



Stepping

in

for those left out

MISSISSIPPI
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE

Injustice
anywhere
is a threat to
justice
everywhere

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

An HIV/AIDS patient is denied housing because of his illness.

LGBT Mississippians risk discrimination under a law that favors some religious beliefs over others.

A paperwork error puts a hard-working woman in foreclosure.

A high school football player is kicked out of school without cause.

Senior citizens watch their homes deteriorate around them as long-promised repairs are never made.

Each of these situations is different. What all have in common is the Mississippi Center for Justice as the organization stepping in and fighting to make things right.

Since 2003, the Mississippi Center for Justice (MCJ) has worked to advance racial and economic justice in the arenas of housing, healthcare, consumer protection, disaster relief, and education.

But MCJ realizes that injustice knows no boundaries. In 2016, MCJ took a stand through signature cases that testify to the organization's belief that fighting for a fair resolution for even one Mississippian in need is a step toward transforming Mississippi into a place where justice really *is* for all.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. noted, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." MCJ believes the reverse is also true. Justice anywhere – especially in a state long known for poverty and discrimination – is a threat to injustice everywhere.

"Why this effort here, why now? Because this is the place and the time where we can make a difference. This is where the tools we have as lawyers can bring forth the kind of justice that people need."

Reilly Morse, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mississippi Center for Justice



IN MY STATE

Mississippians
FOR
EQUALITY

NO HATE
IN MY STATE

 HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN

NO HATE

Championing Equality

A signature 2016 case for MCJ was *Barber v. Bryant*, a lawsuit filed by the Mississippi Center for Justice and attorney Rob McDuff of McDuff & Byrd Law Firm **challenging House Bill 1523** passed by the Mississippi Legislature and signed by Governor Phil Bryant.



(opposite page)
MCJ Advocacy Director
Beth Orlansky speaks
to a group of supporters
after HB1523 victory.

(left)
MCJ attorneys and
Barber v. Bryant plaintiffs
leaving court after HB1523
lawsuit hearing.

The new law would have allowed discrimination in many situations based upon a specific set of religious beliefs, including the belief that marriage should be between a man and a woman and the belief that only married, heterosexual couples should engage in sexual relations. The law allowed clerks to cite religious objections to recuse themselves from issuing marriage licenses to same sex couples, and sought to protect merchants who refused services to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender people from being sued for discrimination. In addition to targeting same sex couples with regard to marriage, the law condoned discrimination against transgender people, as well as against unmarried people, straight or gay, that engage in sexual relations.

The lawsuit filed by MCJ and McDuff claimed the controversial measure violated the principle of the separation of church and state contained in the First Amendment of the Constitution. Plaintiffs in the suit included Mississippi ministers, community leaders, civic activists, and a Hattiesburg church. The plaintiff group included gay, lesbian, transgender, and straight Mississippians – people from all walks of life standing together against discrimination.

At a hearing in June 2016, U.S. District Court Judge Carlton Reeves issued an injunction blocking the law from taking effect on July 1 on the grounds that the law was unconstitutional. At the time of this writing, Governor Bryant was appealing the decision. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals denied the governor's request for a stay in the lower court's decision, ensuring the law will not go into effect until after the 5th circuit hears the appeal case. The court also denied Governor Bryant's request to expedite the appeal.

The injunction was a significant victory for equality in Mississippi, a state struggling to overcome a reputation for discrimination.

“Ensuring that government maintains neutrality on religious beliefs and respects religious diversity is part of our commitment to Mississippi as a social justice state,” said Beth Orlansky, advocacy director for the Mississippi Center for Justice. “Granting special protections to one set of religious views would allow legalized discrimination to put at risk decades of progress to secure full rights for *all* Mississippians.”



(left) MCJ Advocacy Director Beth Orlansky is interviewed by the media after HB1523 success. (right) MCJ Consumer Protection Director Charles Lee helps to spread the “No Hate in My State” message through social media.

“I knew that history was being made in Mississippi.”

Pastor Brandilynne Dear was ordained in 2006 and was leading a church-based ministry for recovering drug addicts when she came out as a lesbian.

“I lost my ministry and my standing in the community,” Dear recalls. “I had dedicated my life to helping others recover from addiction and rebuild their lives. I walked with them through some of their darkest and most difficult moments. Some had called me a hero. Then suddenly, I went from a hero to an abomination, and the very ones I had helped find their lives again turned on me. They began to bully me via social media and use the Bible that I love to condemn me. It was devastating. It took me two years to realize that even though the *church* might not love me, *God* loves me.”

Dear founded the Joshua Generation Metropolitan Community Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, with the goal of sharing God’s love with everyone, including the LGBT community. When HB 1523 was passed, Dear and her wife, Susan Magnum, who serves as director of worship with Joshua Generation MCC, joined other concerned Mississippians as plaintiffs in the lawsuit against HB 1523 filed by the Mississippi Center for Justice.

“When I heard about HB 1523, all of those wounds opened back up. I could feel the agonizing pain all over again. This is not God! God would never do the things that this bill suggested. I’m not sure if I was more upset about the harm that this bill would cause people in my community, or the horrific picture that it was painting of Jesus Christ. This bill was far from Christ-like.”

Dear describes her reaction to Judge Carlton Reeves’ injunction against the bill as “ecstatic, but cautiously ecstatic, because I was certain that our governor would appeal,” and adding that she is prepared to join with MCJ and the other plaintiffs to “go as far as necessary” to prevent the law from taking effect.

“The most memorable moment of this experience was when I was on the stand representing our church, and I knew that history was being made in Mississippi. Many denominations were standing up for Christianity and the LGBT community. I never thought I would see the day that a priest, a rabbi, and pastors would unite against the religious right in the South. It was exactly what Jesus would have done.”



Disrupting



the Pipeline

In school districts throughout Mississippi, students of color are more likely to face disciplinary actions, including suspensions or expulsions. Depending upon the nature of the infraction, some students may be thrust into the criminal justice system at an early age. These students are more likely to drop out of school and to be pulled back into the criminal justice system as adults.

Realizing this “school to prison pipeline” is a serious issue in Mississippi, leaders in Sunflower County stepped up to partner with the Mississippi Center for Justice and others to address school discipline issues statewide.

MCJ, the Sunflower County Consolidated School District, the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi, and the Sunflower Parental Engagement Council partnered to create a pilot project to improve the approach to discipline and allow students who make mistakes to continue on the path to success.

Launched in 2015, the Sunflower County Systems Change Project (SCSCP) promotes changes in practices and policies followed by the media, the juvenile justice system, and the local school district to disrupt the school to prison pipeline.

SCSCP engaged local leaders, the media, and young men and boys of color to correct the unfair, negative narrative often perpetuated about young men of color. Through a project known as ROOTS (Reclaiming Our Origins Through Story), 19 young men from the

area embarked on an oral history project that is taking them across Sunflower County to learn more about their history, elders, peers, and themselves. The ROOTS project will generate media stories that provide an accurate perspective about young men of color, how they function in society, and their individual challenges and successes.

Advocates also work with the local school district and youth court to adjust discipline policies that shuttle students into the criminal justice system. An Advisory Council made up of administrators, students, parents, and other community members helps oversee and guide the reform efforts. Small SCSCP victories to date include revising the school district dress code to remove gender discrimination (girls were allowed to wear earrings while boys were not); racial discrimination, including prohibiting corn rows or “do rags;” and insignificant rules like shoe or belt colors that served only to impede learning.

As a next step, the Advisory Council will present recommendations addressing the issue of school discipline and its far-reaching implications to the school board. If the board approves the recommendations, the SCSCP partners will continue to work together to implement the suggestions and evaluate the program’s success.

If successful in Sunflower County, the SCSCP program will be implemented in other school districts throughout Mississippi to disrupt the school to prison pipeline.



“We are successful young men working to change the future.”

Kyle Pernell is one of 19 young African American men participating in the Sunflower County System Change Project (SCSCP), which seeks to disrupt the school to prison pipeline. Pernell, a 17-year-old high school junior, interviewed parents, teachers, authors, clergymen, and other community leaders about their perceptions of young men of color.

“The biggest surprise to me was that there was such a perception of African American men as failures,” Pernell says. “I heard people describe their impression of young men like me as people who have nothing better to do than to hang on corners, sell drugs, and produce children.”

“My reaction was, ‘Wow.’ I know there are people who do these things, but we also have young men trying to better themselves and their communities. We are not just objects on a street corner.”

Pernell and the other young men involved in the SCSCP are working to change that perception by sharing their own, positive stories and life goals with members of their community. The young men have partnered with the school district to create more after school programs focused on developing reading and writing skills, and hope to be an inspiration to the generations of young African American men that will follow them.

“My goal is first to better me and to be an example. If I can better myself, then I can be a better influence on the world and those around me,” Pernell says. “Through the SCSCP, I’ve met other young men, all with different stories and backgrounds and all working toward the common goal of changing this negative perception. I’ve gained some brothers and close friends. We’ve become a family, working together to try to help others. This program has helped us all realize that we are somebody. We are successful young men working to change the future.”



34

Expungement Clinics, Workshops, and Presentations

238

Expungement Cases Opened

702

Expungement

158

Employment Barriers Removed

53

Volunteers Engaged

Fighting for a Fresh



"Your record has been cleared."

Quinton Thompson, an Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps legal fellow, assisted with the MCJ expungement program in the Mississippi Delta. In an 11-month period, Thompson spoke with 420 people with criminal records and accepted 170 cases. In 130 of those cases, the clients' criminal records, which included everything from drug possession to shoplifting, were cleared.

"Some of the saddest cases were women who had been in abusive relationships involving domestic violence," Thompson says. "A lot of them had been charged with assault during an altercation with a violent husband or boyfriend. Once they left the relationships, they were model citizens, but they still had a record that prevented them from becoming the nurse, the teacher, or the professional they wanted to be. They would come to me in tears, saying, 'Everyone thinks I'm a violent person.' It was very sad."

For those whose records are cleared, the results are nothing less than life changing.

"When I was able to call that first client and say, 'Your record has been cleared,' that was a great feeling. And it was still a great feeling 129 cases later," Thompson says. "I received a letter from a client who had three children. She wrote, 'I made a mistake. My kids needed to know that I can do better and that *they* can do better. Thank you for helping me show them that.' To know that you're helping people pursue better options and that you're giving them hope is a euphoric feeling for an attorney. And for the client? It means *everything* to that person."

Mississippians convicted of misdemeanor crimes often find their past records a permanent barrier to obtaining employment, housing, and benefits.

In Mississippi, the state with the nation's second-highest incarceration rate, misdemeanor records prevent hundreds of people from being considered for life-changing jobs. Citizens who have maintained a clean record and would be in a better position to serve society if their criminal records were expunged often have no access to the assistance they need in order to pursue clearing their records.

In an effort to remove this barrier to employment, MCJ held a series of *pro bono* clinics around the state to walk people through the process and assist in completing the paperwork necessary for expungement. The program was developed in partnership with Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps.

MCJ was also instrumental in the passage of a 2016 state law that clarified and made consistent Mississippi judges' authority to expunge misdemeanor convictions. MCJ attorneys noted discrepancies in state law that allowed for expungement in some cases but not in others involving the same offense. MCJ brought these discrepancies to the attention of State Representative Mark Baker, head of the legislative judiciary committee, who supported the bill clarifying the law.

Start

"I felt the work I did in expungements was a great service to provide to my home state and my community. I would also like to stress that the Mississippi Center for Justice provided one of the only full time programs dedicated to this particular issue. Without MCJ, there would still be a considerable gap in this area."

Kyra McDonald, Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow

Standing Up for Fair Housing

In February 2016, MCJ and the Washington, D.C.-based Venable law firm filed a suit in federal court alleging that the City of Ridgeland violated the Fair Housing Act. At issue is the city's attempt to eliminate through rezoning five apartment complexes occupied by predominantly African-American and Latino residents.

According to the suit, Ridgeland officials and some residents complained – without supporting evidence – that the city's changing demographics were negatively impacting schools, driving white residents out, and lowering property values. The mayor and board of alderman identified apartment complexes in Southeast Ridgeland, where a substantial percentage of Ridgeland's minorities live, as the cause of the supposed problem and developed a rezoning plan to shut down and demolish the properties. According to the suit, the plan does not affect any other housing developments with similar population densities, including those with predominantly white residents.

The suit seeks to have the rezoning provisions of the 2014 zoning law declared invalid and to prohibit the City from enforcing them.

At press time, we learned that HUD reached a settlement with the City of Ridgeland that will require the apartments to stay open.

2014
INVALID
Law

“The Ridgeland ordinance is a textbook example of structural racism – a governmental policy masquerading as neutral that creates overwhelmingly negative outcomes based upon race. The consequences for African American and Hispanic residents, including dislocation, loss of housing security for families, and disruption of educational continuity, are exactly what the Fair Housing Act was designed to prevent.” – John Jopling, Mississippi Center for Justice Housing Law Director

Justice in Exposing a False HOPE

MCJ mounted a successful public awareness campaign and lobbying effort that helped defeat House Bill 1116, the so-called “HOPE bill,” during the 2016 legislative session.

Dubbed the HOPE bill because it would supposedly “restore hope, opportunity, and prosperity for everyone,” the bill would have, in reality, seriously hampered the state’s safety net programs by adding layers of bureaucracy and by preventing the state from providing food assistance to Mississippians after economic and natural disasters – such as Hurricane Katrina – by not allowing the state to pursue waivers on a three-month time limit on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

MCJ lobbied against the HOPE bill and launched a public information campaign encouraging Mississippians to contact their legislators and voice their opposition. Working with local and national advocacy partners, MCJ prepared a detailed analysis of the bill, pointing out its flaws and educating legislators on the cost to the state if passed. MCJ communicated with the legislature to the end, sending a pointed email to every legislator as they were on the floor waiting for the bill to come up on the calendar.

“What will you do when people working in low- and moderate-income jobs are hungry after the community devastation of a hurricane, of a tornado or a flood, or when businesses and factories close?” the email read in part. “What will you do for Mississippians who have no savings, who just lost their source of income and can’t turn to federal food assistance in a world of chaos because of HB 1116? Please vote NO on HB 1116.”

Advocating through Legislative Action

Responding to a SNAP Judgement

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food benefits for low-income individuals and families. When SNAP was established, the program included a rule that required able-bodied adults without dependents (dubbed “ABAWDs”) to find a job or enroll in a training or education program within three months or lose their SNAP benefits.

Since 2006 – the year Hurricane Katrina came ashore in Mississippi – the state of Mississippi had received a waiver exempting Mississippians from the three-month rule based on the fact that there were more unemployed Mississippians than there were jobs available.

In 2016, Governor Phil Bryant announced that Mississippi would no longer seek the ABAWD waiver, meaning that the three-month rule was reinstated. The resulting confusion led to thousands of Mississippians losing their benefits because they were unaware of or did not understand the new requirements.

While this is not a matter for litigation, the Mississippi Center for Justice has taken action to assist those left hungry as a result of the change. MCJ launched a public information campaign to help alert recipients of the new requirements. MCJ has been compiling data proving that the number of ABAWDs in Mississippi still outnumbers the jobs available in an effort to convince leadership that refusing to apply for the ABAWD waiver harms Mississippians in need.

According to the Mississippi Department of Human Services, 51,000 Mississippians may be affected by the three-month time limit.

2016
Highlights
in
Healthcare,
Consumer
Protection,
Education,
and
Housing

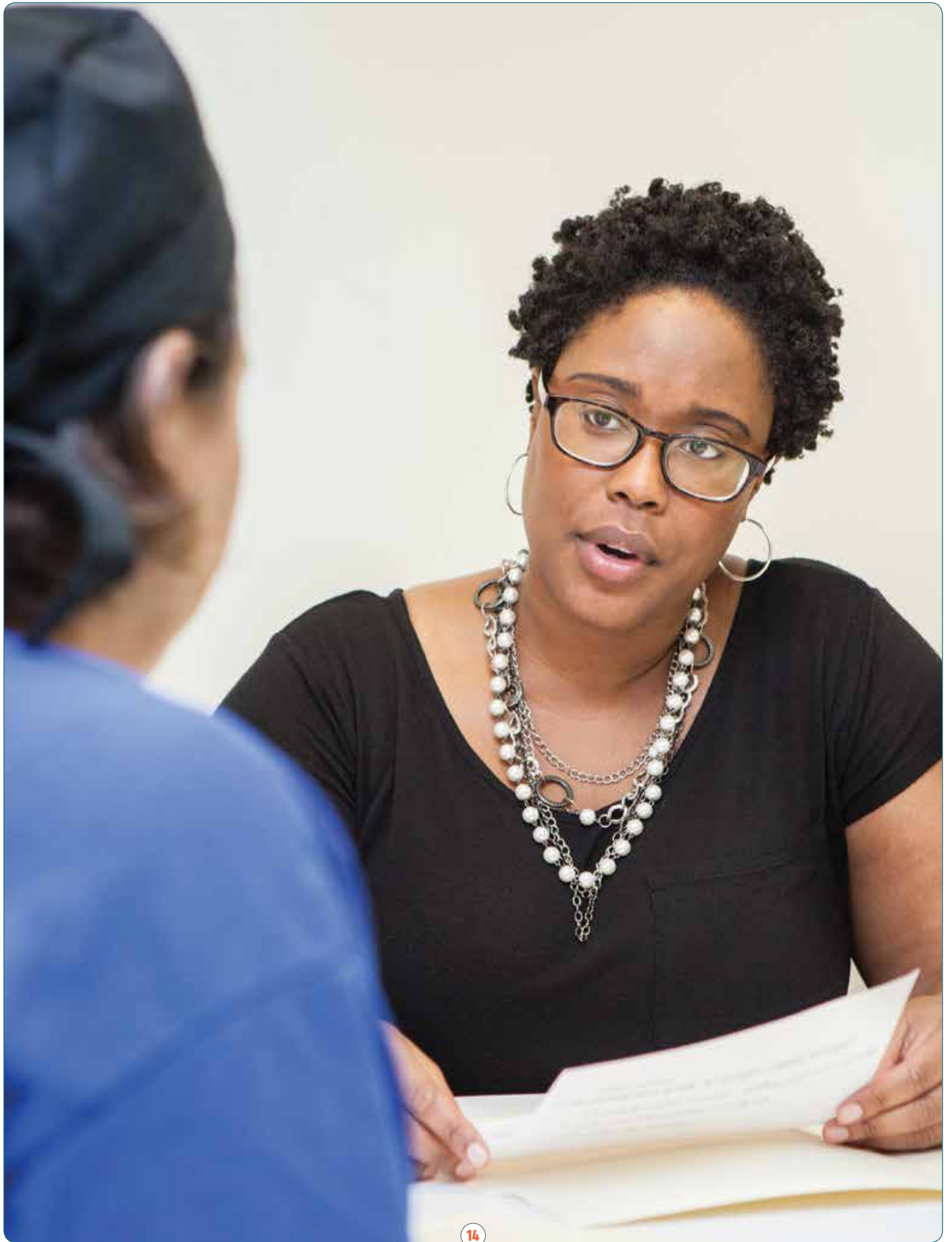
Healthcare

The medical-legal partnership between 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 35 clients living with HIV/AIDS.**

In partnership with the Southern AIDS Coalition, MCJ convened its **5th Annual Mississippi AIDS Justice Project** for a discussion about the legal rights of Mississippians living with HIV/AIDS.

Mississippi Center for Justice conducted **more than 25 outreach events** educating Mississippians on the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

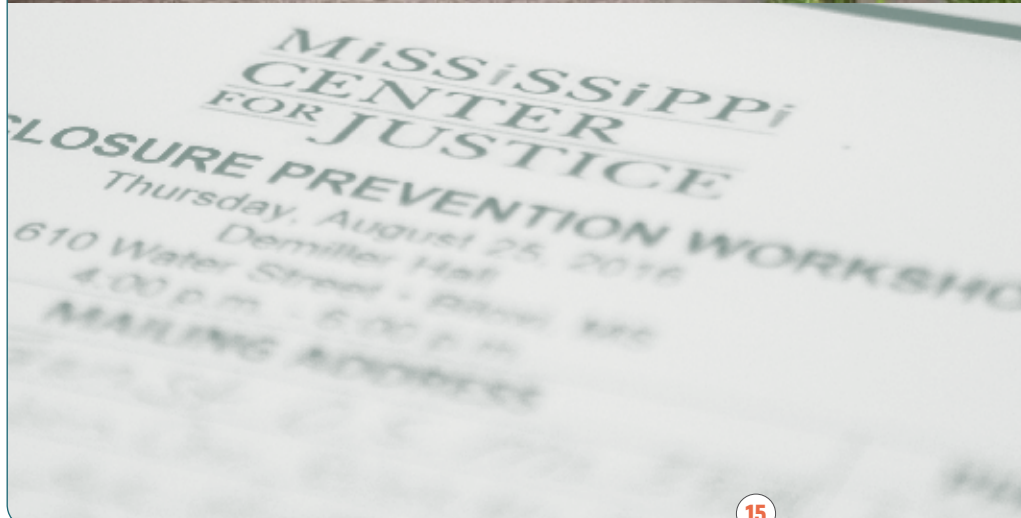
MCJ reached **hundreds of high school and college students** in the Delta and Jackson with information on the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program.



Consumer Protection

Mississippi Center for Justice continued its foreclosure prevention work, providing **legal services to 80 clients in 28 counties**, and hosting foreclosure prevention clinics in five cities statewide.

In partnership with the Women's Foundation of Mississippi and Nissan North America, Inc., MCJ will begin providing **free legal assistance to Hinds Community College students** over the next year. Areas of assistance include student loans, consumer debt and credit, criminal record expungement, and fair housing.



"The first thing that comes to my mind is relief."

Mary Williams found out she had been foreclosed on in the newspaper.

"My sister saw a notice that my house was being sold in a foreclosure sale," Williams says. "When she showed me that notice, it seemed like my heart stopped. I was so scared."

Williams' problems had begun seven years earlier, when illness forced her to retire. She had been trying to work with her mortgage company on a loan modification ever since, a frustrating process marked by paperwork errors, delays, and unreturned phone calls that culminated with learning from the newspaper that her home was in foreclosure.

"The mortgage company wasn't listening," Williams says. "They didn't care."

Faced with losing the home she had lived in for 21 years, Williams' first thought was where she, her disabled husband, and their two teenage sons would go.

Fortunately, the Mississippi Center for Justice had already become involved on Williams' behalf. Thanks to MCJ's intervention, the foreclosure sale was cancelled and Williams received the loan modification she had so long been seeking.

"When I hear the words 'Mississippi Center for Justice,' the first thing that comes to my mind is *relief*," Williams says. "If there was ever anything I could do for Ms. Jessica Catchings, my attorney there, I would do it immediately. I will forever appreciate the Mississippi Center for Justice to the highest for everything they did for me."

Education



"I knew it wasn't fair, but we had no one to represent us."

A hard-working student athlete at Mooreville High School in Lee County, Mississippi, John "J.T." Tyler's goal is to earn a college football scholarship and become a coach.

In the fall of 2015, J.T.'s dream was jeopardized when his high school principal smelled marijuana on the team bus and called for a police search. Even though no drugs were found on the bus and despite the fact that he proclaimed his innocence and passed a drug test, J.T. was suspended from Mooreville and sent to an alternative school.

J.T.'s mother, Kima Moore, appealed the decision to the school board, but her impression was that the board members' minds were made up before the hearing ever started.

"They just kept saying, 'Why would the principal lie?'" Moore says. "I said, 'Because he's human and humans make mistakes,' but they wouldn't listen to me. J.T. had never been in trouble before. I was angry and frustrated. I knew it wasn't fair, but we had no one to represent us."

"They didn't hear me out like they should have," J.T. says. "They sent me to the alternative school. I couldn't play football and I got behind in my schoolwork."

Then the Mississippi Center for Justice stepped in. After MCJ intervened, J.T. was readmitted to Mooreville High School and reinstated on the football team.

"Mississippi Center for Justice did a great job for us," Moore says. "I want J.T.'s story to be told so if this happens to any other family, they'll know where to turn for help."

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.

Mississippi Center for Justice received **61 calls from concerned parents** with issues in school districts in **30 Mississippi counties**.

Cases included:

25

general discipline cases

27

special education cases

4

residency cases

2

504 plans

2

bullying cases

1

youth court issue

MCJ provided services in **42 cases**
14 cases are still active

Housing



“The Mississippi Center for Justice carried my burden.”

In February 2016, several senior citizens contacted the Mississippi Center for Justice about deplorable conditions in their Vicksburg, Mississippi, senior apartment complex. Some 40 elderly residents were living with mold, mildew, leaks, and rain pouring through their ceilings and coming through their windows. One of those residents was 73-year-old Delores Hemphill.

“Whenever it rained, the carpet in my bedroom got wet,” Hemphill says. “You could smell the mold and mildew, and sometimes, it felt like you could taste it. I would wake up in the morning and my throat was so raw I could barely whisper. [The moisture and the smell in the bedroom] got so bad, I started sleeping on the couch. I did not sleep in my own bedroom for three months.”

Hemphill and other residents had complained to the apartment management for more than a year, but nothing was done. The housing division at the City of Vicksburg attempted to intervene, but management at the complex refused to make the repairs.

“I’m on a fixed income and I had to have some place to lay my head. I know some of the other residents were afraid to complain because they had nowhere else to go,” Hemphill says. “In that situation, you have to be humble and submissive, even when you feel like nothing is being done. I had done all I could within my little power and I couldn’t afford an attorney.”

Then a neighbor suggested that Hemphill contact Jessica Catchings, an attorney with the Mississippi Center for Justice. MCJ contacted the management and the owners, who responded less than two weeks later with a remediation plan. Repairs have since been made, with management now in the final stages of mold and mildew removal and repair. Not only has Delores Hemphill’s apartment been repaired, she has also been reimbursed for her linens and furnishings damaged by the constant moisture.

“Jessica Catchings has been my rock of Gibraltar,” Hemphill says. “She listened to me, she cared about me, and she worked diligently for me. Attorney Catchings and the Mississippi Center for Justice carried my burden for me. They interceded for me. They brought me some liberty. They were nothing less than a godsend.”

MCJ filed a HUD Fair Housing complaint on behalf of a single mother against an apartment complex in the Jackson Metro area with a policy of charging \$200 in additional rent for each additional occupant, including small children.

MCJ is collaborating with the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights to prepare residents of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods

in Gulfport for participation in the City’s “Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Assessment.” This program allows local residents to provide testimonials in reports submitted to HUD that reflect how well their communities comply with regulations governing the use of Community Development Block Grants.

“Attorney Catchings and the Mississippi Center for Justice carried my burden for me. They interceded for me. They brought me some liberty. They were nothing less than a godsend.”

Delores Hemphill, MCJ Client

Social Justice Campaign

STATE AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

AARP Mississippi
ACLU of Mississippi
Activists with a Purpose
Advocates for Environmental
Human Rights
Alabama Appleseed Center for
Law and Justice
All Saints Episcopal Church, Tupelo
Asian-American/Pacific Islander
Health Forum
Back Bay Mission
BancorpSouth
BankPlus
Better Choices for Mississippi
Better Schools Better Jobs
Boys and Girls Clubs of Mississippi
Brown & Associates, Inc.
Capital Area Bar Association Young
Lawyers Division
Catholic Diocese of Jackson
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
Community Builders' Leadership
Initiative
Community Foundation of
Greater Jackson
CredAbility
Crossroads Clinic
Delta Health Partners
Disability Rights Mississippi
Downtown Jackson Partners
Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi
First Pentecostal Church, Jackson
Florida Bar Foundation
Florida Legal Services
Fresh Start, City of Jackson
Goldring Woldenberg Institute of
Southern Jewish Life

Grace House
Greater New Orleans Fair
Housing Center
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
Gulf Coast Community Design Studio
Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center
Gulf Coast Interfaith Task Force
Gulf Coast Renaissance Corporation
Gulf Regional Planning Commission
Gulf Restoration Network
Habitat for Humanity - Metro Jackson
Hancock Housing Resource Center
Hinds County Human Resources
Agency
Hope Community Development
Agency
Hope Enterprise Corporation
Hope Policy Institute
Hunger Free Jackson
Indianola Promise Community
Jackson Medical Mall Foundation
Jackson, MS VA
Nollie Jenkins Family Center
Kingdom Community
Development Corp.
Legal Services Alabama
Legal Services of North Florida
Liberty Bank and Trust Company
Living Independence for Everyone
Louisiana Appleseed
Louisiana Civil Justice Center
Louisiana Justice Institute
Louisiana State Bar Association
Access to Justice Program
MACE
Magnolia Bar Association
Mercy Housing and Human
Development
Mid South Delta LISC
Mission Mississippi
Mississippi Access to Justice
Commission
Mississippi AFL-CIO
Mississippi Association for Justice
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

The Mississippi Bar
Mississippi Center for Education
Innovation
Mississippi Center for Legal Services
Mississippi Center for Nonprofits
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 Communities for
Public Education Reform
Mississippi Consumer Protection
Division, Office of the Attorney
General
Mississippi Credit Union Association
Mississippi Families as Allies for
Children's Mental Health
Mississippi Head Start Association
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 Primary Health
Association
Mississippi Religious Leadership
Conference
Mississippi State Department
of Health
Mississippi United to End
Homelessness
Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers
Project
Mississippi Youth Justice Project
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
The Pro Bono Project (New Orleans)
Public Policy Center of Mississippi
Rebuild Jackson County
Rethink MS
Sanderson Farms
Save our Schools Coalition
Self-Help
Soria City Civic Organization
South Delta Regional Housing
Authority
Southeast Louisiana Legal Services
Southern AIDS Coalition
Southern Echo
Southern HIV/AIDS Strategy Initiative
Southern Mississippi Planning and
Development District
Southern Poverty Law Center
Steps Coalition
Sunflower County Ministerial Alliance
Sunflower County School District
Sunflower County Youth Council
Sunflower County Parents and
Students Organization
Teach for America
The First Bank
Tougaloo College
Trustmark Bank
Turkey Creek Community Initiative
United Methodist Church State
Conference
United Pentecostal Church -
Mississippi District
University of Mississippi Medical
Center
Voice of Calvary Ministries

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.

We 2gether Creating Change
West Tennessee Legal Services
William Winter Institute for
Racial Reconciliation
Women's Foundation of Mississippi
Word and Worship Church
Working Together Jackson
Yazoo County Correctional Facility

NATIONAL PARTNERS

AARP Foundation Litigation
AFL-CIO
American Bar Association Center
for Pro Bono
American Bar Association Section
of Business Law
American Bar Association Section
of Litigation
Asian Americans for Change
Boat People SOS
Brennan Center
Center for Law and Social Policy
Center for Legal Aid Education/
Shriver Center
Center for Responsible Lending
Center on Budget and Policy
Priorities
Children in the Vanguard
City Bar Justice Center
Community Benefits Law Center
Community Catalyst
Congressional Hunger Institute
Emerson Fellows
Consumer Federation of America
Consumer Financial Protection Board
Corporation for National and
Community Service
Empire Justice Center
Equal Justice Works
FAST (Family and School Together)
Federal Deposit Insurance
Corporation
Georgetown Center for Children
and Families
Housing Works

Insight Center for Community
Economic Development
International Relief & Development
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
Under Law
Legal Services Corporation
Money Management International
NAACP Legal Defense and
Educational Fund, Inc.
National Alliance of Vietnamese
American Service Agencies
National Center for Law and
Economic Justice
National Consumer Law Center
National Economic Research
Associates, Inc.
National Employment Law Project
National Health Law Program
National Legal Aid & Defender
Association
National Low Income Housing
Coalition
National Partnership for Women
and Families
National Resources Defense Council
National Senior Citizens Law Center
National Women's Law Center
Neighborworks
New York Lawyers for the
Public Interest
Opportunity Agenda
Oxfam America
Parents for Public Schools-National
People's Institute
Pro Bono Net
Save the Children
Shriver Center
Vietnamese American Bar
Association of Northern California

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Statement of Activities

for the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014

	2015	2014
SUPPORT AND REVENUES		
Contributions.....\$	1,200,679	1,238,104
In-kind Contributions.....	420,377	313,498
Grants.....	1,352,912	2,608,536
Interest and Dividends.....	353	563
Miscellaneous.....	907	1,453
Contract Services.....	151,699	244,945
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUES	3,126,927	4,407,099
EXPENSES		
Program Services	4,103,057	4,106,164
Management and General.....	386,551	290,264
Fundraising	505,060	543,244
TOTAL EXPENSES	4,994,668	4,939,672
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(1,867,741)	(532,573)
RETURN OF GRANT FUNDS	(19,570)	(16,635)
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS	(1,887,311)	(549,208)
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	2,974,131	3,523,339
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	1,086,820	2,974,131

Statement of Financial Position

for the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014

ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash.....\$	420,457	1,303,886
Receivables.....	472,810	1,627,186
Prepaid Expenses.....	20,242	37,810
	913,509	2,968,882
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, net	376,656	431,003
OTHER ASSETS		
Deposits.....	9,272	9,272
	1,299,437	3,409,157
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable.....	23,948	177,878
Accrued Expenses.....	153,320	156,680
Payroll Liabilities.....	349	468
Note payable, current.....	35,000	-
	212,617	335,026
LONG TERM LIABILITIES		
Notes Payable	-	100,000
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	108,614	1,231,913
Temporarily Restricted	978,206	1,742,218
	1,086,820	2,974,131
	\$ 1,299,437	3,409,157

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

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“Sometimes a series of cases that may seem small in themselves produces a big step forward. In other cases, we hope to send a signal to others about what justice should mean in our world.

“And sometimes, it’s necessary for a Mississippi team to solve a Mississippi problem. The mission of the Mississippi Center for Justice is to provide a ‘homegrown’ capacity for justice and to ensure that the outcome is owned by Mississippians. In the past, legal groups have come into our state from all over the country to right wrongs in Mississippi. The core purpose of the Mississippi Center for Justice is to plant that capacity here and to direct that progress ourselves.”

*Reilly Morse, President and Chief Executive Officer,
Mississippi Center for Justice*

“When I hear the words ‘Mississippi Center for Justice,’ the first thing that comes to my mind is relief. I will forever appreciate the Mississippi Center for Justice to the highest for everything they did for me.” – Mary Williams, MCJ client



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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.

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