

MISSISSIPPI
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE

JUSTICE

FOR OUR TIMES





“Since its beginnings, MCJ has applied the lessons learned through Mississippi’s history of social change – and now, through MCJ’s own 15-year history – to create pathways out of poverty and discrimination. Together, the Mississippi Center for Justice and its partners are working to earn a new reputation for our state. Our vision is to make Mississippi known as the social justice leader; a model other states can follow in their quest to provide justice for all.”

La'Verne Edney Partner, Butler Snow; Board of Directors Chair, Mississippi Center for Justice

“Our staff began with two Mississippi women – one white, one black – looking across the table at each other with the hope and determination to imagine a more just Mississippi. Over the past 15 years, this vision has been shared with more and more Mississippians to build us into what we are now – three offices, six campaigns, and a twenty-eight person team. On our 15th anniversary we give thanks to our supporters and our staff and renew our promise to those we serve to stay true to this vision until it is a reality for each and every Mississippian.”

Reilly Morse President and CEO, Mississippi Center for Justice



2018

MARKS THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE (MCJ).

// The intent is to make social justice an expected feature of our community life..." the MCJ founders noted in 2003. "This systemic work requires special effort and collaboration. The situations are unusual, the work takes time, and the results can be extraordinary. //

Fifteen years later, that intent has not changed. While the specific issues that challenge racial and economic equality in our state have evolved, the need for a champion who will stand up for the poor, the marginalized, and those shut out of the legal system has not.

No matter the era, no matter the challenge, MCJ has been and will be at the forefront of the fight to end social injustice in Mississippi.

The situations are still unusual. The work still takes time. And as the stories in these pages prove, the results are still extraordinary.

ROY HARNESS

has always been a hard worker. The Ruth, Mississippi, native and Vietnam-era veteran served three years in the Army before landing a good job as a structural builder with Southern California Edison Power Company in the late 1970s.

"My daddy instilled a strong work ethic in me," 64-year-old Harness recalls today. "Then the military taught me discipline. There was never any laziness in me."

Ironically, it was his work ethic that led Harness into trouble. When fellow members of his Edison crew offered him drugs that would help him stay awake and work longer hours, Harness saw only the benefit. Months later, he found himself addicted to cocaine. He left California and returned to Mississippi, but his addiction followed him home. A desperate Harness soon found himself deeply in debt to drug dealers. He saw only one solution.

"I had some drawing and drafting skills, and I decided to put them to use," Harness says with a wry smile.

Harness put those skills to use forging checks, cashing four before his crime caught up with him. Harness spent "23 months, three weeks, and three days" in Mississippi prisons on forgery charges. He was released in 1988 and spent the next two decades battling his drug addiction before finally walking through the doors of the VA hospital and telling a social worker, "I'm an addict. I need help."

Harness overcame his addiction and returned to school, relying on his background in the utility industry to master courses in mechanical drafting, and engineering. He earned seven associate degrees and certifications from Hinds Community College, the most recent in 2015.

But Harness felt called to another line of work. He was already advocating for veterans as a volunteer; he decided to make that advocacy and service to others a full-time job. In 2015, Harness enrolled in Jackson State University, graduating *cum laude* with a bachelor's degree in social work. He is on track to receive his master's degree in 2019, with the goal of becoming a social worker with the Veterans Administration.

"I hope I can inspire and empower other veterans who are suffering the way I suffered," Harness says.

Having beaten his addiction, reconciled with his family, worked hard for his education, and dedicated his life to helping others, Harness is now focused on another goal. He would like to regain his right to vote.

"I did my time. I'm clean and sober, and I'm an educated, productive citizen," Harness says. "I want to be in a position to make a difference, and that means being a part of the decision-making process in our state."

Under Mississippi law, those convicted of forgery and certain other crimes are permanently banned from voting. The law is a part of the state's 1890 constitution, which was drafted with the express purpose of denying African Americans the right to vote. The offenses listed were those the constitution's authors believed were committed disproportionately by African Americans. Nationally, Mississippi is one of just 10 states that still enforces such a law. Harness is one of the plaintiffs in a case filed by MCJ challenging the 1890 provision. The ultimate goal is to restore the right to vote for thousands of Mississippians denied that right under this archaic, discriminatory law.

For Roy Harness, the opportunity to represent so many others in his situation through the lawsuit is one more form of redemption.

"Who would have thought that a former crack-head, homeless scrub would be in a master's program, a voice for veterans, and an advocate for voting rights?" Harness says with a proud smile. "Sometimes I wonder, why did it take me so long to reach this point? But now, I see the value in these experiences and what they gave me to offer to others. And that feels good."

Having beaten his addiction, reconciled with his family, worked hard for his education, and dedicated his life to helping others, Harness is now focused on another goal. He would like to regain his right to vote.



photo: Charles A. Smith/JSU Communications

JUSTICE

WITH IMPACT

Now well into its second year, the George Riley Impact Litigation Project pursues cases with the potential to change lives in Mississippi and beyond. Spearheaded by MCJ cofounder Rob McDuff, this initiative embodies the lifelong commitment to civil rights and equal justice of the late George Riley, former MCJ board member.

The Right to Vote

Roy Harness, et al. v. Delbert Hosemann, Secretary of State of Mississippi

MCJ filed a lawsuit against the Mississippi Secretary of State challenging portions of Section 241 of the Mississippi Constitution of 1890, which lists certain crimes as forever disqualifying the citizens who commit them from voting.

The 1890 list of crimes is the last vestige of a plan by the framers of the 1890 constitution to rob African American Mississippians of the right to vote they gained in the aftermath of the Civil War. The offenses listed were those the authors believed were committed disproportionately by African Americans. These crimes include bribery, theft, arson, obtaining money or goods under false pretenses, perjury, forgery, embezzlement, and bigamy.

All of the discriminatory tools adopted by the 1890 constitution, including poll taxes and literacy tests, have been nullified by federal court order or federal statute except this one.

The case is scheduled for trial in March of 2019. MCJ's goal is to win a federal court order striking this discriminatory provision of the 1890 constitution. The outcome of the case will affect 45,000 Mississippians convicted of these crimes between 1994, when the administrative office of the courts began keeping records, and the present, as well as untold numbers of Mississippians convicted prior to 1994.

"In a time when some cities are removing Confederate monuments that are vestiges of white supremacy," McDuff says, "it's time for us to remove this vestige of white supremacy from Mississippi's constitution."

PARTNERS: Legendary civil rights attorneys Fred Banks of Jackson, founding chair of the MCJ board of directors; Armand Derfner of Charleston, South Carolina; and MCJ board member David Lipman of Miami, Florida, are co-counsel with MCJ on this case.



Women's Reproductive Rights

*Jackson Women's Health Organization, et al. v. Mary Currier, M.D., M.P.H.,
State Health Officer of the Mississippi Department of Health, et al.*

On March 19, 2018, Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant signed a bill prohibiting abortion in Mississippi past 15 weeks of pregnancy. The Center for Reproductive Rights and Rob McDuff immediately filed suit against the law on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. The following morning, a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order preventing the law from going into effect. MCJ and the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP joined the suit shortly thereafter, and an amended complaint was filed that also challenges several other Mississippi laws placing hardship on women seeking abortion. In the meantime, the 15-week ban remains unenforceable.

This law is the latest attempt to chip away at women's reproductive freedom in Mississippi, a state already recognized as one of the worst in terms of its restrictive abortion laws. For many years, the Mississippi Legislature has gone out of its way to make it difficult for women, especially poor women, to exercise their right to choose whether or not to bear children. The Supreme Court has unequivocally recognized a woman's constitutional right to have an abortion; the state of Mississippi's strategy is to chip away at that right by passing a series of incremental laws that achieves what the Constitution prohibits the states from doing outright. The goal, as stated by Governor Bryant, is "ending abortion in Mississippi."

In addition to declaring the 15-week restriction unconstitutional, the suit also seeks to declare unconstitutional the licensing scheme that subjects providers of abortion to more burdensome regulations than other healthcare providers; the requirement that women make two trips 24 hours apart to a provider before having the procedure; the prohibition on telemedicine that applies only to abortion care; and other regulations that lack medical justification.

The Mississippi case could take on national significance; it is one of the abortion rights cases currently pending in the federal courts that could conceivably reach the Supreme Court. As anti-choice forces continue to try to weaken or overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the Mississippi case seeks to permanently block the 15-week ban, strike down longstanding restrictions, and make the right to reproductive freedom meaningful for women in Mississippi.

PARTNERS: Center for Reproductive Rights, New York;
Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison, New York



The Jackson Women's Health Organization building is often referred to as the "Pink House." The building was painted bright pink to symbolize the organization's assertiveness in the face of opposition.



Rob McDuff and Keren Welch, the Big House Books volunteer who brought the case to MCJ's attention.

Books for Prisoners

Big House Books, et al. v. Pelicia Hall, Commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Corrections, et al.

Big House Books has been providing donated reading material to inmates in jails and prisons across Mississippi since 2015. Prisoners write to Big House Books to request specific books, including novels, composition books, GED study guides, textbooks, and job training manuals. Big House then ships the books to the individual prisoners.

In May of 2018, the South Mississippi Correctional Institute (SMCI) informed Big House that shipments of free books to individual inmates would not be allowed. The only exception to this new policy was for religious books. If an inmate wanted a history book, a GED preparation book, or a novel, someone would have to pay for it.

With assistance from the DLA Piper law firm, MCJ filed a lawsuit on behalf of Big House Books and two SMCI inmates challenging the new policy on First and Fourteenth Amendment grounds because it discriminated on the basis of religion and because it discriminated against prisoners who had little money to buy books. **Soon after the case was filed, MCJ entered negotiations with the attorney general's office and the Department of Corrections. As a result, MDOC issued a new, system-wide policy to clarify that inmates could receive free books, both religious and secular, from Big House Books and other free book distributors.**

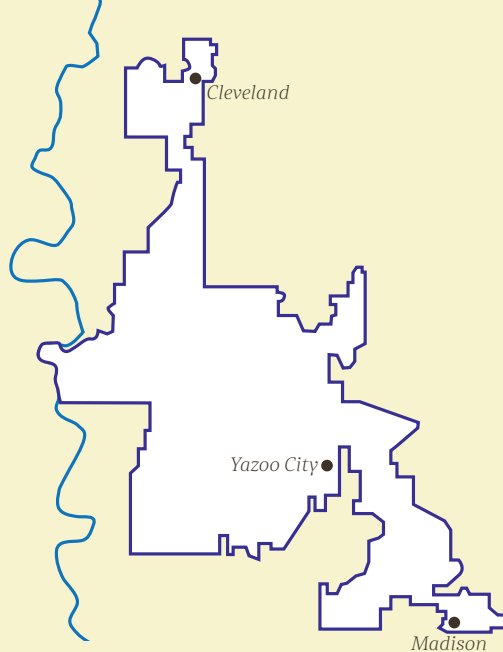
"The free books are not just important to me, they are vital. Although I am in medium security and have no disciplinary violations, I am housed in a unit that [finds me] locked down in 7'x10' cells 22 hours a day Monday through Friday and 24 hours a day on weekends and holidays. The idleness can be crushing to any human unless he or she finds a way to occupy the time and keep the mind active. Sadly, I've watched people deteriorate and seemingly lose their sanity over time; I vowed not to lose mine. Books are vital to remaining sane in this environment."

Charles Owens, an inmate and plaintiff in the case

While incarcerated, Mr. Owens has successfully completed a number of educational programs in religious and paralegal studies. The majority of his academic achievements in prison have relied on free books.

PARTNER: DLA Piper





Redistricting for Fair Representation

Thomas v. Bryant

After an alert from the organization Mississippi Votes, MCJ took a close look at the demographics of the Senate districts in the Mississippi Delta and realized that **District 22 had been drawn in such a way as to dilute African American voting strength.** The district brings in certain wealthy, white majority precincts from Madison County to make it difficult for African American voters in the Delta portion of the district to elect candidates of their choice. In a state that is more than 35 percent African American in voting age population, only 25 percent of senators are African American. Modifications to just two or three districts could eliminate the dilution in District 22 and give African American voters there a better opportunity to elect candidates of their choice; the overall redistricting plan would more fairly reflect the population of the state. MCJ and its partners have filed suit to challenge the configuration of District 22 under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and are seeking a modified plan for use in the 2019 election.

PARTNERS: The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; Ellis Turnage, Turnage Law Office, Cleveland, Mississippi; Waters Kraus & Paul, Texas



Discrimination Even After Death

John Zawadski, et al. v. Brewer Funeral Services, Inc., d/b/a Picayune Funeral Home, et al.

MCJ joined Lambda Legal in a suit against Brewer Funeral Services of Picayune, Mississippi, for failing to honor properly a pre-arranged contract to pick up and cremate a man's body after discovering that the deceased's spouse was also a man. The decedent and his husband had been together for more than 50 years. The grieving family was forced to make new arrangements with a funeral home in Hattiesburg, 90 miles away.

PARTNER: Lambda Legal



AND CHILDREN

FOR 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 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 childcare. In 2017, changes in the application process made applying for the subsidies difficult. Parents were required to provide multiple proofs of address, a barrier for those who lived with extended family, moved frequently, or did not have utility accounts in their own names.

Hundreds of Mississippi parents lost the subsidies they relied on over these paperwork issues. Without affordable childcare, many of these parents working hard to provide a better life for their children found themselves at risk of being forced back into poverty.

One of those parents was **MEGAN JONES**, a single mother of three working in quality control with Viking Range in Greenwood.

"Everyone in my family works," Jones says. "Without daycare, I had no back-up to take care of my son. I was looking at not being able to work, and I had to take *off* of work and pay for gas to go to Jackson, three hours away, to appeal the decision. It was very confusing and very, very stressful. All I wanted to do was work and take care of my children."

MCJ stepped in to assist parents like Jones appeal the DHS decision. MCJ was prepared to file suit to have the policy changed, but pre-trial advocacy was successful in persuading DHS to act on its own. The policy was changed, the paperwork was simplified, and subsidies were restored for hundreds of working parents, including Megan Jones.

"That subsidy meant so much more than just a dollar amount," Jones says. "It was the difference between me being able to work at a good job and support my family, and not being able to work at all. I'm so thankful to MCJ. Now I can wake up every morning and know that my children are well cared for and that I'm headed to work."

 **PARTNER:** O'Melveny & Myers LLP, Washington D.C.





PROVIDES A HANDS UP

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WILLIE GILSON

As a high school student in Indianola, Willie Gilson wanted to spend his summers doing more than just hanging out with his friends. When he was offered a summer job as a custodian at the B.B. King Museum and Interpretive Center, Gilson jumped at the chance. The job was made available through the Sunflower County United for Children's (SCUC) youth summer jobs initiative.

"I loved working at the B.B. King Museum," says Gilson, a music lover who played the baritone, tuba, and trombone in high school. "It gave me the opportunity to learn how B.B. King grew up and where his music came from. I also learned a lot of people skills through that job. In high school, my attitude was so *bad*. Working at the museum taught me that, in the real world, you can't snap back at your boss. You have to get along with your coworkers."

Following his graduation from Gentry High School, Gilson once again turned to SCUC, signing up for the Generation YES! college and career counseling program. He received a referral and financial assistance for the welding program at the Mississippi Delta Community College Capp Center.

"I was looking for better opportunities and a better job than making minimum wage," Gilson says. "The financial aid from SCUC was very important. Without it, I wouldn't have been able to pay for the course. From the first time I picked up the welding gun, I thought, 'I know I can do this. Let's go to work.'"

An outstanding and hard-working student, Gilson was offered a position as a welder before the classes concluded.

"My father died in 2015. He was a truck driver and a hard-working man," Gilson says. "He taught me to always push forward and try to do my best. I know he would be proud of me."



"I was looking for better opportunities...From the first time I picked up a welding gun, I thought, 'I know I can do this. Let's go to work.'"



Sunflower County United for Children

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

SCUC launched in 2014, when the Kellogg Foundation asked MCJ to house community collaboratives for Sunflower County and East Biloxi created under a Kellogg Foundation grant. MCJ hired directors for both projects and assisted in crafting strategic plans. At the conclusion of the initial two-year Kellogg grant period, East Biloxi Community Collaborative (EBCC) moved to independent status and is no longer housed at MCJ, although MCJ remains a member. In 2018, SCUC also moved to independent status.

MCJ is proud to have played a role in the launch of these two important organizations, which continue to improve lives in the Mississippi communities they serve.

SCUC Highlights

Generation YES!

The Generation YES! program offers college and career counseling services for those 16 to 24 years old. Seventy-one participants from six Delta counties received assistance with ACT prep classes, GED classes, college matriculation, job searches, and vocational training.

The Mississippi Delta Community College (MDCC) Capp Center and Generation YES! worked together to provide training for four program participants who received certifications in welding and as pharmacy technicians. The Capp Center assisted in student selection and provided materials, and SCUC paid 50 percent of the enrollment fee for these participants.

Health and Wellness

SCUC partnered with two local fitness centers, Foxtrot Fitness Camp (Indianola) and Dakota (Drew), to provide a 90-day health and wellness program for community residents. Each facility provided free exercise classes, healthy recipes, and access to a nutritionist. Forty residents completed the program, with many reporting weight loss, lowered blood pressure, and a commitment to continue a healthy lifestyle.

Education Summit

SCUC held two education summits, providing professional development training to 247 teachers, school food and nutrition staff members, and parents.



JUSTICE ^{THAT}



HITS HOME

LAUREN MARKLE was looking forward to becoming a mother.

Markle realized that being a single parent would come with challenges, but with a good education that included an MBA and a solid job with D1 Sports, Markle felt ready to provide her child with the best possible start. One thing that did concern Markle was the need to find a new apartment. She had been living with a roommate and wanted to raise her child in a place of their own.

Markle welcomed her son, Kingston Knight, on November 5, 2015, and began apartment hunting while still on maternity leave. She was happy to find the perfect unit in an apartment complex in the Jackson, Mississippi, area. The apartment was quiet, safe, and most importantly, located just a mile from the home of Kingston's paternal grandmother, who had volunteered to provide childcare while Markle worked.

The staff was friendly and enthusiastic, a rental amount was quoted, and Markle began filling out the application. But when Markle mentioned that she had a son, she was informed that the rent would be an additional \$200 per person, per month.

"I pleaded with the woman in the rental office," Markle says. "I told her he was a newborn, that he wouldn't take up much space, that he wouldn't be using any amenities. She showed me a paper with this additional per-person policy noted in writing, along with a line at that bottom that said, 'a quiet community.' The extra \$200 was more than I could spend. They priced me out."

Markle moved into another apartment complex farther from her child's grandmother, but where children were welcomed. She didn't realize she had been discriminated against until she mentioned the incident to an acquaintance who happened to be an attorney with the Mississippi Center for Justice. **The attorney told Markle that she believed the apartment complex was in violation of the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination against families with dependent children under 18. With the help of pro bono partners, MCJ is currently pursuing legal avenues on Markle's behalf.**

Today, Markle owns her own home, has received a promotion at work, and is providing a secure, happy life for Kingston, now an energetic toddler. But the memory of the discrimination she faced and the desire to prevent the same thing from happening to another single mother have inspired her to continue to pursue the case.

"I was educated. I had a good job. I had always worked hard," Markle says, tears filling her eyes. "But this experience made me feel that, because I had a baby, I was now *a problem*. It made me wonder, 'Is this going to happen in other areas of my life now, too? Are other people going to treat me this way?'"

"It was devastating, but I knew I could figure it out somehow," Markle says. "But some other single mom might not have been able to. What if that apartment had been her only option? **I am doing this so what happened to me won't happen to someone else like me.**"

Meeting Challenges in Housing

The federal Fair Housing Act (FHA) was passed in 1968, yet 50 years later, the fight against discrimination in the rental, sale, and financing of housing persists throughout Mississippi.

In 2018, MCJ's housing division extended sustained legal support to each of the areas where MCJ has offices – the Gulf Coast, Jackson, and the Delta. On the Coast and in adjacent counties, MCJ is raising awareness of the FHA and investigating possible violations of the law. In Jackson and the Delta, MCJ established a project to provide legal services to Mississippi nonprofits and housing agencies working to eliminate blight and repurpose deteriorating properties as affordable housing or other community assets.

THE HOUSING DIVISION

Provided **legal assistance to 38 individuals** statewide with housing-related issues

Prosecuted **five complaints** under the Fair Housing Act alleging discrimination

Conducted **more than 40 tests** to uncover housing discrimination against prospective tenants or homeowners

Carried out fair housing education and outreach trainings, including 15 FHA trainings in rural and underserved counties, trainings to students at Jackson State University and the University of Mississippi, and trainings to housing industry professionals, including lenders, real estate agents, bankers, and developers

Celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act with a **statewide Fair Housing Expo** in Hattiesburg



John Jopling and Kiara Taite, MCJ attorneys working to ensure fair housing practices in Mississippi.

ISN'T ALWAYS BLIND

Twelve-year-old **OBRUCHE CARSON** was born with optic nerve hypoplasia. She is legally blind, seeing only bright colors and blurred shapes.

Obruche hasn't let her disability slow her down. A student at the Mississippi School for the Blind, she raises school spirit as a cheerleader and was voted the sixth grade princess, the equivalent of a homecoming maid.

But for her entire seventh-grade school year, Obruche did not have access to the braille textbooks she needed. While the majority of students at the School for the Blind can see well enough to use large-print books, Obruche and one other student relied completely on braille. The school provided one braille textbook for the two students to share; neither could take the book home, which made completing homework impossible.

The school was in violation of Mississippi law, which states that students who rely on braille must receive braille textbooks at the same time their seeing classmates receive printed ones. When Obruche's mother, Octavia, complained, the school's response was less than helpful.

"The teacher's answer was to shrug and say, 'We don't have it,'" Octavia says. "These textbooks aren't a luxury, they are a *necessity*. I can read something to you and you may understand the content, but that's not the same as learning how to read or understanding how to do a math problem yourself. Literacy means reading it for yourself. If I read it to *you*, I'm just enabling you to be disabled."

Octavia Carson knows this from first-hand experience. She is also legally blind. Octavia is an alumna of the Mississippi School for the Blind and a teaching

assistant at the school. Ironically, the Carson family's deep connection to the school initially made the situation worse.

"At first I let it go because I worked there, and I was intimidated," Octavia says. "But as time passed and nothing was done to get my child what she needed, I had to do something. It wasn't about me or about my job. It was about Obruche and what she needed, what she was entitled to by law."

When they couldn't reach a solution with the school, the Carson family turned to the Mississippi Center for Justice for help. MCJ attorney Jeremy Eisler met with the assistant attorney general assigned to represent the school in the case.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that this assistant attorney general was initially incredulous that this had been allowed to go on," Eisler says. "The School for the Blind has since ordered braille textbooks for Obruche for every class she will take in her eighth-grade year."

The situation made seventh grade stressful for Obruche, an excellent student and self-sufficient perfectionist who, her mother says, "doesn't like to ask for help." Without the textbooks she needed, Obruche was forced to complete state tests for her grade level without ever having "seen" the material first-hand. But despite the lack of critical materials, Obruche continued to excel in the classroom. Her experience also reinforced Obruche's plan to become a psychologist specializing in work with visually impaired children.

"The name 'Obruche' is Nigerian. It means 'she who encourages and comforts,'" Obruche's father, Warren, explains. "Obruche doesn't really know it yet, but that perfectly describes her."

Meeting Challenges in Education

Mississippi is challenged by the effects of long-term, structural racism as manifested in school funding and disciplinary policies, particularly as they impact the minority and disabled communities.

The Education Division received 57 calls from concerned parents with issues in school districts in 30 Mississippi counties from September 1, 2018, to May 10, 2018.

Cases included:

- 25** Special Education Cases
- 12** Bullying Cases
- 10** General Discipline Cases
- 2** Youth Court Issues
- 8** Other Education-related Cases

"The name 'Obruche' is Nigerian. It means 'she who encourages and comforts.' Obruche doesn't really know it yet, but that perfectly describes her." Warren Carson



Octavia and Obruche Carson

MCJ provided services in 43 cases; 27 cases are still active as of May 10, 2018.

Cases currently in litigation include:

- Interpretation of Mississippi's bullying statute to require school districts to recognize that a single act can constitute bullying and to advise students of their right to defend themselves
- Inadequacy of the "substantial evidence" standard of proof in school discipline cases
- Misuse of disturbance of the school setting statutes to expel disabled students protected under federal law

43
cases

With the help of University of Southern Mississippi students and interns, MCJ developed an education and outreach workshop to help parents statewide recognize bullying issues and support efforts to correct school district policies.

Partners:

Forman Watkins & Krutz LLP, Jackson
Julian Miller, Bradley Arant Boult & Cummings, Mississippi

JUSTICE REMOVES THE STIGMA

RYAN HOLT is a gay white man.

JEWELL TERRELL is a straight African American woman.

Holt and Terrell have very different backgrounds but they share a diagnosis. Both are living with HIV.

The two have something else in common. Holt and Terrell are members of the MCJ Advisory Council, which explores areas of concern for people living with HIV and develops strategies for addressing those issues.

Holt was 26 years old when he received his diagnosis on Christmas Eve in 1995. The diagnosis did more than terrify Holt; it also outed him.

"At that time, the life expectancy following an HIV diagnosis was 10 years," Holt says. "I was told to get my affairs in order. I decided I should tell my parents that I was gay and HIV positive because I didn't want them to find out because I'd ended up in a hospital."

It was a traumatic time for Holt, who began a regime of harsh drugs to prevent the virus from developing into AIDS. But as he and his family came to grips with his diagnosis, Holt chose not to withdraw. Instead, he became an activist.

"I was 26 years old with a good job and I looked pretty mainstream, yet I'd contracted the HIV virus by having unprotected sex," Holt says. "I started going into high schools and colleges and giving safe sex talks. Every time I said, 'I am HIV positive,' out loud, it got easier. I decided to make myself the face of HIV. That put me on the path of helping others with HIV to get over their shame."

Jewel Terrell was diagnosed with HIV in 2008. Recently divorced, Terrell had contracted the virus from her ex-husband. Terrell had known her husband had been unfaithful; after the diagnosis, she learned that he had known he was HIV positive

for most of their 15 years together and had never told her his secret.

"For the first few months, I was too ashamed to tell anyone," Terrell says. "Then, when I *did* tell a few people, I always felt like I had to explain that I was a decent, college-educated, married woman with a professional job who got HIV from an adulterous husband. I made sure I told people I wasn't a drug user or a prostitute."

"I stopped doing that when I realized that people had sympathy for me, but not for some other people who were HIV positive," Terrell continues. "It doesn't really matter how you contract it or whether you're black or white or straight or gay. You shouldn't be ashamed."

Terrell began speaking about living with HIV, explaining, "I'd been asking God for answers. Why had this happened to me? He showed me there was a purpose in my pain."

Terrell eventually chose to out herself to the world on Facebook.

"Why should I have to hide who I am?" Terrell says. "Living with HIV is no different than living with any other disease. I'm HIV positive, but I am still *Jewel*."

Holt and Terrell hope that by eliminating the stigma associated with an HIV diagnosis, they can eliminate discrimination against those living with HIV. The MCJ Advisory Council's proposed tactics for fighting discrimination range from workshops designed to educate rural healthcare providers to town hall meetings that reassure people that HIV cannot be transmitted by hugs or handshakes. Key to the council's mission is encouraging people who are HIV positive to stop self-stigmatizing.

"When people come out and say, 'I have HIV and I'm normal,' the fear lessens," Holt says. "Our goal isn't to force people to reveal their diagnosis, but to embolden them to share it."

"A couple of months ago, I met a guy who had just been diagnosed with HIV," Holt continues. "He was stuck in a dead-end job because he didn't think there was any point in making plans for the future. We talked and he told me that my story gave him hope. Today, he's gone back to school. That's why I love advocacy. And anything I've given, I've received back tenfold."





“In sharing their personal stories, Ryan Holt, Jewel Terrell, and other trailblazers have shown a great deal of courage and an even greater degree of selflessness. By stepping forward, they are giving other people living with HIV the encouragement they need to continue to lead positive, productive lives free of shame. Those who come forward to help others are an inspiring example – not only for those living with HIV, but for all of us – of how to serve others and how to live life to its fullest.”

Linda Dixon Rigsby
Health Law Director
Mississippi Center for Justice

Meeting Challenges in Healthcare

The United Health Foundation's 2017 report on health rankings by state ranked Mississippi #50, the unhealthiest state in the nation. Lack of access to healthcare and to affordable health insurance is a factor in that ranking.

LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND HEALTH INSURANCE

MCJ strongly opposes the Mississippi Division of Medicaid's proposed requirement that Medicaid recipients be required to work 20 hours per week or lose their coverage. This proposed change is in direct contrast to the objective of the Medicaid program, which is to provide health coverage to the low-income population, and will almost certainly result in the loss of coverage for low-income families. MCJ intends to challenge the federal government if it grants the governor's request to impose a work requirement.

FIGHTING THE HIV STIGMA

Jackson, Mississippi, continues to rank in the **top 10 cities home to people living with HIV and in new HIV diagnoses**. Many studies place Jackson in the top five. Some 80 percent of new HIV diagnoses in Mississippi are in African Americans.

MCJ's medical-legal partnership with the University of Mississippi Medical Center, the Mississippi State Department of Health, and the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation **provided free civil legal services to 25 clients living with HIV**.

Cases were related to:

Employment Discrimination.....	10
Housing Discrimination.....	4
Public Accommodation.....	2
Privacy Rights.....	2
Other Issues.....	7

MCJ conducted **more than 30 outreach events** educating communities on HIV stigma and discrimination.

In partnership with the Southern AIDS Coalition, MCJ convened its **7th Annual Mississippi AIDS Justice Project** to discuss the legal rights of Mississippians living with HIV and develop strategies for policy advocacy and education.

MCJ's six-member HIV Advisory Council suggested **several strategies to reduce the stigma** associated with HIV, including educational town hall meetings; creating educational materials on testing, awareness, and stigma; and training for providers of services to those living with HIV, including healthcare providers and employees of federal and state agencies who serve those living with HIV.

#STIGMAFREEMS #ENDSTIGMAMS

HOME SWEET HOME

KEEPS



EDDIE ROBINSON still recalls the pride he and his late wife, Vera Belle, felt when they moved into their new home in Macon, Mississippi, in 1973. The couple built the home from the ground up and raised their two sons there. Eddie Robinson's favorite memories, including those of happy times with Vera Belle, bringing his newborn sons home from the hospital, and festive family holidays, all took place within those four walls.

Following Vera Belle's death in 2012, Robinson's health declined. Financial woes followed, and Robinson soon found himself behind on his mortgage. In 2017, he was devastated to receive a foreclosure notice from Bayview Loan Servicing. Desperate to hold on to his home, Robinson reached out to his family, who gave him the \$4,200 needed to reinstate the loan.

"I felt bad asking my family for help," Robinson, a preacher who also worked for more than 40 years as a manufacturing machine operator, says. "It was embarrassing. It interfered with my ability to minister to others. It not only affected me financially, it affected me mentally and spiritually."

Robinson swallowed his pride and mailed the \$4,200 check to Bayview. But Bayview held the check for two weeks, then mailed it back to Robinson for a signature. Robinson signed the check, but Bayview refused to accept it because a foreclosure sale date had been set. Repeated calls to Bayview led nowhere.

"My world had turned upside down," Robinson says. "Bayview wouldn't listen to me or discuss anything with me. Sometimes they would give me another number to call – 'I'm sorry, you'll have to call Mr. So and So' – but it just went round and round in circles. My life was in chaos, and all they would tell me was, 'Sorry.'"

In December 2017, Robinson received a notice to vacate the property; he was given two weeks to pack all of his belongings and his lifetime of memories. **At that point, Robinson turned to the Mississippi Center for Justice for help. MCJ advised Robinson on how to make the final payment and close out his loan with Bayview. With help from MCJ and the Mississippi Attorney General's office, Robinson settled the issue and remained in his home.**

"What a relief," Robinson says today, sitting in his cozy kitchen. "I can hardly describe the toll it would have taken on me if I'd lost this house. I praise God that didn't happen. Now I know I'll always have a home and a place for my sons and my grandchildren to come visit me. I am so thankful to the Mississippi Center for Justice. They said, 'We're going to do all we can to help you,' and they proved it. When no one else would listen to me, when I was just the little guy getting run over, they treated me like a king."

Meeting Challenges in Consumer Protection

IMPROPER HANDLING OF STUDENT LOANS

State of Mississippi v. Navient Corporation et al.

MCJ joined the Mississippi Attorney General and other partners in suing Navient Corporation and its subsidiaries, Sallie Mae Bank and Navient Solutions, for improper handling of student loans. The lawsuit alleges widespread abuses across all aspects of the student loan business, including lending and loan servicing that targeted Mississippians. The complaint alleges that the defendants failed to assist borrowers in accessing the best available repayment options, putting them into costly forbearance programs instead.

While the suit will not result in damages awarded to individual borrowers, it could ultimately save them a significant amount of money going forward if Navient is forced to service the loans in a more borrower-friendly manner. Following a press conference with Attorney General Jim Hood to announce the suit, MCJ heard from more than 1,000 holders of student loans who could be affected by the suit's outcome.

PARTNERS: Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood
Lee Abraham, Abraham & Associates, Mississippi
Zimmerman Reed, Minnesota



MCJ attorneys Charles Lee and Beth Orlansky and Attorney General Jim Hood announce the lawsuit against the Navient Corporation.

JUSTICE COURT NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

Justice courts handle the vast majority of civil cases in Mississippi. Common issues include landlord/tenant disputes, loans in default, and unpaid medical bills. While some plaintiffs are represented by attorneys, a large percentage of low-income Mississippians who enter justice court each year as defendants lack legal representation.

Too often, judgments are entered against working poor defendants who do not understand their legal rights. The dollar amounts may be "small claims" under the law, but they have a tremendous impact on low-income Mississippians. An unjust judgment can result in eviction, vehicle repossession, or wage garnishment. Defendants who were already struggling may never recover.

To ensure that justice is served in justice court, MCJ worked with the Hinds County Board of Supervisors, justice court judges, and the clerk of the Hinds County Justice Court to develop a justice court navigator program that was launched in September of 2018. Under the supervision of MCJ, college students and other volunteers are trained to help individuals involved in consumer debt cases navigate the justice court system. If successful, the Hinds County pilot program will be implemented in other counties.

To ensure the success of the program, MCJ:

- Prepared a Justice Court Navigator Training Manual
- Recruited and began training volunteer navigators from colleges and universities in the Jackson Metro area
- Developed promotional materials and informational flyers for self-represented litigants for distribution in the justice court clerk's office

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

Foreclosures not only displace families, they weaken communities. Every foreclosed home or business means lost tax revenue.

MCJ provided foreclosure prevention services to 35 clients in 18 counties statewide. MCJ meets clients where they are in the foreclosure process, whether that means providing prevention advice, seeking a loan modification, or filing for injunctive relief in court.

MCJ works to raise awareness of issues that can lead to foreclosures and make sure homeowners understand their rights. MCJ promoted its foreclosure prevention services through TV and radio announcements, community events held statewide, and educational brochures. Funding for these efforts was provided through a three-year grant from the Mississippi Bar Foundation, which resulted from a lawsuit settlement involving Bank of America.

SINGLE STOP PROGRAM AT HINDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MCJ was the legal provider for the Single Stop Program, which offered free legal counseling to students at Hinds Community College campuses in Jackson, Vicksburg, Utica, Rankin County, and Raymond. The project was funded through a one-year grant from the Women's Foundation of Mississippi.

During the grant period, MCJ:

- Conducted 10 workshops on consumer debt, student loan debt, landlord-tenant debt, fair housing, access to healthcare, and expungement of criminal records
- Reached 272 students with information, advice, and/or legal services

PREVENTING ITS REPEAT


PRESERVING HISTORY,

In 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old African American child from Chicago, was brutally murdered for allegedly flirting with a white woman in Money, Mississippi. Emmett's mother, Mamie, opted to hold an open-casket funeral for her son, displaying for the media and to the world the brutality of his death. Her decision was instrumental in sparking the outrage that fueled the Civil Rights Movement.

Sites connected to the Emmett Till case – including the Bryant Grocery where Till supposedly whistled at a white woman, the home from which Till was kidnapped, the courthouse where Till's alleged murderers were tried and acquitted (they later confessed), and other locations – are important stops for civil rights tours and for those who wish to honor Till's legacy. However, some key sites have fallen into disrepair and are in danger of being forever lost to history.

With leadership from *pro bono* counsel and the Emmett Till Interpretive Center in Sumner, Mississippi, MCJ has moved efforts forward to have the Emmett Till sites placed under the umbrella of the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS would then provide funding for the preservation of the sites and for docents to interpret the sites for visitors from around the country and the world.

Since 2012, Mississippi native June Langston DeHart of Manatt Phelps & Phillips, LLP has spearheaded and coordinated federal and state support to secure federal legislation authorizing an NPS study of five civil rights locations across Mississippi, including two Till sites. The legislation was included in the 2017 Omnibus bill overseen by Appropriations Chair Senator Thad Cochran. MCJ has added a team from Latham and Watkins to support the Emmett Till Interpretive Center's efforts to persuade the NPS to recommend a Congressional designation of the Till sites as part of the National Park Service.

 **PARTNERS:** Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, Washington, D.C., Latham & Watkins, Washington, D.C.

"As a native Mississippian who grew up during the civil rights era, working to secure federal protection for these sites has been a personal mission. I am so proud of Manatt's pro bono leadership, our work with the Mississippi Center for Justice, and the bipartisan support we built to secure Congressional authorization of the feasibility study."

June Langston DeHart
Manatt Phelps and Phillips LLP

"Civil rights advocacy is a primary focus of Latham's pro bono program. We are thrilled and honored to have the unique opportunity to collaborate with the Mississippi Center for Justice – our longtime partner – and the Emmett Till Interpretive Center to preserve and protect sites connected to the Emmett Till lynching."

Nikki Buffa
Latham & Watkins LLP

"We want to tell the story of Emmett Till in a way that moves people forward. If preserved, these sites will deepen understanding of civil rights and American history in a living setting outside the walls of a conventional museum."

Patrick Weems
Director of the Emmett Till Interpretive Center



Bryant Grocery is an important stop on civil rights tours in Mississippi. MCJ is part of the effort to preserve the landmark as a National Park Service site.

photo: Dr. Edward Bergmark

JUSTICE

FOR THE NEXT GENERATION



The Mississippi Center for Justice is preparing the next generation of attorneys to take up the fight for social justice. MCJ offers internships in its offices in Jackson, Indianola, and Biloxi to college students and law school students drawn to public interest work. In 2018, MCJ welcomed interns from the University of California Irvine School of Law, Northwestern University, Duke, the University of Pennsylvania, Reed College, the University of Mississippi School of Law, American University College of Law, Yale Law School, and the Mississippi College School of Law.

"MCJ provides our students with experiences that are just not available in California. Work at MCJ exposes students to the overwhelming need for legal services around the United States and helps them understand the strong impact they can make by volunteering their time – even just in one week." **Anna Strasburg Davis**, Director of Pro Bono Programs, UC Irvine School of Law, California

"I was inspired to go to law school to gain tools I could use to make changes in my home state of Mississippi. Law school is practical knowledge; here at MCJ, I'm putting it to use. I want to be in Mississippi long-term. The work will mean the most to me here, where I grew up."

Madeline Iles

From Natchez, Mississippi,
University of Mississippi School of Law

"In just five weeks with MCJ, I worked on issues ranging from disability rights to prisoners' rights to fair housing. I have written memos, worked with clients one-on-one, done research at Chancery Court, and prepared drafts of various legal documents. The sheer breadth of the issues and experiences I have had has been incredible. I learn something new every day. Law school teaches you about the theory of law and gives you a foundational understanding of the field, but I have learned most of what I know about the actual practice of law from working with MCJ."

Abigail Pershing

From Rockville, Maryland, Yale Law School

MCJ summer interns: Kylon Bush, Gentry High School; **Bethany Crowder**, Regent University; **Madeline Iles**, Ole Miss Law; **Simue' Isabel**, Reed College; **David Kerry**, Reed College; **Nicholas Oo**, Yale Law; **Abigail Pershing**, Yale Law; **Grace Sullivan**, Ole Miss Law; **Tessa Verbal**, Reed College; **Jaleceia White**, Mississippi College School of Law; **Elizabeth Zhang**, American University Washington College of Law

Social Justice Campaign

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 Jackson
Coalition for a Prosperous Mississippi
Coastal Family Health Center
Coastal Women for Change
Danita Munday Remain Calm Consulting
Delta Design Build Workshop
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
Hinds Community College
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
Magnolia Bar Association
Mercy Housing and Human Development
Mississippi Access to Justice Commission
Mississippi Association of Educators

Mississippi Association for Justice
The Mississippi Bar
Mississippi Center for Legal Services
Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities
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 Gulf Coast Delta Alliance for Economic Inclusion
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 State University Extension Service
Mississippi United to End Homelessness
Mississippi Votes
Moore Community House
My Brother's Keeper
NAACP, Biloxi Branch
NAACP, Gulfport Branch

NAACP, Mississippi State Conference
North Gulfport Civic Club
North Gulfport Community Land Trust
North Mississippi Rural Legal Services
Parents for Public Schools–Jackson
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
Working Together Jackson

National Partners

AARP Foundation
AFL-CIO
American Bar Association Center for Pro Bono
Armed Forces Services Corporation
Center for Legal Aid Education/Shriver Center
Center for Responsible Lending
Center for Reproductive Rights

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Community Catalyst
Consumer Federation of America
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Financial Coaching Program
Corporation for National and Community Service
Empire Justice Center
Equal Justice Works
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
Georgetown Center for Children and Families
Housing Works
LAMBDA Legal
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Money Management International
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)
National Consumer Law Center
National Health Law Program
National Legal Aid & Defender Association
National Low Income Housing Coalition
Opportunity Agenda
Parents for Public Schools–National
Pro Bono Net
Sergeant Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Southern AIDS Coalition

Law Firms and Corporate Legal Departments

Abraham and Associates
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC

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.

Ballard Spahr
Bradley LLP
Butler, Snow
Derfner & Altman LLC
DLA Piper
Forman Watkins & Krutz PLLC
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Latham & Watkins LLP
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Ellis Turnage
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Waters Kraus
Zimmerman Reed LLP

Mississippi College School of Law
Mississippi Delta Community College
Mississippi State University
Mississippi State University
Extension Service
Mississippi Valley State University
New York University Wagner
School of Public Policy
Northwestern University Law School
Reed College
Rice University
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 Mississippi
School of Law
University of Pennsylvania
School of Law
University of Southern Mississippi
University of Virginia School of Law
Vassar
Vanderbilt
Wake Forest University
Yale University School of Law

Law Schools, Colleges and Universities

Charlotte School of Law
Columbia University
Delta State University Center for
Delta Culture and Learning
Duke University School of Law
Georgetown University
Harvard Law School
Jackson State University
Millsaps College

Financial Support

\$100,000 and up

AIDS United
Matthew P. Bergman
Elton John AIDS Foundation
Emerson Collective
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
New Venture Fund
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development
ViiV Healthcare Accelerate!
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Anonymous

\$50,000 to 99,999

The Audrey Irmas Foundation
for Social Justice
Barbara and David Lipman
Open Society Foundations
PepsiCo
Women's Foundation of Mississippi
Judith and Michael Wood

\$25,000 to 49,999

Bergman Draper Oslund, PLLC
Center on Budget and
Policy Priorities
Kazan McClain Partners' Foundation
Mississippi Low-Income
Child Care Initiative
O'Melveny & Myers LLP
Anonymous

\$10,000 to 24,999

Allen & Company LLC
BankPlus
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Butler Snow LLP
Center for Health Law and Policy
Innovation, Harvard Law School
Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP
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Legal Fellowship Program
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Latham & Watkins LLP
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Shadetree Partners, Inc.
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Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and
Dorr LLP

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 School of Law
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\$500 to 999

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 Julia Weaver and Robert Wiygul
 Charles Weisselberg
 Mari K. Wright

Statement of Activities

for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
SUPPORT AND REVENUES		
Contributions.....\$	1,313,063	\$ 1,300,529
In-kind Contributions.....	563,632	620,729
Grants.....	2,470,050	3,748,854
Legacies and Bequests.....	-	325,412
Gain on sale of donated stock.....	-	5,304
Miscellaneous.....	19,909	24,480
Contract Services.....	65,175	53,045
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUES	4,431,829	6,078,353
EXPENSES		
Program Services.....	3,608,064	3,518,598
Management and General.....	402,681	398,469
Fundraising.....	471,848	390,044
TOTAL EXPENSES	4,482,593	4,307,111
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(50,764)	1,771,242
RETURN OF GRANT FUNDS	(3,900)	(13,340)
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS	(54,664)	1,757,902
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	2,844,722	1,086,820
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR\$	2,790,058	\$ 2,844,722

Statement of Financial Position

At December 31, 2017 and 2016

ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash.....\$	747,783	\$ 318,374
Restricted Cash.....	900,000	-
Investments.....	2,244	-
Receivables.....	923,319	2,285,750
Prepaid Expenses.....	18,203	22,904
	2,591,549	2,627,028
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, net	304,401	333,175
OTHER ASSETS		
Deposits.....	10,822	10,822
	2,906,772	2,971,025
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable.....	30,597	13,419
Accrued Expenses.....	85,549	76,780
Payroll Liabilities.....	568	1,104
Note payable, current.....	-	35,000
	116,714	126,303
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted.....	561,877	141,329
Temporarily Restricted.....	2,228,181	2,703,393
	2,790,058	2,844,722
\$	2,906,772	2,971,025

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

Champions of Justice Honorees (2003-2017)

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
Ray Mabus and Dr. Alferdteen Harrison, 2017

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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
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