

Still
fighting
the
good
fight.

MISSISSIPPI
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE

WHEN RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE SEEMS FRAGILE, WHEN GROUND GAINED SEEMS IN DANGER OF BEING LOST, WHEN IT SEEMS PROGRESS HAS BEEN THWARTED, THE MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE (MCJ) IS THERE TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT.

MCJ IS MORE ACTIVE AND RELEVANT TODAY THAN EVER BEFORE, PROVIDING LEADERSHIP AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF POLICY MAKING AND OFFERING HANDS-ON HELP AND HOPE FOR THE DISENFRANCHISED.

YEAR IN AND YEAR OUT, MCJ BRINGS THE DETERMINATION AND RESOURCES TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE. AND IN A TIME WHEN SO MANY NORMS SEEM UPENDED, MCJ BRINGS EXTRA STRENGTH, NOT ONLY TO MOVE FORWARD, BUT ALSO TO PROTECT HARD-WON GAINS THAT MUST NOT BE LOST. NEW CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD, BUT WITH THE SUPPORT OF KEY PEOPLE, MCJ IS READY TO FACE THEM.

IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, ONE THING *IS* CERTAIN.

THE MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE IS HERE, FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT.



“More than ever, our state is hurting. Our nation is hurting. Racial and economic tensions have grown to new heights. Where we are right now in our state and nation is not healthy. The work of MCJ is more important than ever. We must continue to make bold moves against injustice for all people.”

LA’VERNE EDNEY
Shareholder, Baker, Donelson,
Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC
Board of Directors Chair,
Mississippi Center for Justice

“Sometimes our work is sweeping—a discriminatory law is overturned and tens of thousands of people are served in the course of that single, decisive action. Sometimes justice is served in small victories, a series of individual cases that reveal patterns and build to something larger over time. Whether it begins at the highest level or with one individual in distress, the fight is always about lifting up situations and lifting up people.”

REILLY MORSE
President and CEO,
Mississippi Center for Justice

RAMPING UP FOR THE LONG TERM FIGHT

The Impact Litigation Initiative

In 2017, the Mississippi Center for Justice launched a major impact litigation initiative in honor of distinguished former board member and supporter, the late George Riley.

The initiative will allow MCJ to file and pursue landmark cases to advance racial and economic justice, the outcomes of which have the potential to change lives in Mississippi and beyond. One of the first projects handled through the initiative has been defending on appeal the injunction against Mississippi House Bill 1523, a law that would allow discrimination against LGBT citizens based upon a specific set of religious beliefs.

Joining MCJ through the initiative is long-time Mississippi civil rights attorney and MCJ co-founder Robert McDuff.

"Given the troubling signs from the government in Washington and from the state government in Jackson, it is vital that we have the resources to go to court to challenge unconstitutional actions that promote discrimination and threaten poor people," McDuff says. "This initiative adds valuable resources to that effort at a crucial time in our history."



“ Although MCJ has always worked to improve racial and economic justice in Mississippi, our focus has mostly been on our four campaign areas of housing, education, healthcare, and consumer matters, plus disaster recovery. With the addition of an impact litigation initiative, we have the luxury of expanding our focus beyond those areas to address a variety of issues that affect people of color and low-income families in Mississippi. Having a superb civil rights attorney leading this initiative will attract widespread pro bono support, enabling us to effect systemic change in our state. ” BETH ORLANSKY, ADVOCACY DIRECTOR, MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE

THE GEORGE RILEY IMPACT LITIGATION FELLOWSHIP

The initiative was made possible by the George Riley Impact Litigation Fellowship, a 10-year program at MCJ created with generous support from Apple and Emerson Collective. Longtime MCJ supporters David and Barbara Lipman also provided supplemental support for this critical project.

George Riley practiced law with the international firm of O'Melveny and Myers and represented a distinguished list of clients, including Steve Jobs and Apple. His lifelong commitment to public interest included an extraordinary *pro bono* caseload, much of it with MCJ. Riley served on the MCJ Board of Directors from 2009 until his death in 2016.



FIGHTING FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

In a time when the government is tightening down on programs that help working poor families and children, MCJ is helping Mississippians who qualify for much-needed benefits get the help they need.

Federal funding administered through the Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS) provides subsidies that help low-income, working parents afford daycare, but recent changes in the application process have made applying for the subsidies difficult. Many Mississippi parents have lost their

childcare benefits over minor paperwork issues. Without affordable childcare, it is impossible for these parents to work or attend school, the very pursuits that would enable them to build better lives for themselves and their children.

The Mississippi Center for Justice is helping parents navigate the system and handling appeals to DHS for those who have lost their eligibility. **With MCJ's help, these parents can return to work or school and continue moving their families toward a more secure future.**

“MCJ BELIEVES IN ME AND I KNOW I’M NOT ALONE.”

A hard-working, single mother of three, Megan Jones was proud when she landed a good job as an assembly line worker with Viking Range in Greenwood, and even prouder when she was promoted to quality control. With her 11-year-old twin daughters enrolled in school and her three-year-old son on the roster at a trusted daycare center, Jones was well on the way to providing a better life for her young family.

When changes in the application process for her childcare subsidy through the Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS) required Jones to submit a new application, she was quick to comply. DHS responded by citing errors in the paperwork; rather than asking Jones to correct them, the agency denied Jones her childcare subsidy.

“Everyone in my family works—my mother, my father, all of my friends and relatives. Without daycare, I have no back-up to take care of my son,” Jones says. “I was looking at not being able to work. Even when the director of the childcare center let me continue to pay the same out-of-pocket cost, I had to take off work and pay for gas to go to

Jackson, three hours away, to appeal the decision. It was very confusing and very, very stressful. And all I wanted to do was work and take care of my children.”

Debbie Ellis, the executive director of the Susie M. Brooks Child Care Center where Jones’ son was enrolled, is all too familiar with Jones’ situation; of the 21 families her daycare center serves, nine have lost their benefits due to paperwork issues with DHS.

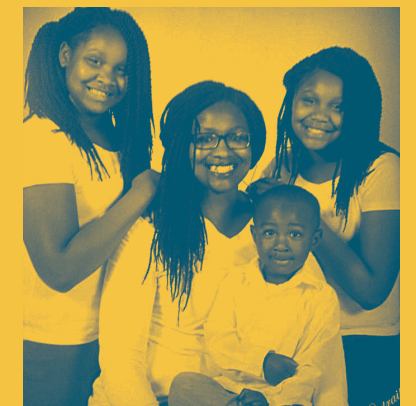
“The lives of these low-income, single parents—who actually *give up benefits* in Mississippi in order to work or go to school—are suddenly and unexpectedly thrown into chaos and often back into extreme poverty by these draconian policies,” Ellis says. “Single parents receiving assistance are ill-equipped to question or find the courage to question such authority.”

Ellis introduced Megan Jones and her other clients to Beth Orlansky of the Mississippi Center for Justice, who is helping the parents appeal their decisions with DHS.

“Now, Beth and MCJ are there, right beside me the whole way,”

Jones says. “They believe in me and I know I’m not alone. It’s a great feeling to have somebody on your side.”

“These parents now have legal representation from Beth, who demonstrates a passion for removing these barriers and who sees the value in their lives,” Ellis says. “If the decision from the hearings is positive, hundreds, if not thousands, of low-income parents will be allowed to continue on their chosen path of dignity through self-reliance. *This* is the work of the Mississippi Center for Justice. I don’t know what we would do without them.”



Megan Jones and her children, 11-year-old twins Kayla and Kaytlin and three-year-old Kaydence



Beth Orlansky of the Mississippi Center for Justice is helping working parents appeal decisions that led to the loss of their childcare subsidies.

FIGHTING FOR A FRESH START

Everyone makes mistakes, some of them serious.

For Mississippians once convicted of crimes, their past records can become a permanent barrier to obtaining employment, housing, and benefits, no matter how hard they've worked to make better choices.

The state of Mississippi allows those who have demonstrated they've paid the penalties and put their pasts behind them to ask a court to clear their previous records, but the process for doing so is complex. **Without legal representation, those previous mistakes continue to be a present-day hindrance to a better, more productive life.**

MCJ partnered with Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps to help eligible Mississippians navigate the expungement process. While AmeriCorps discontinued the program in August 2017, MCJ has continued the work, seeing the value in helping these Mississippians lead productive lives.

IN 2017, MCJ AND EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS AMERICORPS:

Received 333

requests for assistance

Opened 141

cases

Filed 51

Expungement Petitions

Received 31

Expungement Orders

Helped 12

clients gain or maintain employment, receive promotions, get into school, or become eligible for a state professional license

“ Having a criminal record does not make a person a monster who should be punished for the remainder of his or her life. If we truly believe in justice, we have to give people a chance once they've paid their debts to society. I enjoy helping people achieve that feeling of relief and empowerment when they realize that their past can no longer weigh them down. I had a client who had been arrested and convicted as a minor more than 25 years ago for a non-violent felony offense. When his petition was granted, **he shed a tear in open court and said, 'I'm finally free.'** **”**

KIARA A. TAITE, ATTORNEY, MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE



“MY LIFE HAS STARTED OVER.”

“It was the most embarrassing moment of my life,” James Jordan says.

A resident of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, Jordan was working as a contract welder at a plant in Washington, D.C., that served the White House when five Capitol policeman arrived and escorted him off of the job site as his shocked co-workers looked on.

Jordan had been working under a temporary security clearance, but when his employer ran a background check, a years-old charge of drug possession showed up on his record. Jordan was dismissed from his job, despite having paid the penalty for his crime, lived a clean life ever since, and been an exemplary worker. His single mistake continued to haunt Jordan, preventing him from landing jobs for which he was qualified.

“I was trying to get bigger and better paying jobs, but I couldn't get a security clearance. I'd apply and people would be interested in my skills, but as soon as they found out about my record, it was, 'We're sorry.' I started thinking about going back to school, but with my record, I couldn't qualify for student loans. I was stuck.”

Then Jordan heard about the Mississippi Center for Justice's expungement program. **Just one month after contacting MCJ, his criminal record was expunged.** Today, Jordan has the security clearance he needed to land a well-paying job as a welder at V.C. Summer, a nuclear power plant in Virginia.

“I feel like my life has started over,” Jordan says. “That mistake is all in the past. Now there's nothing keeping me from doing what I want to do.”

FIGHTING FOR DISASTER RELIEF

On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico while performing work for BP oil company. **The explosion killed 11 people, triggered the largest marine oil spill in history, and crippled the economy of the Gulf Coast states.**

The Mississippi Center for Justice began serving clients damaged by the BP oil spill in December of

2010. MCJ’s clients typically had losses too small to attract the attention of private attorneys, but the claims process was just as complex for these individual claimants as it was for major businesses that could afford a team of lawyers.

In 2017, after 10 years of fighting for justice, the final economic damages claim was paid.

JUSTICE IN THE WAKE OF DISASTER

Between 2010 and 2017, MCJ served **2,000 oil spill-related clients**. **MCJ** filed **1,150 claims**, including **950 economic claims** for lost wages, property damages, and subsistence fishing, and **200 medical claims**. The total amount awarded to MCJ clients to date is more than **\$2 million**. **MCJ** designed and administered a **four-state consortium** of legal service and social non-profits in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida. The consortium served more than **16,000 clients** who received total compensation of **\$18 million**.

In the spring of 2010, 24-year-old Chris Payet’s future had never looked brighter. A recent graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Payet had landed a well-paying job as a quality control lab technician with PSL North America LLC, a Bay St. Louis-based company that manufactured steel pipe used in oil drilling. Then the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico.

“I CAME CLOSE TO GIVING UP HOPE, BUT MCJ WAS THERE TO ENCOURAGE ME.”

One month later, Payet was laid off from his job, a casualty of the moratorium on oil drilling. He was out of work for three months, and when he did land another job, it paid much less than his previous position. Payet filed a claim against BP for lost wages, and waited. And waited.

“I never heard a word back and I wasn’t getting anywhere with it,” Payet says. “Then I went to the Mississippi Center for Justice.”

MCJ monitored Payet’s claim as it moved through the complicated BP system, ensuring his claim didn’t get lost in the maze of paperwork and bureaucracy. On July 25, 2017—more than seven years after the oil spill—Chris Payet received a check for \$25,425. **Payet’s was the final of 950 economic damages claims handled by MCJ as a result of the oil spill.**

Still working toward a successful future despite the setbacks he’s weathered, Payet used the settlement money to refinance his house, replacing his 30-year mortgage with a 15-year mortgage.

“I came close to giving up hope because so much time passed, but MCJ was there to encourage me to stick with it,” Payet says. “They were great people to work with, and all for no charge. In the end, I felt relieved. It was nice to have some closure and to know this effort to make things right wasn’t a waste of my time or of MCJ’s time.”

MCJ Housing Director John Jopling (right) presents Chris Payet with a settlement check for his losses due to the BP oil spill. Payet’s case was the final economic damages case MCJ settled related to the oil spill.



A COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The Sunflower County United
for Children Implementation Project



Based out of the MCJ Delta office in Indianola, the Sunflower County United for Children (SCUC) Implementation Project is a partnership including the school district, banking institutions, faith-based groups, local governments, advocacy organizations, community development and social service agencies, and the community at large. All of these entities are working together with MCJ to help the children and families of Sunflower County thrive.

SCUC

- ✓ Works with the school district to provide literacy activities for third graders
- ✓ Provides educational and workforce opportunities for young adults
- ✓ Increases access to asset building, financial literacy, and financial coaching
- ✓ Increases parental participation in school and community activities
- ✓ Provides recipes for healthy food options
- ✓ Offers free physical fitness and medical screenings
- ✓ Promotes racial awareness, equity, healing, and cultural enrichment



DELTA STATE

HIGHLIGHTS

in Healthcare,
Education,
Consumer
Protection,
and Housing

The Mississippi Center for Justice established an **Advisory Council** to explore areas of concern for people living with HIV and develop a strategy to address those issues.

The medical-legal partnership between the Mississippi Center for Justice, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, the Mississippi State Department of Health, and the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation provided free civil legal services **to 28 clients living with HIV.**

In partnership with the Southern AIDS Coalition, MCJ convened its **6th Annual Mississippi AIDS Justice Project** for a discussion about the legal rights of Mississippians living with HIV and addressing those concerns through policy advocacy and education.

The Mississippi Center for Justice conducted **more than 24 outreach events** educating Mississippians on HIV stigma and discrimination.



(left) Alecia Reed Owens, MCJ staff attorney, with (right) Linda Dixon Rigsby, MCJ health law director

Healthcare



“As a person living with HIV, this council gives me a voice.”

“In 2005, I was diagnosed with HIV. I didn’t know much about the virus, and due to my lack of treatment, in 2006 I was diagnosed with AIDS.

“Joining the Advisory Council with the Mississippi Center for Justice has been such a great experience for me. As a person living with HIV, this council gives me a voice. It means a lot to me to know that I’m not only being heard, but that I have the backing of an organization that will put my ideas and thoughts, and the ideas of other council members, into action. Serving on the advisory council has helped me to get familiar with the laws and policy work and take that information back to my community of people living with HIV, as well as the black community.

“‘If you know something, say something.’ That is what this council has instilled in me. I’m proud to be a part of it along with all the other brave men and women standing up for not only themselves, but also for others who feel they don’t have a voice.”

CEDRIC STURDEVANT, MCJ AIDS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER



Common Standards to Solve a Common Problem

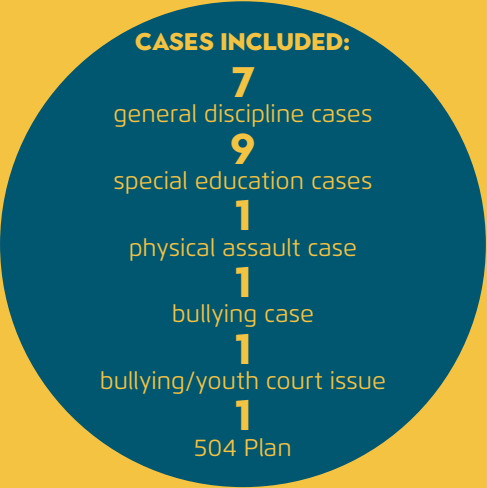
After representing more than 500 students and parents in hearings across the state, MCJ made a commitment to improve school disciplinary procedures in Mississippi. To build consensus, **MCJ assessed the student handbooks of every school district in the state and drafted a uniform school due process policy**, which was sent to all superintendents and school boards. While MCJ’s efforts were underway, the Mississippi Legislature passed a law containing many of the protections MCJ recommended.

Thanks to MCJ’s pressure to establish uniform standards, every Mississippi public school student facing suspension or expulsion, regardless of which school district he or she lives in, will now have a hearing that includes a guarantee of basic fairness.

Education

Lack of access to a quality education is far too common for Mississippi’s children, particularly for children in communities of color and students with disabilities. Access requires students to remain in the classroom for instruction, but access is too often interrupted by unjust and discriminatory disciplinary actions or by failure to accommodate students with disabilities or special educational needs.

The Mississippi Center for Justice received **31 calls from concerned parents** with issues in school districts in **13 Mississippi counties**. MCJ provided services in 20 cases.



The Education Division identified school districts that fail to provide transportation to alternative school students and is working with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to remedy this situation.

DOUBLE THE FIGHT, DOUBLE THE VICTORY

Born two months prematurely, twins Drew and Gage spent the first several weeks of their lives in a neonatal intensive care unit struggling to survive. When the fragile babies were finally released, their homecoming was not a happy one. At three and a half months old, the boys were put into emergency foster care following horrific abuse. Drew’s tiny body had suffered 19 broken bones; Gage’s shattered body bore 21.

“They came to me in tiny little body casts,” their foster mother, Becky Watkins, recalls.

Becky and her husband, Steve, bonded with the tiny, broken boys, legally adopting Drew and Gage two years later. Becky and Steve knew that Drew and Gage had developmental delays and faced ongoing orthopedic problems as a result of the abuse they had suffered as infants. The list of challenges grew when the twins were diagnosed with autism. But the Watkins family’s biggest challenge wouldn’t come from Drew and Gage’s violent past, traumatic injuries, or even their autism. It would come from their public school district.

Initially, the school district supported the Watkins family, complying with accommodations specified in the boys’ Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and allowing them to use laptops provided by their parents and special educational software purchased by the school. With the help of these accommodations, Drew and Gage flourished in a mainstream classroom; by the fifth grade, both boys had been placed in the school’s gifted program.

But when Drew and Gage began sixth grade, the school district not only denied them their accommodations, but also questioned whether Drew and Gage were actually autistic. For months, the Watkins advocated for their sons, filing complaints and representing themselves at hearings despite having no legal background. The Watkins won repeated legal arguments, yet the school district continued to violate the boys’ IEPs again and again. As the months wore on, Drew and Gage floundered in school, losing the precious ground they’d worked so hard to gain. Then Becky Watkins contacted the Mississippi Center for Justice.

Over a five-year period, MCJ represented the Watkins family in multiple proceedings over special education eligibility, appropriate services and accommodations, and bullying issues. MCJ eventually filed a suit against the school district in chancery court, at which point the district relented and allowed Drew and Gage the accommodations for which the Watkins had fought so hard. The battle had begun when the boys were in sixth grade; Drew and Gage were now high school juniors.

“Once MCJ stepped in, we started getting what we needed,” Becky says. “I remember thinking, ‘There is a God in Heaven and finally we have somebody who cares. That’s when things started turning around for Drew and Gage. We knew they had disabilities, but we had always focused on their abilities and now we could do that again. Drew and Gage excelled their junior and senior years of high school. We attribute that to MCJ stepping in and standing with us.”

Drew and Gage earned their diplomas in 2017, but graduating from high school was only the beginning. Both received scholarships to Jones County Junior College.

“The Watkins case taught me that keeping children with special challenges in school and moving towards graduation demands an ongoing commitment far beyond what normal litigation requires,” says Jeremy Eisler, the MCJ attorney who handled the case. “As an advocate, it’s always gratifying to succeed on behalf of a client. It’s even more gratifying when that success helps your client succeed on his own behalf. I am so proud of Drew’s and Gage’s accomplishments, and so hopeful for their future.”

“We are living proof that with the right resources, a child can succeed,” Becky Watkins says. “We are forever grateful for what MCJ has done for our family. If ever there were two children that MCJ has made a difference for, they are Drew and Gage Watkins. I just wonder how many kids with the same potential are sitting in an institution somewhere because they didn’t get the resources they needed and they didn’t have the Mississippi Center for Justice.”



MCJ attorney Jeremy Eisler, pictured with the Watkins family’s case files

“One cannot work with families, in some cases for years, without them becoming part of your life. I’m honored that the Watkins have said they consider me part of their family. I know I consider them to be part of mine. Ultimately, it is only love that makes working for justice possible over the long term, and –if one is very lucky–love is the reward that working for justice sometimes brings.”

JEREMY EISLER



“We are forever grateful for what MCJ has done for our family. If ever there were two children that MCJ has made a difference for, they are Drew and Gage Watkins. I just wonder how many kids with the same potential are sitting in an institution somewhere because they didn’t get the resources they needed and they didn’t have the Mississippi Center for Justice.”

BECKY WATKINS

Education

Many low-income Mississippians working to better themselves by attending community college face setbacks in the form of housing issues, debt, and past criminal records. MCJ is the legal provider for the **Single Stop Program at Hinds County Community College**, a free program offering legal counseling, advice, and services that help overcome these obstacles.

MCJ's **"It's A Family Affair: Consumer Issues for the Entire Family"** conference provided the Metro Jackson community with information from local experts on children's savings accounts, college savings plans, household budgeting, strategies for retirement saving, and recognizing and avoiding scams targeting senior citizens.

Average Mississippians may feel they have no voice in Washington. MCJ represented Mississippians in the first National Consumer Lobby Day in Washington, D.C., **lobbying the offices of Senators Wicker and Cochran and Congressman Thompson** regarding the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the proposed payday lending rule and arbitration rule.

MCJ continued its foreclosure prevention work, providing legal services to **155 clients in danger of losing their homes** from January 2016-January 2017.

Putting the Justice in Justice Courts

Justice in Mississippi turns not only on high profile cases, but also on civil cases affecting low-income residents who find themselves in small claims court. Common issues involve landlord/tenant disagreements, loans in default, or unpaid medical bills. Judgments for eviction, repossession, and monetary judgments are entered every year against working poor defendants without legal representation who do not understand their rights. Compounding the problem, these decisions are rendered by justice court judges who are not required to have any formal legal education.

The dollar amounts at stake may be "small claims" under the law, but they have a tremendous impact on low-income Mississippians. An unjust judgment can result in an eviction, repossession, or wage garnishment. Low-income defendants who were already struggling may never recover.

The Mississippi Center for Justice conducted a two-month evaluation of justice courts in Rankin and Hinds Counties using volunteer law student interns. MCJ found that procedures and rulings varied widely based on the judge's legal education and whether or not the defendant was represented by an attorney. Judges handled basic questions of law differently and in some cases, delivered judgments that would clearly be overturned by an appellate court. These quick judgments do not serve the interests of justice, and are fundamentally unfair to Mississippians struggling with debt.



Charles O. Lee, MCJ consumer protection director

TO MAKE SURE JUSTICE IS SERVED IN JUSTICE COURT, MCJ:

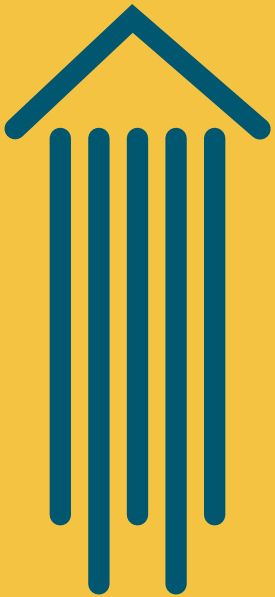
Developed a brochure for defendants outlining their legal rights in justice court civil actions

Is working with the Mississippi College School of Law to develop a clinic for law students that would allow them to represent litigants in justice court

Is developing training for justice court judges regarding issues of debt collection, as well as a bench book to guide them through the process.

“The passage of the Fair Housing Act was spurred by the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. As we approach the 50th anniversary of Dr. King's death, we continue to fight to ensure that access to housing in every corner of Mississippi shall not be impaired by one's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or familial status.”

JOHN JOPLING
BILOXI MANAGING ATTORNEY/
HOUSING LAW DIRECTOR,
MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE



Housing

The United States made a commitment some 50 years ago to prevent discrimination in the rental, sale, and financing of housing. Locally in Mississippi, however, there is no law or no agency dedicated to enforcing fair housing practices. As a result, public awareness of what constitutes housing discrimination is limited. Mississippians, especially those in rural areas, may not recognize fair housing violations that directly affect their ability to obtain decent, affordable housing.

In 2017, MCJ conducted educational and outreach activities in rural areas of the state, as well as continued to conduct fair housing enforcement testing and investigation statewide.

In 2017, the Housing Division conducted **fair housing education and outreach programs in 10 Mississippi Counties**, including:

- Chickasaw
- Clarke
- Harrison
- Humphreys
- Hinds
- Jasper
- Lafayette
- Marshall
- Panola
- Tishomingo

The Housing Division conducted **32 fair housing investigations in 14 cities**, including:

- Biloxi, 11
- Booneville, 1
- Canton, 1
- D'Iberville, 1
- Greenwood, 1
- Gulfport, 3
- Hattiesburg, 1
- Horn Lake, 1
- Indianola, 1
- Jackson, 3
- Pascagoula, 1
- Picayune, 1
- Ridgeland, 2
- Summit, 1
- Tupelo, 1
- Waveland, 2

Some of these investigations are still ongoing; it is expected that at least three of the cases will be referred to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for further action.

SOCIAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGN PARTNERS

We offer our deepest thanks to the many community organizations and advocacy groups who collaborate with us to strengthen our campaigns to advance racial and economic justice throughout Mississippi. We value every hour of support from each volunteer attorney, student, and staff member at the law firms, corporate legal departments, law schools, colleges, and universities who partner with us. Progress would not be possible without you.

STATE AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

ACLU of Mississippi
Back Bay Mission
BancorpSouth
BankPlus
Capital Area Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
Children’s Defense Fund, Southern Regional Office
Church of Christ (Holiness)
City of Canton
City of Jackson
Coalition for a Prosperous Mississippi
Coastal Family Health Center
Coastal Women for Change
CredAbility
Disability Rights Mississippi
East Biloxi Community Collaborative
Grace House
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
Gulf Coast Community Design Studio
Gulf Regional Planning Commission
Gulf Restoration Network
Habitat for Humanity–Metro Jackson
Hope Community Development Agency
Hope Enterprise Corporation
Hope Policy Institute
Indianola Promise Community Youth Council
Jackson Medical Mall Foundation
Nollie Jenkins Family Center
Liberty Bank and Trust Company
Living Independence for Everyone
Magnolia Bar Association
Mercy Housing and Human Development
Mississippi Access to Justice Commission
Mississippi Association for Justice
The Mississippi Bar
Mississippi Center for Legal Services
Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities
Mississippi Coalition for the Prevention of Schoolhouse to Jailhouse
Mississippi Coalition of Vietnamese Fisherfolk and Families
Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service
Mississippi Community Financial Access Coalition
Mississippi Consumer Protection Division, Office of the Attorney General
Mississippi Credit Union Association

Mississippi Families as Allies for Children’s Mental Health
Mississippi Health Advocacy Program
Mississippi Home Corporation
Mississippi Housing Partnership
Mississippi Human Services Coalition
Mississippi Immigrants’ Rights Alliance
Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative
Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center
Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference
Mississippi State Department of Health
Mississippi United to End Homelessness
My Brother’s Keeper
Moore Community House
NAACP, Biloxi Branch
NAACP, Gulfport Branch
NAACP, Mississippi State Conference
North Florida Center for Equal Justice
North Gulfport Civic Club
North Gulfport Community Land Trust
North Mississippi Rural Legal Services
Operation Shoestring
Parents for Public Schools—Jackson
Public Policy Center of Mississippi
Racial Equity Community of Practice
Rethink MS
Rural LISC
Self-Help
Soria City Civic Organization
Southern Echo
Southern HIV/AIDS Strategy Initiative
Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District
Southern Poverty Law Center
Steps Coalition
Sunflower County Parents and Students Organization
Teach for America
Turkey Creek Community Initiative
University of Mississippi Medical Center
Voice of Calvary Ministries
We 2gether Creating Change
West Tennessee Legal Services
William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation
Women’s Foundation of Mississippi

NATIONAL PARTNERS

AFL-CIO
American Bar Association Center for Pro Bono
Center for Law and Social Policy
Center for Legal Aid Education/Shriver Center
Center for Responsible Lending
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Community Catalyst
Consumer Federation of America
Corporation for National and Community Service
Empire Justice Center
Equal Justice Works
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
Georgetown Center for Children and Families
Housing Works
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Money Management International
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Consumer Law Center
National Health Law Program
National Legal Aid & Defender Association
National Low Income Housing Coalition
Oxfam America
Opportunity Agenda
Oxfam America
Parents for Public Schools–National
Pro Bono Net
Southern AIDS Coalition

LAW FIRMS AND CORPORATE LEGAL DEPARTMENTS

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC
Ballard Spahr
Bradley Arant Bolt Cummings LLP
Butler Snow LLP
DLA Piper
Forman Watkins & Krutz PLLC
Malcolm Harrison Law Firm
Hogan Lovells LLP
Latham & Watkins LLP
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLP
Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP
Musgrove Smith Law
Nixon Peabody LLP

O’Melveny & Myers LLP
Patton Boggs LLP
Pigott & Johnson
Richard Law Firm
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP
Thomas Law Firm
Van Ness Feldman
Venable LLP
Tatum and Wade, PLLC

LAW SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Brooklyn Law School
Charlotte School of Law
Columbia University
Delta State University Center for Delta Culture and Learning
Duke University School of Law
Georgetown Law
Harvard Law School
Jackson State University
Millsaps College
Mississippi College School of Law
Mississippi Delta Community College
Mississippi State University
Mississippi State University Extension Service
Mississippi Valley State University
Northwestern University Law School
Rice University
The Ohio State University Kirwan Institute
Thurgood Marshall Law School
Tougaloo College Owens Health and Wellness Center
University of California, Irvine School of Law
University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law
University of Iowa
University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law
University of Mississippi School of Law
University of Southern Mississippi
University of Virginia School of Law
Vassar Law School
Vanderbilt Law School
Wake Forest University

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

\$100,000 AND UP

ACLU of Mississippi Foundation
Apple, Inc.
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
Mississippi Bar Foundation
New Venture Fund
George Riley
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
ViiV Healthcare Accelerate!
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

\$50,000 TO 99,999

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Elton John AIDS Foundation
Institute of International Education
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Barbara and David Lipman
Sunflower County Ministerial Alliance
Counseling Services, Inc.

\$25,000 TO 49,999

AIDS United Southern REACH Initiative
Phyllis and Reuben Anderson
Equal Justice Works
AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship Program
Food Research and Action Center
Dale Goodman and Leonard Genet
Hilda Mullen Foundation
Kazan McClain Partners’ Foundation
Nissan North America, Inc.
O’Melveny & Myers LLP
Perry, Murr, Teel & Koenenn
Women’s Foundation of Mississippi

\$10,000 TO 24,999

BankPlus
Dr. Edward Bergmark
Butler Snow LLP
Candace Carroll and Leonard Simon
Iola Galerston, LLP
Latham & Watkins LLP
Jack Londen
Paul S. Minor
Dick Molpus
James and Louisa Rudolph
Philanthropic Fund of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh
Sanderson Farms
Shadetree Partners, Inc
Mary Ann Stein
Lois Whitman
Anonymous

\$5,000 TO 9,999

John Arango
AT&T
The Bench Trail Fund
Martha Bergmark and Elliott Andalman
Bradley Arant Bolt Cummings Charitable Foundation
Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation, Harvard Law School
James B. Chanin
Alex Forger and Fern Schair
The Genet Family/Dade Paper Philanthropic Fund
The Hazel Fund
Dale and Kurt Hollinger
George P. Johnson
Mindy and Kenneth Karl
KJ Community Fund of The Denver Foundation
The Marjorie Kovler Fund/ Judy and Peter Kovler
MailChimp
Mike Moore Law Firm
Christina and Reilly Morse
Peter Oppenheimer
Beth and Steve Orlansky
Richard Parker
The Potomac School
United Way of the Capital Area, Inc.
University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law

\$2,500 TO 4,999

Atiba Adams
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
Andalman & Flynn, P.C.
Aresty Family Fund at Aspen Community Foundation
Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC
Mike Cockrell
James and Joel Cohen
The Collis Warner Foundation
Communications Workers of America
DLA Piper
Barbara and David Ferraro
Marc L. Fleischaker
Aviva Futorian
Monica Galloway
Tanya George and Norman Rosenberg
Janet and Luther Ott
Charitable Fund of the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson
Elizabeth Karan and Jonathan Hooks
Marian and Leonard Lansburgh
Judith and Elliott Lichtman
Marcie and Robert Musser
Advised Fund at Aspen Community Foundation
Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky, and Popeo, P.C.
The Mississippi Humanities Council
The Moriah Fund
My Brother’s Keeper, Inc.
Susan Schaffer and Michael P. Rogan
Steps Coalition
Pamela and Richard Strassberg
Venable LLP Foundation
Waltzer Wiygul & Garside Law Firm
Judith and Michael Wood

\$1,000 TO 2,499

AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust
AFL-CIO Union Community Fund
Bonnie Allen
Sarah Jane and Alex Alston
Nan Aron and Bernard Arons
Pamela and Fred L. Banks, Jr.
Debbie Bell and Neil White
Claudine and Mark Bloomfield
Jennifer and Walter H. Boone
Brown Family Charitable Fund of the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson
Stratton Bull
Phil Bullock
Carol Burnett and Jeremy Eisler
David Chambers and John Crane
Martin S. Checov
Cait T. Clarke
Rhonda C. Cooper
Elisabeth Curtz and Richard Coppola
Laurie Davis and Joseph Sellers
Monica de la Torre and Herbert Allen
Quinn Delaney and Wayne Jordan
Joe T. Dockins
Joanne Edgar
Kay Edgar and Robert Healy
Eversheds Sutherland LLP
Tracy and Scott Gilbert
David Gottlieb and Rita Sloan
Gordon D. Greenwood
John Heyman
Hill Country Project
Frances Ho and George Yu
Dr. Beverly Wade Hogan
Hope Enterprise Corporation
Susan and Alan Houseman
Tracey Hughes and David Stern
ICF Consulting Group, Inc.
Elizabeth Jenkins-Joffe
John C. Jopling
Gregg Kander
Katz Marshall & Banks, LLP

Mary E. Keegan and Gina G. Luke
Anastasia D. Kelly
Julia and Matthew Kepniss
Kim Koopersmith
Derry and Craig Koralek
Mary Lynn and Nick Kotz
LaMacchia Family Foundation
Arden Lang and Jim Lewis
Karen Lash and Martha Ertman
Charles Otis Lee
Phyllis Levine
Liberty Bank and Trust Company
Jeanne B. Lockett and C. B. Carroll
Hal Malchow
Matthews, Cutrer & Lindsay, P.A.
Robert B. McDuff
Ellen and Harold McElhinny
Suzannah D. McGowan
Nina McLemore and Donald I. Baker
Dr. Mabel Pittman
Middleton
The Miller Firm, LLC
MINACT, Inc.
Mississippi Human Services Agenda
Mississippi Methodist Rehabilitation Center
Sammy Moon and Jeffrey Karer
Ginnie and Luther Munford
Dr. Ann Myers and Dr. George Schimmel
The Nararo Foundation
Nixon Peabody LLP
Shirley and David Orlansky
Denise and Bob Owens
John N. Palmer
Lisa and Billy Percy
Phelps Dunbar, LLP
Barbara and Barry Powell
Wiley Charles Prewitt, Jr.
Sara and Bill Ray
John Relman
Judy and E. B. Robinson, Jr.
Lynn and Lawrence Ross
Iris Rothman and Shannon Ferguson
Louisa and Jimmy Rudolph
Mary Pat Ryan
Claire King Sargent
Amitai Schwartz

Mary Jo and Arthur Shartsis
Laura M. and Ronald Siena
Dr. Robert Smith
Southern Poverty Law Center
Sarah and Edward Spector
Alison Steiner and David Reynolds
Helen B. Stern
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP
Summoners Ensemble, Inc.
Treehouse Boutique
Olger C. Twyner, III
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union
Van Ness Feldman
Jo-Ann Wallace
Walmart
Allen Waxman
Julia Weaver and Robert Wiygul
Ellen Weiss
Mary Jane and Kjell Westerlund
Margaret and Auvergne Williams

\$500 TO 999

Amy and Michael Adelman
MaryLee Allen
Elizabeth A. Arledge
Juerg W. Baenziger
Susan D. Bennett
Anne and Daniel Bookin
Dr. Walter and Helen Boone
John S. Bounds
Dan Brown
Nancy Duff Campbell and Michael Trister
Lauren and Dustin Childers
Sarah Clark and Mark Iola
CLASP
Royce and Beau Cole
Kim Martens Cooper
Ingrid Creppell
Leah Curry-Rood and Larry Rood
Kathy and Sid Davis
Polly Dement and John Mayer
Marian Wright and Peter Edelman
La’Verne Edney
Meg Finn and David Michener
John Fleming

Susanne W. Galtney
Wendy Garrison and Richard Raspet
Gerald Blessey Law Firm
Pamela Gilbert
Thomas A. Gottschalk
Laura Guthrie
C. Paige Gutierrez and Gerald H. Blessey
Joel M. Hellman
International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers
Dr. Dan and Lydia Jones
Steven Kelban
Catherine Klipple
Lawrence B. and Claire K. Morse Fund
Jennifer Leuba and Victor Hou
Michael K. Lewis
Katharine and Richard Lorr
Abbe David Lowell
Kate Margolis
Mayo Mallette PLLC
Meredith McBurney
Menefee Dill Fund
Velma Parness
Joy Lambert Phillips
Julia Quincy
Amelie L. Ratliff
Michael Selmi
Andrew F. Sharpless
Sandeep Solanki
Susan Sommer and Stephen Warnke
Sara Waldstein and Philip Dorman
Judy Waxman and James D. Weill
Kris Wernstedt
Dr. Randal and Leanna Whitman
Judy and Josh Wiener
Kathryn Wiener
Dr. Hill and Millie Williams
Bonnie L. Wishne
Anonymous

\$250 TO 499

Judy and David Aaronson
Shirley and Jonathan Asher
Pauline Bassett and Alan Katz
Valerie Berlin
Rita and William Bruce
Lucia and James Case
Leonard L. Cavise
Tami and Travis Childers
David A. Cruickshank
Kellye K. Daniels
Zachary Dembo
Natilee Duning and Frank Sutherland
Daniel Farber
Nancy McElroy Folger
Kathy and Ted Gest
Jill S. Goodman and Arthur N. Malkin
Philip G. Hampton, II
Toba and Tony Hausner
Bruce H. Iglauer
Joseph Saveri Law Firm, Inc.
Victor A. Kovner
Celinda C. Lake
Martha Olson Land
Joan H. Lefkow
Mary P. Mackenzie
Diane Martin and Wardell Townsend, Jr.
Laurie and Mike Mehalic
Henry Michel
William L. Oberdorfer
Queene and Willie Paige
Linda Perle and Neil Levy
Glenn W. Rawdon
Danny Reed
Dr. Vonda Reeves
Maryellen and John Riley
Bruce Robbins
Betsy and Joe Samuels
Marta-Ann Schnabel
Deanne Siemer and Howard Willens
Sarah M. Singleton
Elise and Steve Smith
Jane and Drew Spalding
Pamela S. Stearns
Linda and Gerald Stern
Carol Tanski and Steve Golden
George W. Terrell, Jr.
Laura and Jimmy Tucker
Frank Upham
Shannon Vlahos
Anonymous

Statement of Activities

for the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015

	2016	2015
SUPPORT AND REVENUES		
Contributions.....\$	1,300,529	1,200,679
In-kind Contributions.....	620,729	420,377
Grants.....	3,748,854	1,352,912
Legacies and Bequests.....	325,412	-
Gain on Sale of Donated Stock.....	5,304	-
Interest and Dividends.....	37	353
Miscellaneous.....	24,443	907
Contract Services.....	53,045	151,699
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUES	6,078,353	3,126,927
EXPENSES		
Program Services.....	3,518,598	4,103,057
Management and General.....	398,469	386,551
Fundraising.....	390,044	505,060
TOTAL EXPENSES	4,307,111	4,994,668
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	1,771,242	(1,867,741)
RETURN OF GRANT FUNDS	(13,340)	(19,570)
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS	1,757,902	(1,887,311)
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	1,086,820	2,974,131
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR\$	2,844,722	1,086,820

Statement of Financial Position

for the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015

ASSETS	2016	2015
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash.....\$	318,374	420,457
Receivables.....	2,285,750	472,810
Prepaid Expenses.....	22,904	20,242
	2,627,028	913,509
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, net	333,175	376,656
OTHER ASSETS		
Deposits.....	10,822	9,272
	2,971,025	1,299,437
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable.....	13,419	23,948
Accrued Expenses.....	76,780	153,320
Payroll Liabilities.....	1,104	349
Note payable, current.....	35,000	35,000
		212,617
LONG TERM LIABILITIES		
Notes Payable.....	-	-
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted.....	141,329	108,614
Temporarily Restricted.....	2,703,393	978,206
	2,844,722	1,086,820
	\$ 2,971,025	1,299,437

The summarized financial data was taken from audited financial statements prepared by Matthews Cutrer & Lindsay PA.

CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE HONOREES

2003-2016

Henry J. Kirksey and Mike Moore, 2003
Rims Barber and Dr. Helen Barnes, 2004
Dr. L.C. Dorsey and Michael Raff, 2005
John M. McCullouch and Dr. Aaron Shirley, 2006
Reuben V. Anderson and Deborah Bell, 2007
Unita Blackwell and Dick Molpus, 2008
Wilbur O. Colom and John L. Maxey, II, 2009
Mercidees and Victor McTeer and Bill Ray, 2010
Robert B. McDuff and Constance Slaughter-Harvey, 2011
Myrlie Evers and William F. Winter, 2012
Fred L. Banks, Jr. and Joy Lambert Phillips, 2013
Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald and Bill Minor, 2014
Dan Jones and Natasha Trethewey, 2015
Dr. Robert Smith and Barber v. Bryant plaintiffs, 2016

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As of October 2017

La’Verne Edney, Jackson, MS, Chair
Walter H. Boone, Jackson, MS, Vice Chair
Vangela M. Wade, Jackson, MS, Secretary/Treasurer
Martha Bergmark, Washington, DC
Gerald Blessey, Biloxi, MS
Gordon D. Greenwood, Oakland, CA
Judith L. Lichtman, Washington, DC
David M. Lipman, Miami, FL
William A. Ray, Jackson, MS
Dr. Temika Simmons, Greenville, MS
Donald B. Verrilli, Jr., Washington, DC
Jeffrey T. Webster, Franklin, TN

STAFF

As of October 2017

Reilly Morse, President/CEO
Denise Antoine, Biloxi Office Manager & Student Coordinator
Martha Bergmark, Founder and Senior Counsel
Angela Bowman, Sunflower Co. United for Children Collaborative Transition Navigator
Cathy Costello, Jackson Office Manager
Lauren Welford Childers, Donor Relations Manager
Phylicia Cotten, Accountant
Jeremy Eisler, Education Director
Monica Galloway, Operations Director
Debra Giles, Indianola Managing Attorney
Yumekia Jones, Indianola Office Manager
John C. Jopling, Biloxi Managing Attorney/Housing Law Director
Charles O. Lee, Consumer Protection Director
LaShay Melton, Foreclosure Paralegal
Beth L. Orlansky, Advocacy Director
Alecia Reed-Owens, Staff Attorney, Health
Melanie Powell, Program Manager, Sunflower Co. United for Children Collaborative
Linda Dixon Rigsby, Health Law Director
Theodora Rowan, Financial Manager
Kiara A. Taite, Staff Attorney
Tanya Talley-Chorba, Paralegal
Dana Thomas, Communications Director
Olger C. Twyner, III, Development Director
Sandra Williams, Testing Coordinator

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE

5 Old River Place, Suite 203
Jackson, MS 39202
Jackson Office: 601.352.2269
Indianola Office: 662.887.6570
Biloxi Office: 228.435.7284
mscenterforjustice.org

Photo credits?????

“ When we envisioned creating the Mississippi Center for Justice, we were very conscious of the legacy of the legendary civil rights law offices of the 1960s and 70s in Jackson. We wanted in 2003 to create a non-profit, public-interest law office to resurrect and carry on that legacy in the 21st century. The center has grown and thrived far more than any of us expected. And now, at this somewhat perilous time...I am pleased to report that the Mississippi Center for Justice is stepping up and stepping in and ramping up. ”

ROB MCDUFF
LAW OFFICE OF ROBERT B. MCDUFF
CO-FOUNDER OF THE MISSISSIPPI
CENTER FOR JUSTICE

OUR MISSION

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE IS A NONPROFIT, PUBLIC INTEREST LAW FIRM COMMITTED TO ADVANCING RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE. SUPPORTED AND STAFFED BY ATTORNEYS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS, THE CENTER DEVELOPS AND PURSUES STRATEGIES TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION AND POVERTY STATEWIDE. MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE WAS ORGANIZED TO ADDRESS THE URGENT NEED TO RE-ESTABLISH IN-STATE ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF LOW-INCOME PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR.

MISSISSIPPI
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE