



SCHOOL of LAW
Center for Social Justice

END OF YEAR CELEBRATION
2020-2021

The poster has a light teal background with a pattern of small white stars. At the top, there are three strings of bunting flags in blue and yellow. Two purple balloons with blue strings are positioned on the left and right sides. The text is centered and includes the WNE School of Law logo, the date and location, the event title, and a thank-you message.

WNE | SCHOOL of LAW
Center for Social Justice

Thursday May 27, 2021
4-6 PM @ The Student Prince/Fort

END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

for the Center for Social Justice
*to thank our amazing supporters, volunteers,
donors/sponsors, and friends.*

THANK YOU ALL!

We greatly appreciate each of our volunteers and **truly couldn't do this without you.**

The CSJ also wishes to thank the many others in our community who have supported our work, including our **primary funders: MassMutual** (General Counsel Michael O'Connor, Lead Counsel Dorothy Varon, outgoing Pro Bono Committee Chair Sucharita Varanasi, incoming Pro Bono Committee Chair Alethea O'Donnell, the Law Department's Pro Bono Committee, and MassMutual's Foundation/Community Responsibility Team), **Shatz, Schwartz, and Fentin P.C.**, and **Health New England; WNEU School of Law students, faculty, and staff** (particularly faculty advisors Harris Freeman and Lauren Carasik; Dean (and CSJ Co-Founder) Sudha Setty; law professors Bridgette Baldwin, Bruce Miller, Julie Steiner, and Jennifer Taub; Asst. Dean of Law Admissions Anthony Orlando; and the Law School Deans); our **supporters across the University** (especially President Robert E. Johnson and Asst. Dean of Diversity Programs and Services Yvonne Bogle); our **program partners, clients, coalition members, donors, and supporters; CSJ staff, externs administrative assistants and independent contractors** (Ariel Clemmer, Jessica Marcellino, Keshini Soborun, Nathan Bench, Aubrey Foy, Dale-Marie Dahlke); and numerous other justice system players across the state and beyond.

**We are honored to work with you to
*advance social justice through research,
advocacy, education, innovation, and public
engagement.***

Center for Social Justice Initiatives

Thanks to you, the CSJ has grown tremendously in the past year. In addition to our critical social justice programming, we are grateful to be able to provide, for the first time, the following in-house pro bono initiatives:

Sealing and Expungement Initiative: The CSJ has partnered with local nonprofits, community members, grassroots organizers and cannabis-industry players to launch an ongoing sealing and expungement racial and economic justice initiative intended to address the harms caused to people of color from the war on drugs. On September 30, 2020, and April 29, 2021, we hosted Know Your Rights events for the public and provided pro bono assistance to those who wanted legal help. At our spring event, every participant was able to receive assistance, including obtaining a copy of their CORI report, one-on-one consultation with an attorney, preparation of and help filing Petitions to Seal and/or Expunge, and brief legal advice. Our legal volunteers were trained by recent Adams Award winner and Access to Justice Fellow Crispin Birnbaum. This virtual event proved to be incredibly complex and ultimately was very successful. We could not have done it without the assistance of our community partners, members of the private bar, law students, and volunteers from Mass Mutual, along with our event sponsors (listed below).

Virtual Court User Experience Survey/Observation Project: A cutting-edge observation/research-based project in which the CSJ and Suffolk University Professor Benjamin Golden worked with student volunteers over winter break and spring term to understand the challenges and successes of virtual Zoom court from a self-represented litigant perspective. Volunteers observed virtual court sessions, recorded data, interviewed litigants, and contributed to a report being drafted by the Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice that will attempt to change policy and practice by judges and magistrates across the state.

Last year, CSJ volunteers completed

more than 3,605 hours!!!

This equates to almost \$750,000 in free legal services provided.

Consumer Debt Initiative (CDI): Over 50% of people in Hampden County neighborhoods of color have a debt in collection, and Springfield has the highest volume of debt cases across the state in our courts. In addition, the outcome of a debt collection proceeding has a significant impact on a person's ability to get loans, rent an apartment, and provide for their family. The CDI, funded by the MassMutual Foundation as part of its Live Mutual Project, is the CSJ's busiest program in which volunteers assist defendants facing wrongful credit card collection actions in virtual Small Claims Zoom sessions at the Springfield District Court every Friday.

CDI volunteers fight for justice against the powerhouse debt collection industry while helping clients understand their legal rights and connecting them to financial literacy and other holistic resources. Among other things, volunteers attend court, conduct client intakes, negotiate settlements, seek dismissals based on economic hardship of the defendants and even go to "trial" in a small claims hearing when needed.

This initiative has served an impressive 223 defendants since the courts reopened virtually in late September 2020 (seven months' time).

The Cost of Gun Violence in Springfield: this project examines the cost of gun violence in our city in collaboration with a local activist group, Greater Springfield Nonviolence. Our research will generate a proposal to the city council and mayor asking for changes in the allocation of anti-violence funds.

Racial Justice Sentencing Project(s): the CSJ has joined in partnership with both CPCS and several private Children and Family Law attorneys to explore the issue of racially disparate sentencing outcomes and court involvement for people of color in our community. These projects are largely data-driven and research-based, and also involve drafting a forthcoming report of findings and recommendations for change.

Addressing Racism as a Social Determinant of Health through Restorative Racial Healing Dialogue:

the CSJ was awarded a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging grant by Health New England to pilot a two-part program, launching this summer, designed to (1) educate the WNEU community about the connection between racism and health disparities, as well as the structural barriers to equity that exist across society; and (2) facilitate racial healing and relationship-building between and among our institution and the local community through restorative justice healing circle conversations.

Independent Pro Bono Project: students are always welcome to pursue pro bono projects independently with the CSJ. In the past year, we hosted several students researching pipeline initiative best practices, as well as diversity, equity and inclusion projects.

Social Media and Website Volunteers: we are lucky to have several marketing and communications volunteers throughout the year who help to promote the CSJ's important work through our new website and social media accounts. If you haven't yet, **make sure to like and follow the CSJ on twitter, Instagram and Facebook!**



Pro Bono Honor Roll

Fulfilling the mission of the CSJ would not be possible without our pro-bono volunteers. Law students, undergrad students, faculty members, MassMutual employees, and members of the local bar, as well as our program partners and sponsors have made significant contributions to our work and allowed us to leverage the resources of our community.

We thank the following volunteers for their time this year:

Consumer Debt Initiative (CDI)

WNEU Law Students

Adhikayan Thilakan
Alexis Johnson
Andrew Lavender
Anthony Paturso
Areaona Roberson
Bo Sjoberg
Catherine Richardson
Catherine Matthews
Daniela Leon
David Bustamante
Harvey Pullen
Michael McAndrews
Milagros Fonesca
Rafael Irizarry-Fields
Rickie Rizos
Ryan Pudik
Shauna Post
Stephanie Linares
Symone Trout
Tassine Sahbani
Tea Wilmot
Tom Kosakowski
William Bigsby

WNE Faculty

Jennifer Taub
Justin Dion

Mass Mutual Employees

Dorothy Varon
Joanna Bradway
Melissa Fennell
Michael O'Connor
Sucharita Varanasi
Susan Senecal

Community Members

Daiana Griffith

Legal Assistance

Adam Deustch
Anita Conte
Alexa Rosenbloom
Christa Douaihy
Elizabeth Miller
Joseph Schneiderman
Meredith Palmer
Matt Brooks



**223 clients
served since
October!**

We've saved consumers **\$78,940**
with another **\$65,200** pending in hardship dismissals!

Last year, the CSJ had 225 TOTAL VOLUNTEERS!

*194 of whom are unique,
as a number of volunteers generously contributed their time to
more than one initiative.*

Virtual Court User Experience Survey/Observation Project

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Alexis Johnson | Hailey Conger |
| Amanda Waife | Jessica Callahan |
| Anthony Paturso | Jessica Ugbo |
| Areaona Roberson | Justin Aljoe |
| Benjamin Golden (Suffolk) | Kathryne Young (UMASS) |
| Brendan McCarthy | Melanie Rush (MA Appleseed) |
| Bonnie Mannix | Michael Pabon |
| Bo Sjoberg | Steven Tilley |
| Caitrin Kiley | Tenneille McFarlane |
| Carley Podlasek | |
| Deborah Silva (MA Appleseed) | |

The Cost of Gun Violence in Springfield

Chelsea Contrada
Samantha Alacci

Racial Justice Sentencing Project

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Andrew Lavender | Leila Counihan |
| Eric Tims | Michael Pabon |
| Igor Bykov | Nathan Bench |

Racial Disparity in Care & Protection Cases

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Adam Schwartz (Voya) | Joy Piper |
| Kally Walsh | Sara Sam-Njogu |

Covid-19 Rapid Response Projects

Adam Leary
Ashley Thorpe
Caitrin Kiley
Prof. Harris Freeman
Kiki Oyegoke-Olafimihan

Prof. Martha McCluskey (Buffalo)
Maureen Carroll Dennis
Michael McAndrew
Prof. Rene Reich-Graefe

Covid Relief Coalition – PPA Cares Act Project

Alison Miller
Al Kingan
Anne Blanchard
Britaney Guzman-Bailey
Bruce Tannahill
Kathryn Wakefield
Cheyanne Clark
Christopher Markowski

Daniella Leon
David Allan
Debra Ashely
Jaime Genua
Marie Fletcher
Michele Collins
Robert Statchen
Robin Fasoli
Thomas Barrett

Social Media and Website Volunteers

Ashley Rivera
Kevin Hassett

Jason Ortiz

Independent Pro Bono Projects/Other

Alex Cerbo
Eric Tims

Tiffany Addo
Ryan Wight



Got the bug? Log on to [Signup Genius](#) today to join us!



National Expungement Week Virtual Event 2020

Partners/Funders

National Expungement Week
RISE Amherst
INSA
Green Meadows Farm

Legal Volunteers

Tim Noonan
Jackie Lee-Washington
Nadine Mazard
Blake Mensing
Nicholas Gomes

Back End Logistics

Hope Marion

Front of the House

Karima Rizk
Julia Agron
Noni Goldman

Legal Panelists

Becky Michaels, ADA
Cynthia Von Flatern, ADA
Kate Murdock, CPCS

Legal Volunteer Training

Bulkley Richardson:
- Judge John Greaney
- Stephen Holstrom

Legal Pro Bono Coordination

HCBA Legal Clinic
Center for Social Justice

Coalition Members

Julie Steiner
Lara Gonzalez
James Jasper
Patrick Elliot
Steve Goldman
Sally Johnson Van Wright
Steve Reilly
Ben Sussman
Catherine Richardson
Patrick Gaynor
Andrea Davis
Areaona Roberson
Terence Britton
Adhikayan Thilakan
Igor Bykov
Tom Kosakowski
Ian Sullivan

18 Legal/CORI Clinic
Participants
& 75 attendees!

Massachusetts Virtual Sealing & Expungement 2021

Partners/Funders

AISS
Beta Sigma Boule
Boston Bud Factory
Emerald River
Four Trees
Green Meadows
Green Thumb
The Hub Craft
MRCC
RISE Amherst

Legal Volunteers

Amanda Cooper
Blake Mensing
Christine Tetreault
Jacobo Roque
Kathleen Jackson
Kendall McPherson
Maurice Powe
Pam Sinofsky
Sanford Lewis
Tyler Ingraham

Back-End Logistics Team

Julissa Colon
Keshini Soborun
Nathan Bench
CSJ

Front of the House

Julia Agron
Noni Goldman

Legal Attorney Support

Crispin Birnbaum
Nina Harrison, CLA

Legal Volunteer Training

Crispin Birnbaum

Lead Interpreter

Barbara Considine

Legal Panelists

Becky Michaels, ADA
Cynthia Von Flatern, ADA
Nina Harrison, CLA

MassHire Holyoke/CORI Events

Armando Olivares
David Serrano
Katherine Ortiz
Kevin Lamson
Kevin Klaus
Melanie Drewnowski
Melinda Fitzsimmons
Mona Kirschenman
Ramona Reno-Rivera
Zenaida Smiley



CSJ Programs & Events

We have hosted and supported a number of well-attended events recently, including:

- Gervino-Ward LGBTQ+ Speaker Series *Evan Wolfson: founder of Freedom to Marry—the successful campaign for marriage equality in the United States*
- *The Color of Life in a Time of Crisis: Thinking Through Racial Disparities During COVID-19*
- *From the Courthouse to the Streets: Lawyering in the Time of Black Lives Matter*
- *Big Dirty Money: The Shocking Injustice and Unseen Cost of White Collar Crime with Professor Jennifer Taub*
- *Lessons from the Pleasure and Power of Black Music in the age of Hip Hop*
- Clason Speaker Series Lecture, Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia: *Banned: Immigration Enforcement in the Time of Trump*
- A conversation with Black Panther Party Chairman Elaine Brown
- Dr. Vicki Vernon Lott and Greater Springfield Nonviolence, *The Legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- *Pathway to Judgeship*
- *Intersection of Law and Occupational Therapy: Disability Rights*
- CSJ movie nights: *Just Mercy* and *Judas and the Black Messiah*

We provided the following trainings:

- CDI Basics and Advanced Level Trainings
- Massachusetts Expungement and Sealing Trainings
- National Lawyers Guild Legal Observer Training

The Expungement/Sealing legal training led by Adam Awards winning attorney Crispin Birnbaum was attended by more than 80 people!!

CSJ Awards & Special Recognition



This year's highly coveted and anticipated CSJ Awards go to:

- Debtor's Champions (tie): **Miguel Villalba**
Rafael Irizarry-Fields
- Extern Extraordinaire: **Nathan Bench**
- Founder's Keeper (creator of the CSJ!): **Dean Sudha Setty**
- Legal Eagle Observer (Court Watch): **Jessica Callahan**
- Patience and Persistence: **Susan Senecal** (MassMutual)
- Seal 'em & Peel 'em: **Noni Goldman**
- Supportive Staffer: **Anthony Orlando**
- That's Professor to You: **Dr. Bridgette Baldwin**
- Rising Star Award: **Amanda Cooper**
- Pinch Hitter: **Tenneille McFarlane**

Mass Mutual

None of our success would be possible without the funding and pro-bono volunteer efforts by our primary supporter, MassMutual. In addition to providing critical financial backing, many Mass Mutual employees make the time to join the CSJ in its mission to impact the community volunteering in many of our programs, initiatives and trainings! We thank the following employees who joined us this year:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Abigail Dejnak | Joanna Bradway |
| Adam Schwartz | John O'Neil |
| Alison Miller | Joseph Morledge |
| Alison Weiss | Julie Shields |
| Alison Wynn | Kamala Brunnett |
| Alyssa O'Connor | Kerianne Fortin |
| Amanda Bannikov | Kylie Demears |
| Al Kingan | Bruce Tannahill |
| Barbara Hough | Laura Lally |
| Ellen Rawson | Tonya Bradford |
| Bernadette Harrigan | Leslie Langford |
| Catherine Baatz | Lori King |
| Cathleen Bradley | Martha Miller |
| Christina Brodeur | Melissa Fennell |
| Christine Juhasz | Michael O'Connor |
| Christopher Markowski | Michelle Faucher |
| Dawn Benoit | Nancy Marafioti |
| Deborah Nebel | Pamela Harnois |
| Debra Ashley | Pamela Sinofsky |
| Dennis Stempel | Patrice Sabach |
| Dianne Rizzo | Patrick Creegan |
| Dmitry Polonskiy | Rachelle Beaulieu |
| Dorothy Varon | Robin Fasoli |
| Edwin Kerr | Sucharita Varanasi |
| Elizabeth Dillon | Susan Senecal |
| Jennifer Lewis | Susana Marques |
| Joan Nemirow Benn | |

CSJ Staff, Interns, Externs, Fellows, Independent Contractors (IC), Administrative Assistants & Advisors

We are so grateful to our amazing CSJ team, without whom none of this important work would be possible:

- Ariel R. Clemmer, Director
- Jessica L. Marcellino, Staff Attorney
- Keshini Soborun, IC/Legal Fellow
- Nate Bench, Spring 2021 Extern and soon to be IC

- Dean Sudha Setty
- Harris Freeman, CSJ Faculty Advisor
- Lauren Carasik, CSJ Faculty Advisor

- Aubrey Foy, Administrative Assistant
- Dale Marie Dahlke, Law School Operations Officer
- Marie Fletcher, Clinical Programs Administrator



Funders/Sponsors/Donors

Without our funders, sponsors and donors, we could not provide nearly the level of impact on our community. Thank you so much:

MassMutual Law Department's Pro Bono Committee

MassMutual Foundation

Health New England

Woman's Fund of Western Massachusetts

MAIA Organics

LSAC

and our many generous donors for all your support!

 **MassMutual**

 **MassMutual**
Foundation



Health New England



Law School
Admission Council

Thank You!

