditions in their communities. The Center advances its work in this space through a dynamic, multifaceted approach to advocacy and public education.

The Initiative for Community Power

The Initiative for Community Power (“The Initiative”), within the Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law, combines scholarship, field-building, experiential education, convenings, and field placements to study and challenge inequality and anti-democracy. The Initiative works closely with nonprofit, academic, and government partners to reimagine the parameters of the possible and to transform its vision of a dynamic democracy, rooted in racial and economic justice, into reality. Combining the weight and assets of a global academic institution with deep community

partnerships and decades of high-impact community organizing and power-building work, the Initiative catalyzes analysis, innovation, and project work to create a more equitable, democratic, and racially just society.

The Initiative’s work includes partnering with the public sector and power-building organizations to confront endemic inequality of political voice, engagement and power; funding, placing, and helping to supervise and support student fellows to work in organizations and on academic projects supporting democracy and challenging inequality; developing course offerings such as seminars and clinics focused on inequality and anti-democratic trends, in the US and abroad; hosting domestic and international scholars, elected officials, organizers, activists, organizational leaders, and others with expertise on issues and disciplines related to inequality, racial justice, political economy, policy, power, and social change as a resource for faculty, students, and the broader advocacy, governance, social justice, and policy fields; convening meetings and partnerships with key organizational leaders and leaders at other schools of law and public affairs; providing student fellows, as well as other interested students and faculty, with training on key equality and democracy issues, the ideological underpinnings of these issues, and on organizing, policy and governance approaches to advancing equity and strengthening democratic engagement;

promoting faculty and student partnerships with pro-democracy and social and racial justice organizations to help conduct and publish research necessary to advance their work; hosting Organizers-In-Residence Fellowships at NYU for social change leaders and organizers to engage in reflection, writing, study, and exchanges with the community that emerge from the Initiative; and creating a fund which would give small grants to promising student-led projects related to equity, justice and democratic engagement.

The Initiative collaborates with NYU Law Centers and social justice organizations to organize a range of convenings, student events, and film screenings. That included organizing and hosting the Dismantling Racial Capitalism series; hosting a convening on Law and Power Building; working with The Action Lab and the Law and Political Economy Project at Yale to organize and support a Law and Political Economy New York City chapter.

Publications

On March 5, 2025, Justine Olderman published "[In Defense of Social Justice Upheaval](#)" in Vital City, arguing that young, radical staffers in nonprofit organizations are often responding appropriately to structural injustice and that internal disruption can signal necessary institutional evolution rather than misguided revolt.

On January 16, 2025, Justine Olderman published "[No More Pretrial Punishment](#)" in Inquest, reflecting on her career in public defense and contending that pretrial incarceration operates as punishment despite its stated non-punitive purpose, underscoring the urgent need for reform.

Public Education

Confronting Plutocracy: A Conversation with Juan Grabois and Itai Hagman

In partnership with the Urban Democracy Lab, in May 2025, the Center co-hosted a conversation with Argentine leaders Juan Grabois and Itai Hagman on the growing influence of plutocracy and its impact on social and economic rights in Argentina. The discussion examined the intensified conditions under President Javier Milei. It explored how political



Urban Democracy Lab and the Center co-hosted a conversation with Argentine leaders Juan Grabois and Itai Hagman in discussion with Andrew Friedman, Executive Director of the Initiative for Community Power.

action, legal advocacy, and grassroots organizing are being used to resist policies that prioritize the ultra-wealthy. Their dialogue highlighted the need for collective strategies to confront inequality and defend democratic and social protections.

American Agitators Screening and Discussion

In partnership with the Urban Democracy Lab and The Action Lab, the Center co-hosted a screening of "American Agitators," a documentary inspired by the life and work of renowned grassroots organizer Fred Ross Sr., in September 2025. The film highlights the power of deep listening, personal connection, and patient organizing through the experiences of Ross, Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez, Fred Ross Jr.,



and contemporary organizers committed to justice and equality. Following the screening, a discussion with featured organizers and filmmakers explored the continued relevance of member-led movements. It

encouraged attendees to carry forward the work of organizing to strengthen and preserve democracy.

29th Annual Derrick Bell Lecture: “The Rage of Innocence”

NYU School of Law and the Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law hosted the [29th Annual Derrick Bell Lecture on Race in American Society](#) in November 2024, featuring Kristin Henning, Blume Professor of Law and Director of the Juvenile Justice Clinic and Initiative at Georgetown Law. In her lecture, “The Rage of Innocence: Decriminalizing Race, Adolescence, Trauma, and Disabilities,” Professor Henning examined the criminalization of youth of color and highlighted the urgent need to reimagine systems that disproportionately punish children, offering a compelling call to align law and policy with principles of dignity, equity, and justice.



Jason Williamson at the 29th Annual Derrick Bell Lecture on Race in American Society.



Gospel choir at the 29th Annual Derrick Bell Lecture on Race in American Society.



Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor and Steve Williams in conversation with UDL Director Gianpaolo Baiocchi as part of “Dismantling Racial Capitalism” series.

Dismantling Racial Capitalism Series: In Conversation with Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor & Steve Williams

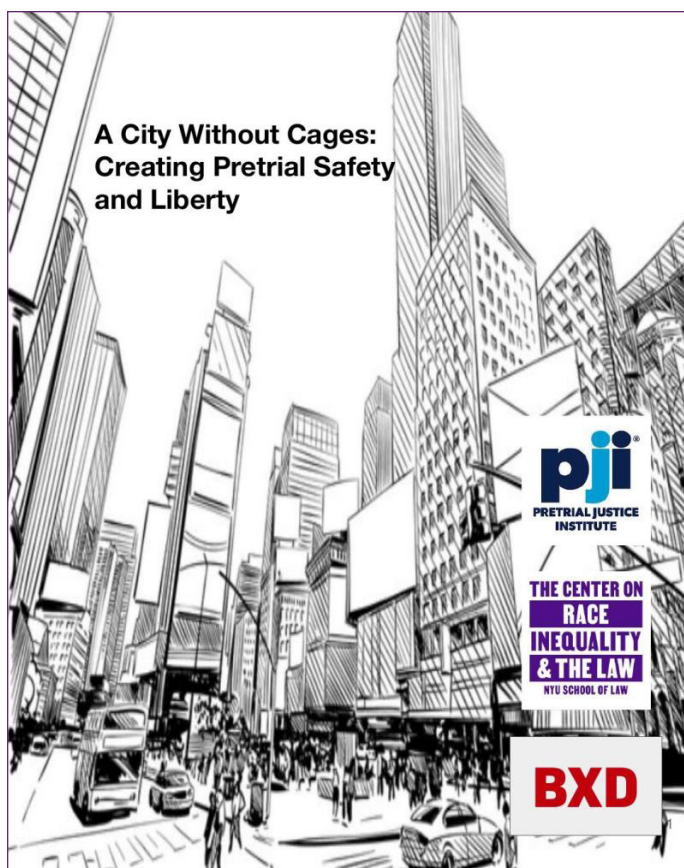
Continuing the [“Dismantling Racial Capitalism” series](#), in February 2025, the Initiative hosted [Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor and Steve Williams for a discussion on movement culture, strategy, and the current political moment](#). Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, a leading scholar of Black politics and social movements and the author of *Race for Profit* and *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, brought critical insight into the ongoing fight for racial and economic justice. Steve Williams, a longtime community organizer and national secretary of the North Star Socialist Organization, drew on his decades of organizing experience at POWER, the San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness, and LeftRoots to examine the challenges and opportunities facing grassroots movements today.



Technology & Racial Justice Collaborative Fellow, Nina Loshkajian, and Executive Director, Jason Williamson at Pretrial Justice Convening

Pretrial Justice Convening

In June 2025, the Center co-hosted the first annual Pretrial Justice Convening with the Pretrial Justice Institute and The Bronx Defenders, bringing together advocates, program providers, scholars, and directly impacted people to examine the future of pretrial justice in New York City. The convening marked one of the city's first gatherings dedicated solely to the pretrial phase and contributed to the development of a long-term framework for ending pretrial detention. Out of this convening came "[A City Without Cages](#)," a bold, justice-centered guide that challenges the status quo of pretrial incarceration. It invites readers to imagine a world where safety is rooted in care, not punishment, and where communities thrive through investment in housing, healthcare, and support systems rather than jails and surveillance. Through data, storytelling, and actionable policy insights, the publication highlights the urgent need to dismantle harmful pretrial practices and to build systems that honor dignity and equity. It's a call to action for

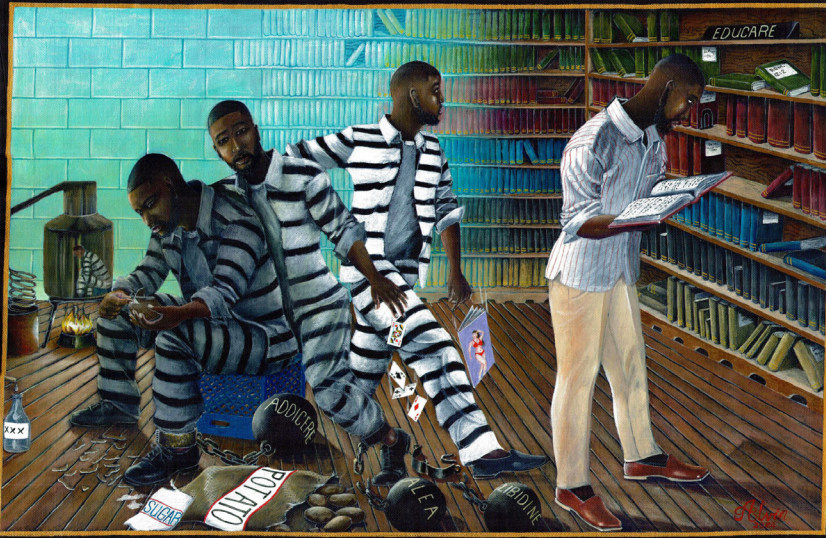


advocates, policymakers, and everyday people to co-create a future grounded in liberation and community care.

Throughout the year, the Center advanced this work through the Pretrial Abolition Lab, led by Justine Olderman, Distinguished Scholar in Residence with the Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law at NYU School of Law. In the lab, law students conducted fieldwork on pretrial reform, examining the systemic harms of pretrial incarceration and the growing body of research that debunks its efficacy and necessity. Through a multidisciplinary approach, students explored public education and narrative change, conducted research and designed pilot projects, developed strategic litigation and law reform strategies, and studied innovative non-carceral alternatives to pretrial detention. The lab empowered students to analyze pretrial practices, create practical solutions, and reimagine a pretrial system without pretrial incarceration.

State Courts Organizing Network Convening

This year, the Center continued to be heavily involved in nationwide efforts to organize a state-court focused counter to the right-wing capture of the federal judiciary by hosting the 2025 State Courts Organizing Network (SCON) Convening -- its third annual event. Following the Center's involvement in The Court New York Deserves Campaign, the Center partnered with the People's Parity Project and the Center for Community Alternatives to further seed and build advocacy efforts at the state court level through SCON. This has included hosting periodic coalition meetings and supporting opportunities to strengthen strategic organizing.



ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Over the course of the 2024–2025 program year, the Center collaborated with the Guarini Center on Environmental, Energy, and Land Use Law to develop plans to jointly launch and direct the NYU Law Environmental & Climate Justice Initiative (ECJI). The ECJI worked with impacted communities and grassroots organizations to confront long-standing environmental racism and advance a just, decarbonized future. Through policy advocacy, litigation, and research, the Environmental & Climate Justice Lab (ECJL) provided law students with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the movement for environmental justice. It also helped cultivate a critical mass of practitioners, academics, and clinicians committed to addressing the environmental challenges faced by communities at the intersection of race and inequality. Officially slated to launch in early 2025, the ECJI was made possible through the generous support of attorneys Marie Napoli, LLM '01, and Paul Napoli.

Leadership and Launch

Marianne Engelman Lado was hired as Director of the Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative and started on March 1, 2025, bringing extensive experience from her service as Deputy General Counsel for Environmental Initiatives in the Office of General Counsel and Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator at the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights at the

EPA. She previously directed Environmental Justice clinics at Yale and Vermont Law Schools, training students in community lawyering and civil rights enforcement, and served as lecturer at both the Yale University School of Public Health and the Yale School of the Environment, where she supervised interdisciplinary teams working on climate justice issues. The Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative is scheduled to hold a formal launch on October 15, 2025.

Mission and Priorities

The Environmental & Climate Justice Initiative is dedicated to advancing environmental and climate justice in partnership with community-based groups in New York and across the United States, using litigation, policy advocacy, research, and public education to protect the rights of all people to clean air, clean water, and a safe place for children to play. The Initiative established four priorities to meet the environmental and climate justice challenges of the moment:

- **Defend Community-Based Environmental and Justice Groups:** Provide legal support to community-based organizations facing the termination of grants, potential investigations, or revocation of their nonprofit status.



ECJ Legal Defense Retreat



ECJ Legal Defense Retreat

- **Strengthen Civil Rights Laws to Advance Environmental and Justice:** Work to protect strong standards for enforcing civil rights in the environmental sector.
- **Represent Environmental Justice Groups Fighting for the Future of Their Communities:** Work directly with residents and in partnership with local co-counsel in communities across the United States disproportionately burdened by environmental harms.
- **Support Community Efforts to Develop and Implement State and Local Environmental Justice Laws:** Provide support for community-based efforts to strengthen state laws that protect community engagement in decision-making and prevent further concentration of polluting facilities in already environmentally overburdened areas.

Environmental & Climate Justice Lab

In fall 2025, the Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative launched the Environmental and Climate Justice (ECJ) Lab, an experiential learning opportunity that engaged ten students in intensive work with community-based organizations. Grounded in a community lawyering model, the Lab

allowed students to step into the role of movement lawyers while contributing directly to projects that advance environmental and climate justice. Interest from NYU second- and third-year students exceeded expectations, with an additional ten students selected for the spring semester from a large applicant pool.

The ECJ Lab has three main components: a weekly two-hour seminar that included black-letter law classes, sessions focused on specific litigation and advocacy skills, and opportunities to workshop litigation strategies; fieldwork, where students are assigned to matters in teams of two; and weekly supervisory sessions with the EJ Initiative director.

Convening and Capacity Building

The Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative hosted several significant convenings to meet the challenges of the moment. In July 2025, the ECJI hosted a two-part Workshop on State Efforts to Advance Consideration of Cumulative Impacts with Environmental Justice Movement co-founder Charles Lee and Sean Moriarty, former Deputy Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and now of the State

Impact Center. Each day of the workshop attracted more than 200 stakeholders, from state regulators to researchers to community advocates, who discussed the development and implementation of laws and policies to take cumulative impacts into account in decision-making. In follow-up, the ECJI is co-hosting Cross-Cutting Conversations on Cumulative Impacts (4CI), bringing stakeholders together monthly to share information and tackle hard issues.

Also in July, the ECJI hosted a two-day retreat with more than 45 nonprofits, clinics, pro bono organizations, and other partners to exchange information on legal defense strategies and strengthen referral systems for environmental justice, indigenous, and other community groups facing the abrupt termination of grants, unprecedented threats to their nonprofit status, and forms of harassment and intimidation.

Advocacy and Direct Representation

The ECJI is engaged in advocacy and representation across all four priority areas:

1. *Defend Community-Based Environmental Justice Groups:* Research assistants and Lab students have worked with the ECJI Director to provide legal counseling to recipients of environmental and climate justice grants responding to notices from the EPA and the Department of Energy abruptly terminating their grants. Lab students work closely with Lawyers for Good Government, which acts as a central intake and referral system for the legal defense of community-based groups.
2. *Strengthen Civil Rights Laws to Advance Environmental Justice:* On June 16, 2025, the Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative filed joint comments with the NAACP, LatinoJustice/PRLDEF, Southern Environmental Law Center, and Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE) on behalf of a coalition of national and community-based organizations and legal experts on a proposal by the Department of Energy to weaken civil rights regulations. In response to these and other substantial adverse comments, the Department of Energy has

released notices delaying the effective date of the rules three times. The ECJI will continue to monitor civil rights enforcement and will partner with Earthjustice and WEAFT for Environmental Justice to provide training for community-based groups on federal civil rights laws.

3. *Represent Environmental Justice Groups Fighting for the Future of Their Communities:* ECJ Lab students work directly with residents and in partnership with local co-counsel in communities across the United States disproportionately burdened by environmental harms on issues ranging from lead contamination in local parks built on the sites of incinerators in communities of color, to the possibility of substantial rate hikes in the cost of water and sewage service in low-income communities where residents already can't afford current rates.
4. *Support Community Efforts to Develop and Implement State and Local Environmental Justice Law:* The ECJ Lab provides direct representation to community groups advocating for state protections against continued clustering of polluting facilities in already environmentally overburdened areas. The ECJI is partnering with the Environmental Justice Center at Yale University and student teams at other partnering law schools to manage and update the Environmental Justice State by State Law Library and to ensure that information about state EJ laws is accessible to all stakeholders.

Additional Activities

On March 27, 2025, the ECJI jointly submitted comments with LatinoJustice PRLDEF, the NAACP, and other partners on the Council on Environmental Quality's Interim Final Rule, "Removal of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations," and accompanying February 2025 Memorandum on NEPA. The comments were submitted on behalf of Tribal Nations, organizations, and individuals and urged the withdrawal of the Interim Final Rule as arbitrary and capricious.

During the summer of 2025, the ECJI together with partners at Harvard and Howard Law Schools,

contributed to the NAACP's emergency response toolkit, *Power in the Storm: A People's Guide to Building a Resilient and Community-Led Disaster Response*.

In collaboration with the Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law's Race & Technology Collaborative Fellow, Nina Loshkajian, the ECJI contributed to a forthcoming report on civil rights and environmental justice implications of the siting of data centers in already environmentally overburdened communities.

In follow-up to the Legal Defense Retreat hosted at NYU School of Law in July 2025, the ECJI is co-lead on a working group of clinical faculty and other partners to support the development of pathways for a new generation of attorneys to assist environmental and climate justice movements.

Publications

1. In August 2025, the ECJI published a blog in *The Equation* titled "[Despite Misinformation from Washington, Environmental Justice is About Common Sense, Fairness, and Access to Clean Air and Clean Water for All](#)," highlighting the fundamental principles of equity at the heart of environmental justice.
2. On May 9, 2025, the ECJI published a [blog](#) in *The Hill*, co-authored by Marianne Engelman Lado and former federal civil rights officials, examining the misuse of federal funding authority under the Trump Administration.
3. On March 26, 2025, Marianne co-authored a blog for the American Constitutional Society arguing that environmental justice is a collective responsibility in "[Environmental Justice is Not About 'Them.' It's About All of Us.](#)"

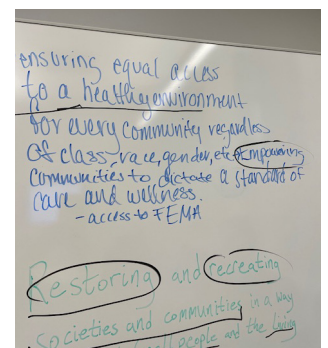
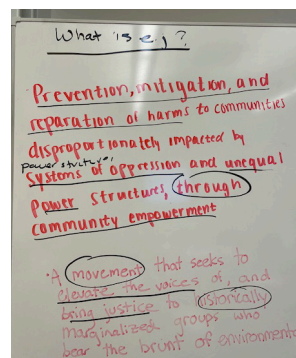
Research and Public Education

The ECJI launched a number of research projects to evaluate and shine a light on federal environmental justice initiatives and to advance understanding of the role of civil rights enforcement in advancing environmental justice. The Director, Marianne Engelman Lado, also served as a peer reviewer for the journal *Environmental Justice*.

Public Engagement

The Director, Marianne Engelman Lado, spoke at numerous forums within the NYU community, in New York, and in the larger community, including:

- Guest Lecturer, Environmental Justice course, University of New Mexico School of Law, September 3
- Panelist, "Climate Justice," Local Power Summit, Public Rights Project, July 22
- Panelist, Center for Brooklyn History program, "Environmental Injustice: Race, Class, and Toxic Inequality," moderated by Vann R. Newkirk II, June 6
- Two weeks in residence at Vermont Law & Graduate School as a Distinguished Environmental Law Summer Scholar, delivering "Hot Topic," "Advancing Environmental Justice in a Chaotic Time," May 29
- Lecturer, "The Policy Landscape for Environmental Justice and Health Equity: Where Do We Go From Here?" in the Environmental and Occupational Epidemiology course at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, May 14
- Keynote and panelist, NYU Environmental Law Society Earth Week, "Climate Justice Under Trump, 2.0," April 15
- Panelist, Environmental and Racial Justice Network (ERJN) 2025 Spring Summit at NYU, "What's Next for Environmental Justice," April 4



Photos of student notes.



RACE AND LEGAL EDUCATION

Race and Law Center Network

The Race and Law Center Network (RLCN) is a coalition of law school-based centers and institutes dedicated to racial justice that aims to strengthen collaboration and amplify the impact of its members. As the Executive Director of the Center, Jason Williamson served on the Network's steering committee and played an active role in the Network's efforts to foster cross-institutional collaboration and advance the cause of racial justice through a combination of legal scholarship, policy advocacy, and organizing.

In October 2024, the RLCN convened at Duke Law School, bringing together scholars, advocates, and practitioners to discuss effective strategies for incorporating racial justice into their work. Jason Williamson and Tolu Lawal represented the Center at the convening, leading and actively participating in discussions on how law school centers can leverage their resources and expertise to support racial justice advocacy in various contexts. The convening underscored the Center's role in shaping national conversations about how to best pursue racial equity in the current political moment.

Student Fellowships, Internships, and Research Opportunities

The Center [continued to engage students](#) at NYU School of Law through its term-time fellowship program and volunteer opportunities. In 2024-2025, the Center hosted numerous Student Fellows during the academic year. These Student Fellows were involved in all facets of the Center's work, to provide valuable research on race and inequality, strengthen the Center's social media presence, offer direct support to incarcerated clients, and more. Volunteer opportunities and support positions are made available on an ongoing basis for undergraduate and graduate students who wish to deepen their understanding of the intersection of race, inequality, and the law and contribute to the Center's work in the world.



NYU INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout the year, the Center continued to work closely with the law school's student affinity groups, faculty, and staff to provide training, guidance and thought partnership on issues of race and inequality. As part of these efforts, the Center continued its annual training with the Lawyering faculty to equip them with approaches and techniques to manage conversations about race and differences in the classroom.

As a member of the [NYU Alliance for Public Interest Technology](#), the Center maintained a partnership with a dynamic and multidisciplinary group of NYU faculty to support the responsible, ethical, and racially equitable use of technology. Through the [Blueprints for Progressive Change in Juvenile Justice](#) initiative, the Center collaborated with NYU faculty to support progressive reform of the criminal legal system's treatment of children. In addition, the Center is part of the university-wide Environmental & Racial Justice Network, in order to strengthen its ties with others in the NYU community focused on environmental justice.

Finally, the Center partnered with a wide array of NYU Law Centers and Institutes, such as, such as the [Center for Human Rights and Global Justice](#), the [Meltzer Center on Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging](#), [Birnbaum Women's Leadership Center](#), and the [Center on the Administration of Criminal Law](#) to host events, engage in advocacy, and confront racial injustice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund for its ongoing and generous support of all of the Center's work; the MacArthur Foundation for its sustained support of our work at the intersection of race and technology; the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison for its continued support of our student fellows; Marie Napoli LLM '01 and Paul Napoli for their support of the Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative; and NYU School of Law, as well as our individual supporters, volunteers, and donors, each of whom make the Center's work possible.

ARTIST STATEMENT

ALVIN SMITH



I'm a visual artist who is primarily drawn to painting works that matter. A lot of my work depicts socially charged images which are important not only to myself, but to the masses. Art is the loudest part of my voice, and I am compelled to use it.

I'm currently using acrylic and water soluble oils to create these storytelling works. I learned through years of trial and error that using these mediums while layering in watercolor techniques works the best for me. As a child of seven or eight years of age, art was the happy place that I regularly retreated to. It was my (Momma) that inspired me from the start. She drew images of powerful women in order to cope with her own circumstances. Whether that was fighting with dad, or difficulties at making ends meet, she would draw. When she finished I would grab what she'd drawn and stare in amazement. I can see her influence on my own style with how the clothes have movement with the characters in my works. While I am not shackled to any particular kind of depiction, I do have a certain love for displaying the urban community experience.

As an example of this experience, I've embarked on a journey through a series of socially charged paintings I call "Underprivileged Oasis." In each installment, the oasis is represented by the neighborhood liquor store. With an honest, and sometimes ugly look at the things that tend to occur there. On display are truths that many know of, but few shine light on. These works beg the question, why have these stores become gathering places for urban communities?

ARTIST BIO

Alvin Lavon Smith Jr. is an incarcerated artist in Michigan's Department of Corrections. He was born in Laurel, Mississippi, and grew up in Ypsilanti, Michigan. He is a long time participant in the University of Michigan's Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) and one of only fifteen American incarcerated artists to be invited to participate in We Bear Exhibition, Coventry England (February 2022).

Alvin's art and illustrations have been published by College Inside Newsletter and Zócalo Public Square, and are featured in several books including: "Incarceration and The Law: Cases and Materials, Tenth Edition" and "Making Art in Prison: Survival and Resistance", by Janie Paul. His paintings has been included in several exhibitions including: Work Assignments: Forced Prison Labor in the Land of the Free, several Bay Area locations(2023 & 2024); a solo show Underprivileged Oasis, MUSE SE, Grand Rapids(2024); Paperchained International, Boom Gate Gallery, Australia(2024); and Painting Ourselves Into Society, Berkeley Art Center (2024). His work is cataloged in the Kruizenga Art Museum.

ARTWORK

PAGE 6

Name: Alvin Smith

Title, Year: Outside the Rusting Decay of Confinement, 2024

Medium: Acrylic on unstretched canvas

Portfolio: <https://www.empowermentave.org/artist/alvin-smith>

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Name: Alvin Smith

Title, Year: Emerging from the Cocoon, 2024

Portfolio: <https://www.empowermentave.org/artist/alvin-smith>

ARTIST STATEMENT



COREY DEVON ARTHUR

The world as it was shown to me has never been enough. This has always frustrated me. One day while I was in kindergarten, I picked up a broken, dirty, black crayon and began to redraw the world the way I saw and felt it in my heart.

I chose the broken, dirty, black crayon, because it reminded me of how I saw myself. I chose it because it looked like me. It was the one that nobody wanted to use.

Since then I have learned to use every conceivable tool that makes and holds a mark. Growing up in the hood, I never saw anything as trash. Broken things and other folks' garbage was my treasure. Later, upon incarceration, I found a way to sketch despite the scarcity of art supplies. I found my voice while locked in solitary confinement using a three-inch rubber pen and scraps of paper, if I was blessed.

My influences were graffiti artists I saw in Brooklyn throwing up their pieces on the trains and walls. These are my folks, the bottom people. Down here we make our heroes. I was immediately drawn to the prospect of marking something that would show the world what beauty could come from a dirty broken black crayon. I remember the first time I wrote my name on the wall of the boys' bathroom in kindergarten. I saw more of my authentic self in my five-year-old scrawl than I had ever seen of myself depicted anywhere on earth.

Recently I created a collection of five paintings titled "Blood In Eye," inspired by the late Comrade George L. Jackson's book *Blood In My Eye*. Since age 13, I evolved from a criminal, to an animalized prisoner, to a revolutionary, and now into a feminist. I noticed the ledge where they assassinated George. It stopped the movement. His legacy compelled me to take the evolutionary next step.

As an artist, this was the ideal opportunity to use my talents to study our bloodline of resistance. I painted Lolita Lebron, Kathy Boudine, Angela Davis, and Assata Shakur with blood in their eyes. I also put a red rose in their hair. The system said they were broken; I saw them as beautiful. They fought for me. Now it's my turn to keep it lit, and pay my respects to them. The world didn't give them enough respect. So I created a way to use my art to throw it up for my sheroes.

ARTIST BIO

Corey Devon Arthur is an incarcerated writer and artist from Brooklyn, New York. He makes art as an intimate way to heal and offer hope of a reimagined future, where we strive to resist first with love, and then with all else we are made of. Corey hopes to create art until every corner of the earth and the people who inhabit it have been touched by his work.

Corey has participated in several exhibitions including: *Capitalizing On Justice*, New York (2019); *Return to Sender: Prison as Censorship*, EFA Gallery NY, (2023); a solo art show, *She Told Me Save The Flower*, My Gallery Brooklyn, New York (2023) with a follow up display at the Brooklyn Public Library (2024); *Work Assignments: Forced Prison Labor in the Land of the Free*, several Bay Area locations (2023 & 2024); *Paperchained International*, Boom Gate Gallery, Australia (2024) and *Painting Ourselves Into Society*, Berkeley Art Center (2024).

His collection of "Quaker Paintings" are exhibited in Quaker meeting houses across the U.S. Corey collaborated with Brooklyn W.A.Y. to create numerous feminist and pro-social inspired art including his *Save The Flower Registry*, with its first successful mission, [*We Freed the Flowers*](#) (Mother's Day 2024). His writing and art have been published in venues including: the Marshall Project; Writing Class Radio; Mangoprism (2022); Study and Struggle Blog; NYU Center for Law, Equality, and Justice Annual Report (2023); and Intra Magazine Time Capsule edition cover (2023).

You can check out more of his art and writing on

instagram @coreydevonarthur, @thebrooklynw.a.y.
#freedtheflower and medium.com/@coreydevonarthur.

ARTWORK

COVER

Name: Corey Devon Arthur

Title, Year: Assata Shakur, 2022

Medium: Acrylic and colored pencil on paper

Portfolio: <https://www.empowermentave.org/artist/corey-arthur>

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Name: Corey Devon Arthur

Title, Year: Resister, 2024

Medium: Acrylic and colored pencil on paper

Portfolio: <https://www.empowermentave.org/artist/corey-arthur>

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Name: Corey Devon Arthur

Title, Year: First Amendment, 2023

Medium: Mixed Media

Portfolio: <https://www.empowermentave.org/artist/corey-arthur>

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