

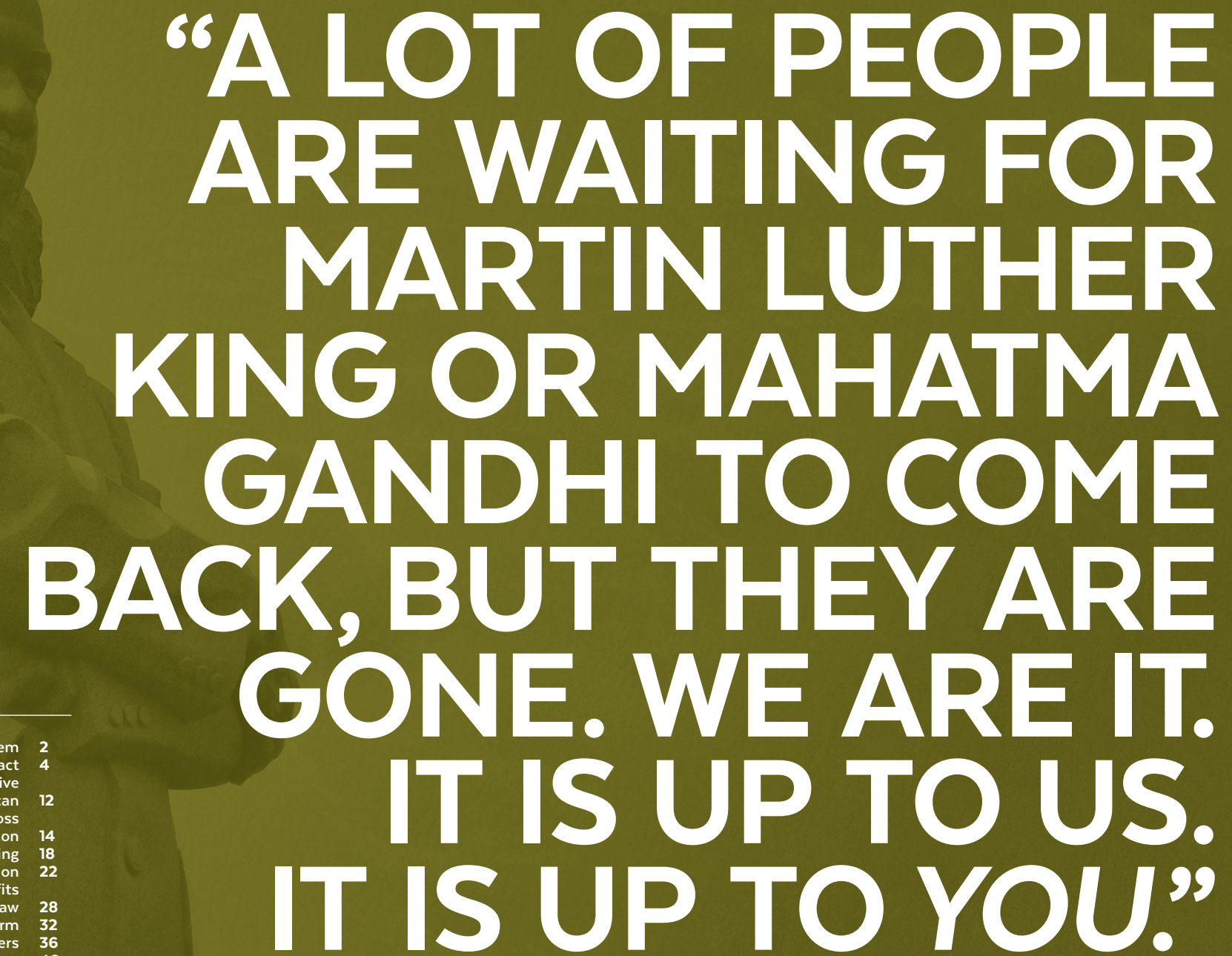


WE ARE THE THEY.

MISSISSIPPI
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE

IMPACT REPORT

2020–2021



“A LOT OF PEOPLE
ARE WAITING FOR
MARTIN LUTHER
KING OR MAHATMA
GANDHI TO COME
BACK, BUT THEY ARE
GONE. WE ARE IT.
IT IS UP TO US.
IT IS UP TO YOU.”

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN, CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST, FOUNDER OF THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

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People are thrown out of their homes because **COVID** threw them out of their jobs.
They should do something about that.

350,000 Mississippians don't have health insurance.
They should do something about that.

The justice courts are filled with people who won't get **JUSTICE** because they can't afford legal representation.
They should do something about that.

Politicians are trying to **CENSURE** the teaching of Mississippi history.
They should do something about that.

There are Mississippians living in poverty and under oppression, not because of choices *they* made, but because of a **SYSTEM DESIGNED** to keep them oppressed.
They really should do something about that.

In the fight to dismantle Mississippi's culture of injustice, there is no "they" coming to the rescue.

***THAT FIGHT
IS UP TO US.***

It's up to those of us who are willing to confront the challenges of racial, economic, and social injustice head on.

It's up to those who will stand up for people of color, the poor, and those shut out of the legal justice system.

The fight is up to us, and to those who support us and fight alongside us.

THE MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE
We are the they.



IT'S UP TO US TO DISMANTLE THE SYSTEM

It's common to hear that Mississippi's justice system is broken, but in reality, it works exactly as it was designed to work. Issues in Mississippi today don't just "pop up." They're manifestations of a generations-old, systemic effort to keep people of color, the poor, and other historically marginalized people stuck in a perpetual sharecropping system that benefits the wealthy and powerful.

THE MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE (MCJ) AND ITS SUPPORTERS WORK TO DISMANTLE THAT SYSTEM THROUGH A POTENT COMBINATION OF DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES, STRATEGIC POLICY ADVOCACY, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH.

MCJ's ongoing campaigns focus on fair housing, consumer protection and public benefits, health law, and immigration. But MCJ's work isn't limited to those areas.

MCJ is nimble and resourceful, taking on cases that may not fit into a single program area – or an existing budget allocation – but that do fit into MCJ's mission. When MCJ sees injustice, MCJ takes it on, raising the money and championing the cases that lead to change.

MCJ sees the opportunities lost, the damage caused, and the people hurt by Mississippi's systemic racism and injustice every day. Our work on the frontlines and in the trenches shapes our work at the policy level.



Vangela M. Wade

"MCJ'S WORK GIVES EVERYONE WHO IS A PART OF IT – OUR ATTORNEYS, OUR PARTNERS, OUR SUPPORTERS, AND THE CLIENTS WE SERVE – THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE ACTION.

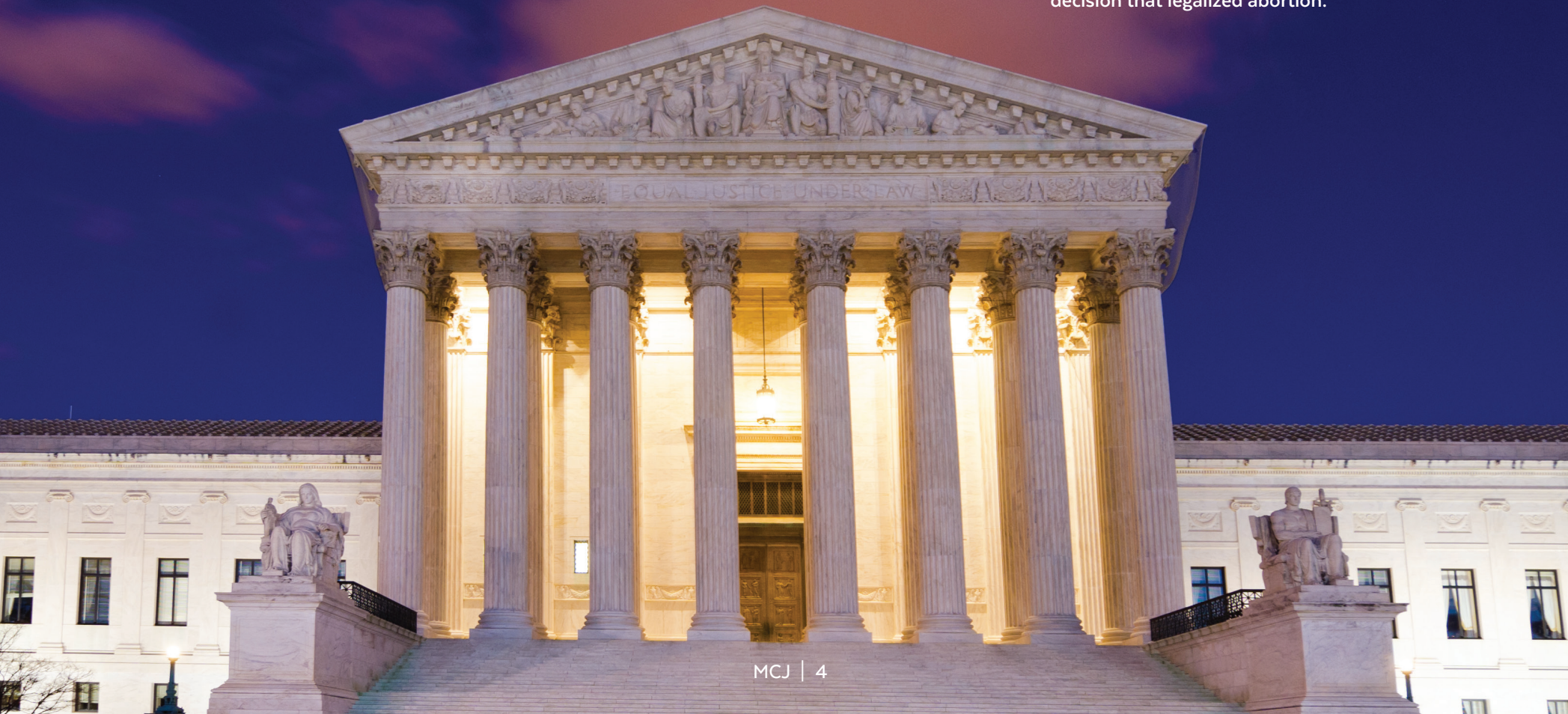
Together, we are the 'they' that will create a Mississippi in which everyone who wants a better life, stability, and equity will have it."

VANGELA M. WADE, MCJ President and CEO

ONE CASE AT A TIME, WE'RE BREAKING DOWN THAT GENERATIONS- OLD, OPPRESSIVE SYSTEM AND REPLACING IT WITH JUSTICE FOR ALL.

THE FIGHT FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IS UP TO US

On December 1, 2021, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, a landmark case that threatens to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. The leaked draft of a Supreme Court majority opinion on May 2, 2022, indicates the court *will* overturn the 1973 decision that legalized abortion.



“FOR OVER 50 YEARS, THE SUPREME COURT HAS SAID WE HAVE THIS RIGHT. THIS CASE COULD TAKE ALL OF THAT AWAY. WE ARE GOING COMPLETELY BACKWARD.”

SHANNON BREWER, CLINIC DIRECTOR, JACKSON WOMEN'S HEALTH ORGANIZATION

MCJ served as co-counsel in the case, representing Jackson Women's Health Organization, Mississippi's only abortion clinic, in its fight to block a 2018 law passed by the Mississippi legislature that would ban abortions after 15 weeks, well before fetal viability. If upheld, the law will have the greatest impact on poor women and women of color.

“Our patients are the women who can't afford to take more time off work to travel or fly to another state to have an abortion,” said Shannon Brewer, clinic director at Jackson Women's Health Organization. “If this law is allowed to take effect, it will be detrimental to women in Mississippi. It will be detrimental to women in the South, and, eventually, **this law is going to be detrimental to women everywhere.**”



“It's ironic that the State of Mississippi brought this lawsuit, since the State of Mississippi does such a poor job of helping its citizens *after* they're born. Mississippi ranks last nationally in virtually every category measuring the well-being of its people, from healthcare to education to food security. **If the State of Mississippi genuinely cared about women and children, it would do a better job of caring for the women and children who already live here.**”

VANGELA M. WADE, MCJ PRESIDENT AND CEO
*Remarks on the steps of the United States Supreme Court Building
December 1, 2021*

At the time of this writing, the Supreme Court's decision was still pending. In the meantime, MCJ is not only preparing for the possibility that the 2018 law will go into effect and, more ominously, that the Supreme Court could overrule *Roe v. Wade* completely and allow states to outlaw abortion entirely, which would happen quickly in Mississippi as a result of the state's existing trigger law. MCJ is prepared to fight on multiple fronts, to advise the clinic and pro-choice groups, and to defend those who provide abortion care and are charged with crimes under the changing landscape.



Through the George Riley Impact Litigation Initiative, MCJ pursues landmark cases with the potential to change lives in Mississippi and nationwide.

PARTNERS

THE CENTER FOR
REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
New York

PAUL WEISS RIFKIND WHARTON
& GARRISON
New York

THE FIGHT FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IS UP TO US

MCJ IS NOT A CRIMINAL DEFENSE FIRM.

But when Curtis Flowers spent 23 years in prison due to prosecutorial misconduct rooted in racism, MCJ joined the fight to set Flowers free. MCJ was drawn into the proceedings by a gross, repeated miscarriage of justice that embodied the pathology of racism in Mississippi's criminal justice system.

Curtis Flowers was tried for murder an unprecedented six times in Mississippi, despite the absence of any evidence indicating the 26-year-old gospel singer with no criminal record would commit this violent crime and despite compelling evidence that pointed to other suspects. **Flowers' first three trials resulted in convictions and death sentences, every one of which was overturned on appeal by the Mississippi Supreme Court** due to misconduct on the part of the prosecutor, Montgomery County District Attorney Doug Evans.

"I got my hopes up every time," Flowers said. "But the worst trial was the first one because I just couldn't believe it was happening. Everybody in this community knew me. How could they think I was a murderer?"

“NO ONE ELSE
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CURTIS FLOWERS



The fourth and fifth trials — the only trials that included more than one Black juror — ended in mistrials. After a sixth trial, a majority-white jury found Flowers guilty; he was returned to Death Row at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. The U.S. Supreme Court overturned that guilty verdict, ruling that Evans had unfairly excluded African Americans from the jury over the course of the six trials.

MCJ joined Flowers’ defense team when his case was sent back for a potential seventh trial.

In December 2019, MCJ helped persuade the trial judge to release Flowers on bail for the first time since his original arrest nearly 23 years earlier. MCJ also filed a motion to remove Doug Evans from the case; as a result, Evans withdrew. The Mississippi Attorney General then took over the case. In a months-long campaign, MCJ and its co-counsel persuaded the Attorney General to dismiss the case entirely.

ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2020, THE PROSECUTION THAT HAD BEEN HANGING OVER CURTIS FLOWERS’ HEAD FINALLY CAME TO AN END.

The State of Mississippi awarded Curtis Flowers \$500,000 in compensation for the 23 years of his life lost. MCJ and its legal partners have also filed a civil lawsuit on Flowers’ behalf against Doug Evans and three investigators who worked on the case.

After 23 long years, justice was finally served when the charges against Curtis Flowers were dismissed. But for far too many Americans, particularly for people of color, justice never comes.

“The Flowers case was a consequence of 400 years of racism that is still with us today and that affects our modern criminal justice system,” said Rob McDuff, director of MCJ’s George Riley Impact Litigation Initiative and one of the attorneys who represented Curtis Flowers. “Every blow we strike against that racism is important. We’re so happy that Curtis was finally released, but we also hope this decision will have some impact beyond this case itself.”

Despite all he has endured, Curtis Flowers still chooses to live in the small Mississippi town where he was raised.

“I’m disappointed in Mississippi, but it’s still my home,” Flowers said. “No one else should ever have to go through anything like what I went through. My hope is that my case prevents this from ever happening again in the future. We need people in these positions in Mississippi that will keep this from ever happening again.”



PARTNERS

HOGAN LOVELLS
Washington D.C.

MISSISSIPPI INNOCENCE PROJECT

CORNELL DEATH PENALTY PROJECT
Cornell Law School, New York

HENDERSON HILL
North Carolina



RIGHT:
Curtis Flowers
makes up for lost
time reminiscing
with his father,
Archie Flowers.



THE FIGHT FOR FAIR AND ACCESSIBLE VOTING IS UP TO US

At this time when the right to vote is under attack in a way not seen for many years, Mississippi and other Southern states are engaged in redrawing election districts for the first time since the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013 invalidated the preclearance provision of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

Without the preclearance oversight that the U.S. Justice Department previously provided, MCJ is working to prevent gerrymandering designed to dilute Black voting strength in state, city and, county voting districts. Any redistricting that doesn't comply with the Voting Rights Act and provide fair representation to *all* Mississippians will be met with legal challenges.



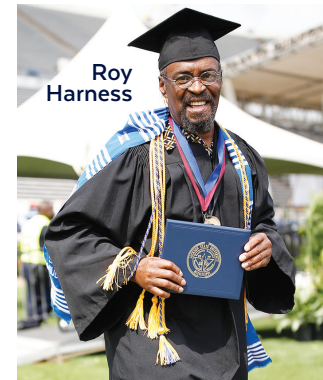
PARTNERS

FRED BANKS
Former Mississippi
Supreme Court Justice
Former MCJ Board Chair

DAVID LIPMAN
MCJ Board Member

ARMAND DERFNER
South Carolina

DON VERRILLI
Former U.S.
Solicitor General
MCJ Board Member



Roy
Harness

HARNESS V. WATSON

In response to a request from MCJ, the full United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit agreed to review Mississippi's felon disfranchisement provision from the Jim Crow 1890 Constitution. Arguments in the case were heard in September 2021.

The felon disfranchisement measure *permanently* bars anyone from voting who was convicted of certain crimes that the 1890 framers believed were committed mostly by Black people, even if the person has paid the penalty for the crime. The disqualifying crimes are bribery, theft, arson, obtaining money or goods under false pretense, perjury, forgery, embezzlement, and bigamy.

One of the plaintiffs for whom MCJ filed the lawsuit is Roy Harness, a military veteran who was convicted of forgery in 1986 during a period of drug addiction. Harness served his sentence, beat his addiction, went on to earn bachelor's and master's degrees in social work, and now helps others overcome addiction. Yet, Harness still cannot vote in Mississippi.

"I did my time. I'm clean and sober and I'm an educated, productive citizen," Harness said. "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."

"I NEVER IMAGINED IN MY WILDEST DREAMS WE WOULD BE REVISITING THE SAME KINDS OF ISSUES THAT WE VISITED IN THE 1960S.

I just never imagined that we would have to fight that battle over again. I'm devastated. I'm really heartbroken. It's unbelievable that I am observing this and watching this today...but it's real and it's happening and we have to fight back. We have to let the world know that this country is worth saving and that we need our citizens to be actively involved in the process."

DR. LESLIE-BURL MCLEMORE, recipient of MCJ's inaugural Fannie Lou Hamer Award and a 2021 Champion of Justice honoree

In 1962, Dr. McLemore was the first African American to register to vote in DeSoto County, Mississippi. Six decades later, he was the lead plaintiff in *McLemore v. Hosemann*, a lawsuit filed by MCJ that successfully removed provisions of the 1890 state constitution designed to dilute the voting power of Black Mississippians.

“IF YOU GOT LAND, YOU HOLD ONTO IT. YOU DON’T GET RID OF IT, BECAUSE THEY CAN’T MAKE NO MORE LAND.”

HENRY ROBBINS, MISSISSIPPI LANDOWNER



PARTNERS

CENTER FOR HEIRS’
PROPERTY PRESERVATION
South Carolina

KIMBERLY-CLARK
Texas

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND
Washington, D.C.

THE FIGHT TO END AFRICAN AMERICAN LAND LOSS IS UP TO US

When their parents died, Henry Robbins and his 13 siblings became the third-generation owners of 350 acres of timberland in Winston County, Mississippi. The land had been worked for — and long since paid for — by their father and grandfather.

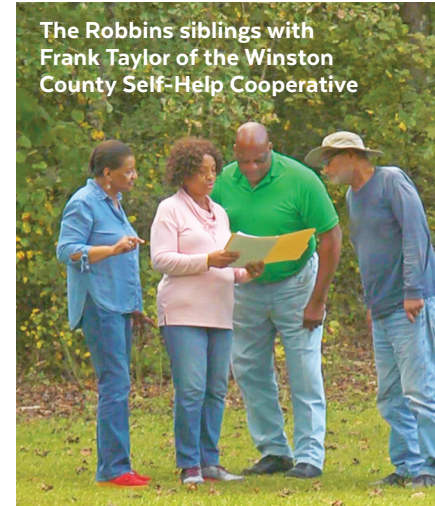
But when the Robbins siblings wanted to harvest and replant the timber on the land to build a strong financial future for their children and grandchildren, they discovered that an unrelated stranger had put his name on one acre of the property. Because they did not have a clear title to the property, the siblings could not make use of their own land.

The Robbins family’s case is a textbook example of an heirs’ property issue. Heirs’ property is land passed down informally from generation to generation, often because landowners died without a will. In the absence of a will, the land is considered jointly owned by all heirs. Without a clear title, none of the heirs can sell, mortgage, improve, or otherwise make use of land that rightfully belongs to them.

The property may be ineligible for federal assistance, like USDA farm programs. The heirs are also at risk of losing the land through tax sales or the dubious actions of unscrupulous developers.

OWNERS ARE FACED WITH EITHER GIVING UP THEIR PROPERTY OR GOING THROUGH THE COMPLEX, COSTLY LEGAL PROCESS OF RESOLVING TITLE ISSUES.

Heirs’ property issues most often affect racial minority groups, low-income households, and other vulnerable groups less likely to engage in estate planning, or who historically may have been hesitant to file deeds due to a well-founded mistrust of those in charge of recording property ownership.



The Robbins siblings with
Frank Taylor of the Winston
County Self-Help Cooperative



**BLACK FAMILIES IN
MISSISSIPPI HAVE BEEN
DISPROPORTIONATELY
IMPACTED BY HEIRS’
PROPERTY ISSUES,
WHICH PREVENT
THE TRANSFER
OF WEALTH
THROUGH THE
GENERATIONS.**

In 2021, MCJ and the South Carolina-based Center for Heirs’ Property Preservation formed the **Mobile Basin Heirs’ Property Support Initiative**, a two-year program designed to help families in Mississippi keep their forestland, build generational wealth, and promote sustainably managed forests. Underwritten by paper products manufacturer Kimberly-Clark and the World Wildlife Fund, the initiative will also provide landowners with forestry education and access to funding for conservation and management.

The initiative will help families like the Robbinses earn income from land that rightfully belongs to them and pass that land and the wealth it generates onto future generations, all while protecting Mississippi’s forests and wildlife habitat.

“We would never have considered selling this land,” Florine Robbins Stewart said. “It has value and it will have value for my future generations.”

THE FIGHT FOR EQUAL EDUCATION IS UP TO US



MCJ is compiling a comprehensive report that will be used to advocate for equitable distribution of resources for learning. MCJ will hold Mississippi's lawmakers accountable for responsible use of \$1.25 billion in CARES Act funding, including how CARES funds are applied to education.

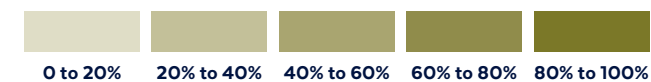
Mississippi's poor, rural children deserve the same access to education as every other child in Mississippi.

A YEAR OF LOST EDUCATION

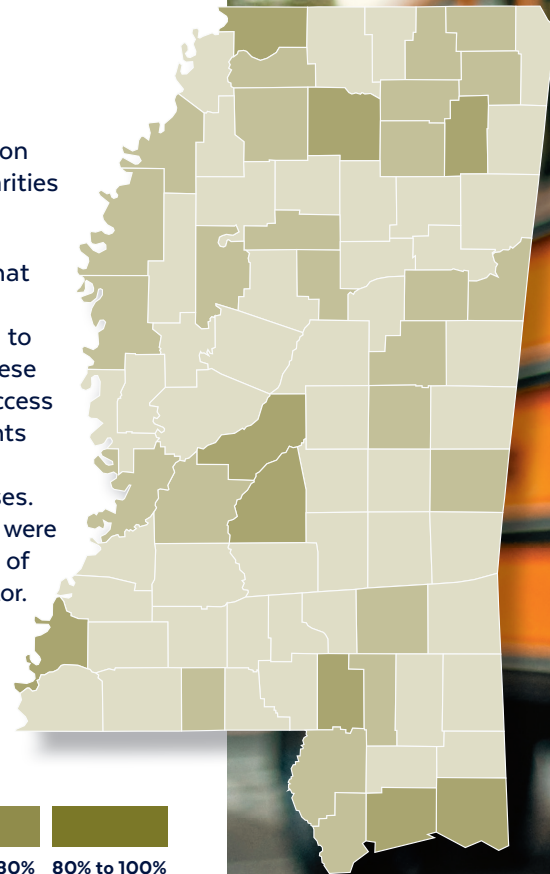
In 2021, MCJ launched a special education project in response to educational disparities magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Predominantly Black school districts that had already struggled for decades with inadequate funding had zero resources to transition to virtual learning. Many of these schools were located in areas without access to broadband, and many of their students couldn't afford *lunch*, much less the technology they needed for virtual classes. These children's parents, many of whom were frontline workers, didn't have the luxury of opting for homeschooling or paying a tutor.

PERCENTAGE OF K-12 STUDENTS IN HOUSEHOLDS USING THE INTERNET AT BROADBAND SPEEDS*



*Broadband speeds greater than or equal to 25 Mbps





**LEADERS WHO
UNDERSTAND
IT'S UP TO US**

A \$120,000 GIFT FROM AN ANONYMOUS DONOR ALLOWED MCJ TO LAUNCH THE EDUCATION PROJECT.

In May of 2021, the Black Voices for Black Justice Fund, an organization that fights systemic racism by supporting outstanding Black leaders, chose MCJ President and CEO Vangela M. Wade as one of 19 national Black Voices for Black Justice award winners. The award came with a \$50,000 honorarium, which Wade donated to MCJ to fund the education study and make recommendations based on its results. Wade's gift was matched by the MCJ Board of Directors.

The leadership of MCJ doesn't just say, "We are the they." These leaders put their money where their mouths are.

THE FIGHT TO TEACH HISTORY IS UP TO US

To not know history is to repeat it.

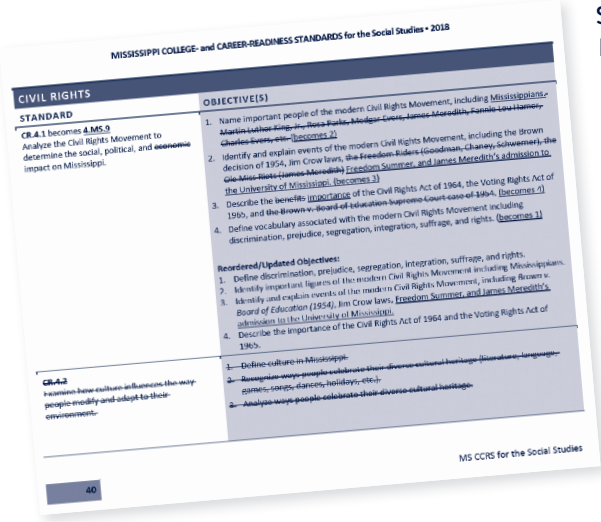
MCJ is taking a stand against attempts to censor the teaching of Mississippi history and to curb the academic freedom of teachers and professors in public schools and universities.

In 2022, MCJ monitored bills introduced in the Mississippi Legislature that would ban the teaching of critical race theory in public schools and universities. Critical race theory is a legal concept that links historic, discriminatory public policies with present-day disparities.

**CRITICAL RACE THEORY HAS NEVER BEEN TAUGHT
IN ANY OF MISSISSIPPI'S K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

The bill that eventually passed into law did not specifically mention "critical race theory," but includes vaguely worded language that could be interpreted as prohibiting teachers from presenting the full, factually accurate story of Mississippi's history — including education about racism and the civil rights movement — and the impact that history has today on healthcare, education, and housing.

This new law is nothing more than a political move designed to inspire fear and turn education into propaganda. Mississippi students — the next generation responsible for leading the state — will be hurt the most. Only when students learn the state's true history — good and bad — can they work together to move Mississippi forward.



Schools should not be political battlefields. MCJ will monitor reactions to this law and stands ready to defend teachers committed to teaching Mississippi's full history — good and bad.

At the time of this writing, MCJ was also monitoring changes proposed by the Mississippi Department of Education to the state's social studies curriculum, which have included removing specific references to happenings during the civil rights era and Mississippi leaders like Medgar Evers and Fannie Lou Hamer.



MCJ CREATED A WEBSITE THROUGH WHICH MISSISSIPPIANS CAN ADVOCATE FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND ENCOURAGE THE HONEST TEACHING OF MISSISSIPPI'S FULL HISTORY.

For more information and to join the fight, visit

Teachhistory.ms

“I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO BE ON THE STREETS. I WAS DEPRESSED. I COULDN’T SEE STRAIGHT. I DIDN’T KNOW WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO.”

J. T. WILLIAMS, MCJ HOUSING CLIENT, GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI

THE FIGHT FOR FAIR HOUSING IS UP TO US

THE COVID EVICTION HOTLINE

“2020 was a nightmare,” J. T. Williams said. “I never want to see that again in life.”

When Williams was laid off from his job at a Wendy’s restaurant during the COVID-19 pandemic, he fell behind on his rent and his landlord threatened to evict him. Williams, who had never missed a rental payment in the entire six years he had occupied a modest house in Gulfport, feared he would be thrown into the streets over \$800.

COVID-19 magnified long-standing disparities in Mississippi. When the economy began shutting down, people with low incomes and people living paycheck to paycheck were the first ones affected.

IN RESPONSE, MCJ SET UP THE ONLY STATEWIDE COVID EVICTION HOTLINE TO COUNSEL PEOPLE ON THEIR RIGHTS AND HELP KEEP THE ROOFS OVER MISSISSIPPIANS’ HEADS.

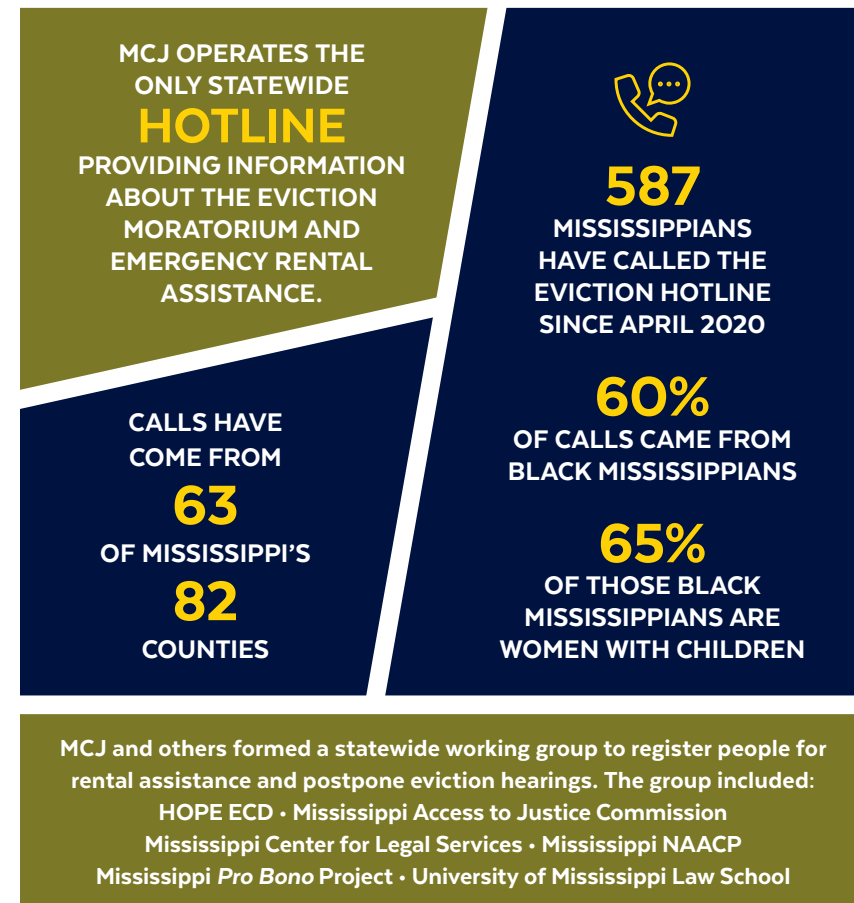
Despite a national and statewide eviction moratorium, landlords in Mississippi continued to pursue evictions. Many Mississippians facing eviction didn’t know there was a moratorium or how to apply for help. Families ordered to shelter in place and children attempting to keep up with schoolwork virtually suddenly had no place to shelter or to learn.

In the summer of 2020, the state of Mississippi used CARES money to set up emergency rental assistance programs to help tenants make their rent payments. But it was the same story — people didn’t know how to access the funds. MCJ continued to counsel people about the moratorium and advised them how to access the rental assistance funds. In many cases, MCJ went to court with clients to help prevent impending evictions.

MCJ helped hundreds of people like J. T. Williams apply for the moratorium and for the emergency rental assistance that kept him in his home until he could find another job.

“It got to the point where I could breathe again,” Williams said. “I didn’t get evicted, I got rental assistance, and I’m going to be okay.”

But for every J. T. Williams, there was another Mississippian who didn’t find help in time. In the fall of 2021, the eviction moratorium ended, but the hotline is still operating. MCJ is still answering calls related to rental assistance, still going to court with clients to prevent imminent evictions, and still working to keep people who lost their livelihoods to COVID-19 from losing their shelter, too.



TRANSFORMING MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITIES

MCJ worked with the City of Jackson Housing Authority, Delta Design Build, and Twin Forks Rising to perform the title work and legal services needed to renovate 21 blighted properties in Jackson, the Delta, and Hattiesburg into affordable housing units.

Funded by a grant from the Mississippi Bar Foundation and Bank of America, this campaign transformed properties that had become crime and fire hazards into community assets.

REWRITING MISSISSIPPI'S EVICTION LAWS

MCJ's pandemic eviction work provided a platform for policy work that led to reform in Mississippi's historically egregious landlord/tenant laws.

In 2021, MCJ filed an amicus brief supported by research in the case of *Conner v. Altin* noting serious flaws in Mississippi's eviction laws and expressing the opinion that, when challenged, the laws would be found unconstitutional.

JUDGE MICHAEL P. MILLS OF THE U.S. DISTRICT COURT NOT ONLY AGREED, BUT ALSO CITED MCJ'S RESEARCH IN HIS ORDER, WRITING:

“MCJ has conducted a survey of United States eviction laws and has failed to find any state eviction law which so clearly denies due process and equal protection as do Mississippi’s laws. MCJ research further determined that no eviction laws similar to Mississippi’s laws have survived a constitutional challenge...”

During the 2022 Mississippi legislative session, MCJ worked with a coalition of stakeholders to advocate with key legislators on a progressive landlord/tenant bill that was signed into law and better protects the rights of Mississippi renters.

UNDER THE OLD LAW, Mississippi was the only state that allowed same-day evictions. Only Mississippi required a judge to issue a writ of removal immediately at an eviction hearing and command that the sheriff or constable execute it immediately.

MCJ ADVOCATED FOR THE NEW LAW, which increases the amount of time between a judicial judgment for eviction and actual removal from the home to seven days.

UNDER THE OLD LAW, Mississippi was the only state that allowed a landlord to take immediate control of a tenant's possessions. This



provision dated back to the days of agricultural sharecropping, when a landlord could seize the tenant's tools and prevent the tenant from working elsewhere.

MCJ ADVOCATED FOR THE NEW LAW, which in addition to the seven days between the judgment and removal, gives the tenant 72 hours from the time of eviction to return to the home to secure personal property.

THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE IN JUSTICE COURT IS UP TO US

“I WAS WORRIED THAT MY WAGES WOULD GET GARNISHED AND THAT I WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO AFFORD MY CAR NOTE. AND IF I DON’T HAVE A CAR, I CAN’T GET TO WORK.”

JUSTIN RUCKER, JUSTICE COURT DEFENDANT, YAZOO CITY, MISSISSIPPI

Justin Rucker had never let his heart condition stop him from working. But when COVID-19 swept through Mississippi, Rucker’s underlying medical condition and his job as a frontline worker with Walmart combined to literally put his life on the line. When Rucker was forced to take unpaid leave, he fell behind on his medical bills and found himself in court.

People are called into Mississippi’s justice courts over unpaid medical bills, predatory loans they can’t repay, landlord/tenant issues, and other matters referred to as “small claims” under the law.

FOR THESE MISSISSIPPIANS, MANY OF WHOM ARE ALREADY LIVING ON THE EDGE FINANCIALLY, A JUDGMENT AGAINST THEM CAN BE THE BEGINNING OF A DOWNWARD SPIRAL THAT LEADS TO THE LOSS OF A CAR, A JOB, OR A HOME.

Sometimes, the solution is as simple as asking the judge to require evidence of the debt or working out a payment plan. But while the judge knows there are options, the judge has to remain impartial. The plaintiff and the plaintiff’s attorney know there are options, but they’re in court to win the case. Typically, the only person who doesn’t know the solutions available to them is the defendant.

MCJ’s free Justice Court Navigator Program puts someone who knows the law on their side.

THE JUSTICE COURT NAVIGATOR PROJECT CONTRIBUTED TO A

**20%
REDUCTION**
IN DEFAULT JUDGEMENTS

2,374

PEOPLE HAVE RECEIVED NAVIGATOR SERVICES IN HINDS COUNTY SINCE THE MCJ PROGRAM LAUNCHED THERE IN 2019

700

PEOPLE IN 6 COUNTIES HAVE RECEIVED NAVIGATOR SERVICES SINCE THE PROGRAM LAUNCHED IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA IN 2020

The initial funding to launch the Justice Court Navigator program was provided in 2018 by the Harvard Law School Public Service Venture Fund. Additional funding to extend and expand the program in Hinds County was donated by Janet and Luther Ott in 2019 and through a 2020 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

In 2020, Ty Pinkins joined MCJ through an Equal Justice Works Fellowship that expanded the Justice Court Navigator Program into the Mississippi Delta. The Justice Court Navigator Program has been extended into six counties thanks to the generous support of:

Donna and Jim Barksdale
Nancy and Roy Campbell
Barbara and David Lipman
Beth and Steve Orlansky
Carol Puckett

Roy Rucker, Sr.
Southwestern Home
Health Care, Inc./
Ivy Parker-Snider

Southwestern Private
Services, Inc./
Ivy Parker-Snider
Rebecca Sive and
Steven Tomashefsky
Lenora Jo Winn

MCJ representatives meet with community members as they arrive at court, informing them of their rights and options and giving them the knowledge and the confidence they need to advocate for themselves before the judge.

Ty Pinkins, MCJ Equal Justice Works Fellow, leads the Justice Court Navigator Program in the Mississippi Delta. With Pinkins’ guidance, Justin Rucker asked the judge for a payment plan that allowed him to keep his paycheck, his car, and his job.

“WHEN TY CAME IN TO OFFER HELP, IT WAS LIKE AN ANGEL WALKED INTO THE BUILDING,” RUCKER SAID. “IT TOOK A LOT OF WEIGHT OFF MY SHOULDERS. I KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE OKAY.”





THE JUSTICE COURT ACCESS PROGRAM

msjusticecourthelp.com

MCJ’s Justice Court Access Program offers virtual resources to help litigants prepare for appearances in justice courts statewide.

Litigants may access a website featuring training videos, sample court forms, court rules, law libraries, frequently asked questions, and other helpful resources.

A virtual court navigator chatbot dubbed “Lex” has assisted some **200 PEOPLE** by quickly answering questions about the justice court system.

PARTNER:
Mississippi Access to Justice Commission

“I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN POVERTY IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA, just a few miles from the courts where I now meet with clients. This is the work I came here to do. This is why I went to law school. I’m affecting the lives of people who look like my family. Who look like me.”

TY PINKINS, MCJ EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS FELLOW
JUSTICE COURT NAVIGATOR



Justin Rucker
and Ty Pinkins



THE FIGHT AGAINST PREDATORY LENDERS IS UP TO US

It's not enough to just tell low-income Mississippians they should stay away from predatory lenders. MCJ established the New Roots Credit Partnership to offer an alternative to predatory lenders and payday loans.

New Roots matches employers with financial institutions to offer small-dollar loans at reasonable terms to their employees. Borrowers are required to complete financial literacy courses.

This New Roots Credit Program not only decreases reliance on predatory lenders, but also acts as a bridge between unbanked Mississippians and the mainstream banking industry. Program participants have an opportunity to open bank accounts, enroll in direct deposit, and establish long-term banking relationships and the good credit required for home ownership and other opportunities for economic stability and advancement.

MCJ established New Roots Credit Partnerships with:

- City of Jackson/BankPlus
- City of Laurel/The First Bank
- Sanderson Farms/A network of banks in communities in which Sanderson Farms operates

MCJ WILL MEASURE THE PROGRAM'S SUCCESS IN TERMS OF LOANS REPAYED, BANKING RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHED, AND CREDIT SCORES RAISED.



7

CITY OF JACKSON
EMPLOYEES TOOK OUT
LOW-INTEREST,
SMALL DOLLAR LOANS

25

CITY OF JACKSON
EMPLOYEES ATTENDED
A FINANCIAL
LITERACY CLASS

THE FIGHT AGAINST FORECLOSURE IS UP TO US

In 2021, MCJ continued its long-standing work to keep more Mississippians in their homes.

78
HOUSEHOLDS
COUNSELED ON
FORECLOSURE
PREVENTION

- 25 senior citizens
- 8 households with children
- 4 veterans

Many qualified for Home-owners Assistance Funds from the Mississippi Home Saver Plus program, which gives up to \$50,000 to homeowners to catch up on their mortgage payments

2
FORECLOSURES
PREVENTED

11
LEGAL
CLINICS
CONDUCTED
STATEWIDE

THE FIGHT FOR A FRESH START IS UP TO US

For Mississippians once convicted of crimes, their past records can become a permanent barrier to obtaining employment or housing. MCJ partners with Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps to help those who have paid the penalties and put their past behind them navigate the complex process of having their records expunged.

IN 2021:
162
CLIENTS IN
26
COUNTIES
ASSISTED

- 67% Black
- 30% White
- 1% Latino
- 1% Native American

- 24% college graduates
- 41% completed some college



In addition to conducting virtual and onsite clinics, MCJ launched a user-friendly app that helps individuals determine whether they are eligible for expungement.

PARTNERS

HINDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MISSISSIPPI VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT



**THE LEGACY
OF RACIAL
DISCRIMINATION
IS REFLECTED
IN THE VERY
DESIGN OF
MEDICAID.**

Medicaid and Medicare were created in 1965, in an era in which the Southern states were resisting federal oversight and civil rights legislation. While Medicare was administered at the federal level to provide for every senior in America, Medicaid allowed each state to decide which segments of its population Medicaid would cover.

Discretionary use of Medicaid has long allowed states to refuse access to affordable healthcare to Blacks, the working poor, and other low-income populations that need help the most.

IT'S NO COINCIDENCE
THAT 8 OF THE 12
NON-EXPANSION STATES,
INCLUDING MISSISSIPPI,
ARE SOUTHERN STATES.

THE FIGHT FOR ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE IS UP TO US

Mississippi ranks last nationally in almost every indicator of health and well-being. But Mississippi ranks first or second in deaths due to heart disease, diabetes, and more recently, COVID-19. **And yet, Mississippi remains one of 12 states that refuses to expand Medicaid** to help low-income families afford healthcare.

Medicaid expansion is not just a matter of healthcare. It's a matter of justice. Healthcare is the place where Mississippi's system of injustice is the most inhumane, where politicians who support that system are deliberately choosing to turn down policies that would improve the health and well-being of all Mississippians.

MCJ and a coalition of stakeholders have long advocated for Medicaid expansion, working to persuade elected officials that the lives of their constituents are at stake and educating Mississippians as to why they should support Medicaid expansion. MCJ's fellow advocates include the **Care 4 Mississippi Coalition** and **Southerners for Medicaid Expansion**.

**POLITICIANS OPPOSING MEDICAID
EXPANSION RELY ON THE ARGUMENT,
"IT WOULD COST TOO MUCH."**

But in a September 2021 report, the state's own economist projected that Medicaid expansion would provide coverage to as many as **233,000 Mississippians by 2027, and that the cost to the state would be offset by the savings.** The same report predicted that Medicaid expansion would create **11,300 jobs per year.**



Linda
Dixon

"Medicaid expansion would benefit the working poor in Mississippi, the people who earn too little money to afford health insurance but too much money for Medicaid."

"These are the low-wage workers we rely on every day to keep Mississippi's restaurants and retail establishments open, to keep our construction projects moving, and to look after our children in day care centers and our parents in nursing homes." — LINDA DIXON, MCJ Director of Health Law

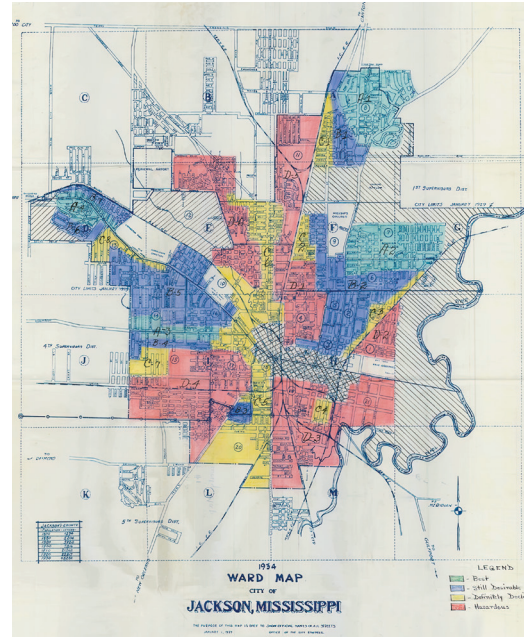
DRAWING THE RED LINE

Health and wellness disparities in Mississippi have their roots in a government practice that stretches all the way back to the 1930s called redlining.

During the Great Depression, the federal government pulled out maps and literally drew lines around communities the government deemed “hazardous,” noting “infiltration of Negroes” and “mixed races” as characteristics that lowered a neighborhood’s value. The government then denied those communities federal resources and investments.

The Black neighborhoods deemed “hazardous” on the redlining map of Jackson, Mississippi, in 1932 are the same communities that today have the highest rates of diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure.

These are also the same communities that have the most limited access to healthy foods — neighborhoods without grocery stores, where residents have few choices other than unhealthy packaged foods from the gas station or a corner convenience store.



WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM MEDICAID EXPANSION?

166,600
UNINSURED ADULTS

- APPROXIMATELY HALF OF UNINSURED MISSISSIPPIANS
- RESTAURANT, CONSTRUCTION, AND RETAIL
- Highest number of uninsured Mississippi workers

- CASHIERS, HOUSEKEEPERS, COOKS, WAITERS AND WAITRESSES, RETAIL SALESPeOPLE

- Occupations with the highest number of uninsured workers

- Frontline workers considered essential during the COVID-19 shutdown

60%
WOMEN

Source: Materials co-released by MCJ and the Georgetown Center for Children and Families



THE KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION ESTIMATES MISSISSIPPI'S BUDGET WOULD SEE A NET GAIN OF

\$400 MILLION

IN JUST TWO YEARS IF THE STATE EXPANDED MEDICAID.



10,000
MISSISSIPPIANS
ARE LIVING WITH HIV

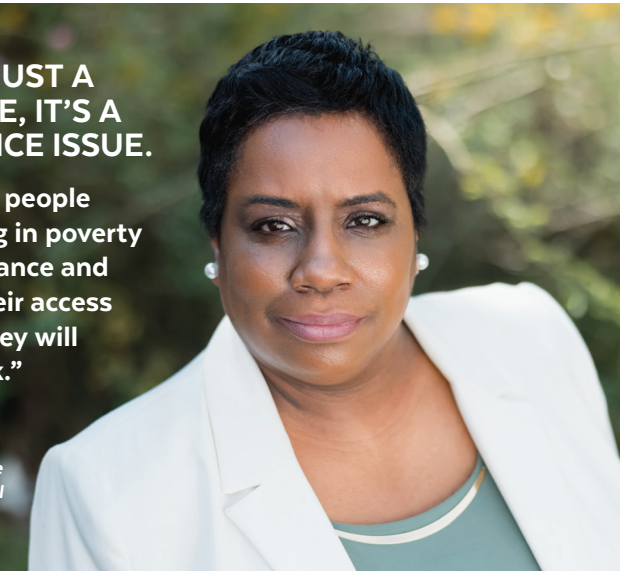
IN 2021, MCJ PARTNERED WITH THE SOUTHERN AIDS COALITION AND THE COUNTER NARRATIVE PROJECT TO CONVEY ITS 11TH ANNUAL MISSISSIPPI AIDS JUSTICE PROJECT TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR HIV POLICY ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION.

THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV DISCRIMINATION IS UP TO US

“HIV IS NOT JUST A HEALTH ISSUE, IT’S A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE.”

As long as Black people and people living in poverty don’t have insurance and are limited in their access to healthcare, they will be at greater risk.”

RYMSKY EVANS
Member of the MCJ
Mississippi AIDS Justice
Project Advisory Council

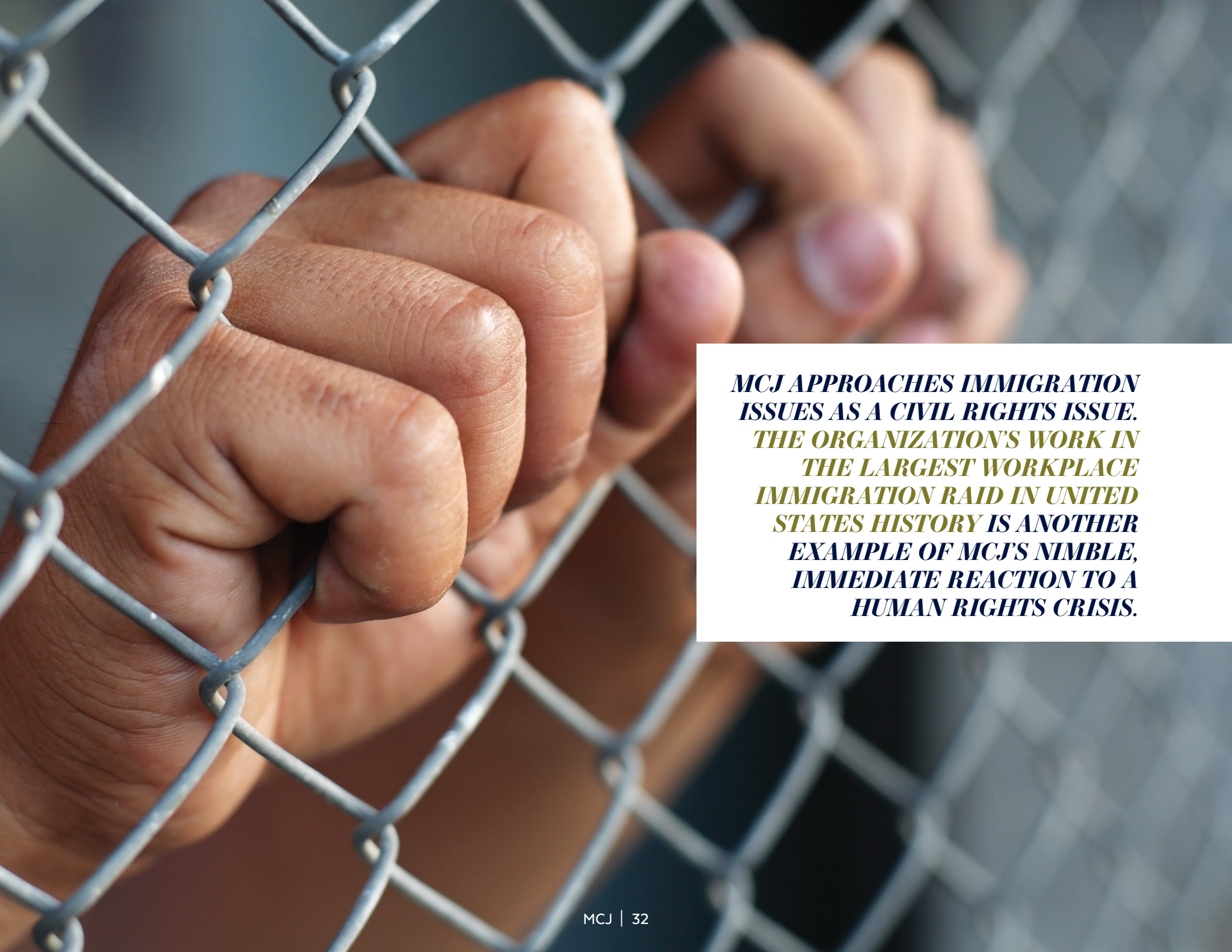


MCJ has long been an advocate for those facing discrimination in the workplace or in housing because of their HIV status.

MCJ’s medical-legal partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health provides legal services to Mississippians with HIV who experience employment or housing discrimination and privacy rights violations. Clients

also have the opportunity to have a simple will, power of attorney, and/or advance care directive drafted. This is the only medical-legal partnership in the state.

MCJ is at the forefront of efforts to decriminalize HIV. Laws in Mississippi make it a crime for a person with HIV to expose another person to HIV. These antiquated laws specify methods of “exposure” that do not actually transmit HIV. MCJ advocates for the modernization of these laws.



MCJ APPROACHES IMMIGRATION ISSUES AS A CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE. THE ORGANIZATION'S WORK IN THE LARGEST WORKPLACE IMMIGRATION RAID IN UNITED STATES HISTORY IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF MCJ'S NIMBLE, IMMEDIATE REACTION TO A HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS.

THE FIGHT FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM IS UP TO US



THE CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI ICE RAIDS

In August 2019, the largest workplace immigration raid in United States history unfolded in Mississippi, when armed ICE agents raided seven Central Mississippi poultry processing plants.

The raids exposed a host of injustices faced by undocumented Mississippians, including sordid collaborations between local law enforcement and ICE, detention in dangerous conditions, lack of access to legal representation, and a system that punishes undocumented workers but not those who knowingly hire them.

These cases will drag on in immigration courts for years while hundreds of undocumented Mississippians struggle to survive in poverty.

680

WORKERS ARRESTED — PEOPLE WHO HAD LIVED, WORKED, AND RAISED THEIR FAMILIES IN MISSISSIPPI FOR DECADES

88

OUTSIDE PRO BONO COUNSEL RECRUITED, TRAINED, OR MENTORED BY MCJ

MCJ AND PRO BONO PARTNERS ASSISTED

115

MISSISSIPPIANS IMPACTED BY THE RAIDS

MCJ AND PARTNERS SECURED THE RELEASE OF

60

MISSISSIPPIANS FROM DETENTION

MCJ SECURED PERMANENT RELIEF FOR

4 MISSISSIPPIANS

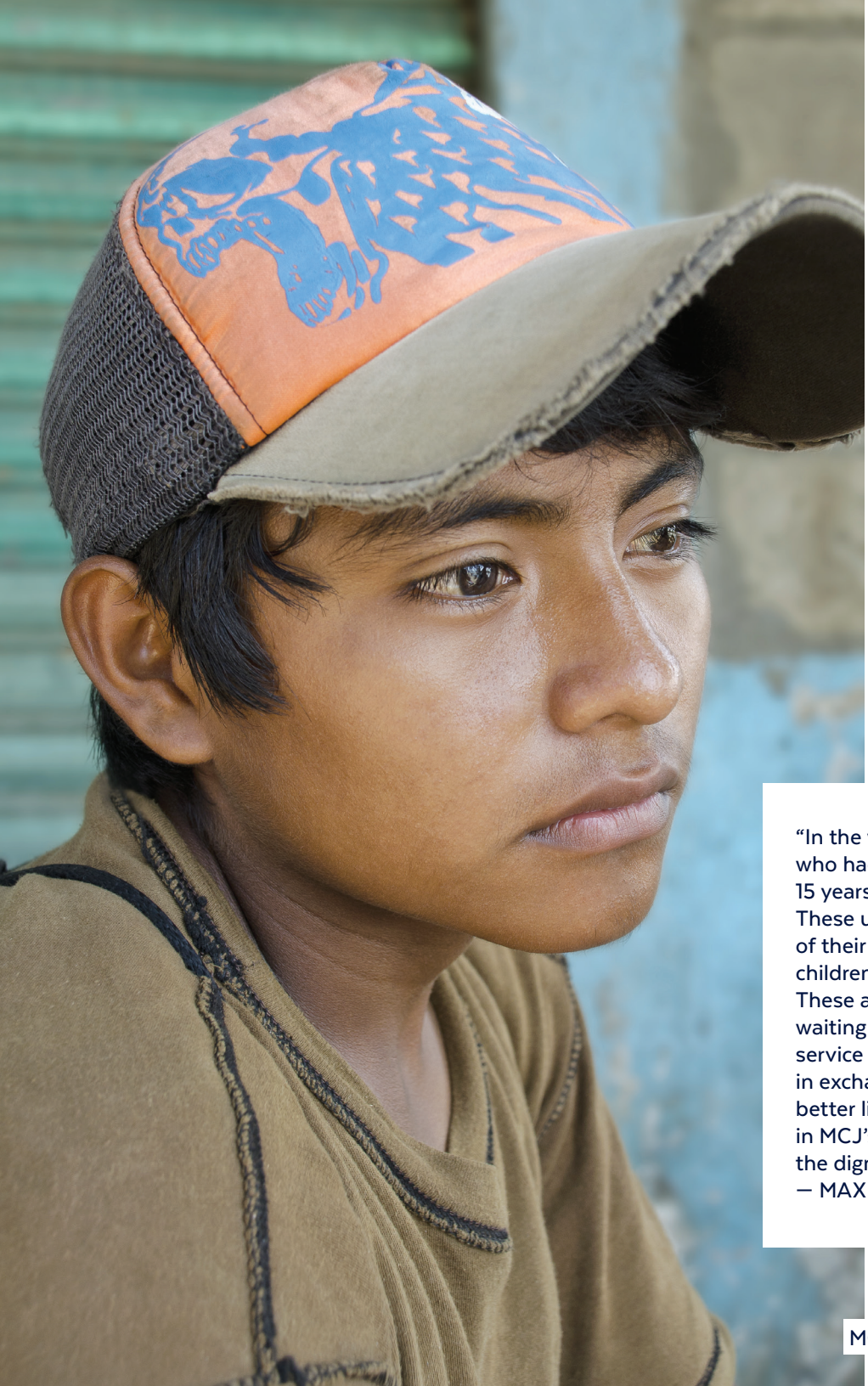
MORE THAN 100

VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS PARTNERED WITH MCJ AND ITS LARGER COALITION TO ASSIST UNDOCUMENTED MISSISSIPPIANS IMPACTED BY THE 2019 ICE RAIDS



“THE UNITED STATES JUSTICE SYSTEM IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE GOLD STANDARD FOR HOW TO TREAT NOT ONLY AMERICAN CITIZENS, BUT ALSO THOSE SEEKING REFUGE HERE.

But too often, these promises are nothing more than an illusion for non-citizens facing removal proceedings in our country. That’s why MCJ takes on tough cases that provide support and solidarity to asylum seekers fighting this unjust system, and why we need your support to push back.”
AMELIA MCGOWAN, MCJ IMMIGRATION CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR



MCJ IS MISSISSIPPI’S ONLY IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICE FIRM FOCUSED ON OFFERING ASYLUM AND APPELLATE REPRESENTATION FREE OF CHARGE.

26
ASYLUM SEEKERS REPRESENTED SINCE 2018

8
FEDERAL CIRCUIT COURT AND BOARD OF IMMIGRATION APPEALS REMANDS

- ASYLUM SEEKERS INCLUDE
- Political protesters from Cuba and Cameroon
 - A former child soldier from Sierra Leone
 - A man living with HIV from Mali
 - A Honduran woman fleeing domestic violence
 - A Mexican woman and her son fleeing cartel violence

“In the wake of the ICE raids, I visited a client who had a plaque in her home honoring her 15 years of service to her Mississippi employer. These undocumented Mississippians are pillars of their workplaces, their churches, their children’s schools, and their communities. These are people who have spent their lives waiting tables, working in the fields or in the service industry, getting paid minimum wages in exchange for the opportunity to build a better life for their children. That’s why I believe in MCJ’s immigration work. We’re supporting the dignity of our Mississippi neighbors.”
— MAX MEYERS, MCJ ATTORNEY



Max Meyers

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**THANK YOU TO OUR
STUDENT INTERNS**

MCJ interns came from universities and law schools nationwide. These interns were drawn to Mississippi by MCJ's work and their belief that changing Mississippi for the better can lead to changes for the better everywhere.

Brooklyn Law School
CUNY School of Law
Dillard University
Georgetown Law
Harvard Law School
Jackson State University
Mississippi College School of Law
New York University School of Law
Princeton University
Rutgers Law School
University of Arkansas School of Law
University of California, Irvine School of Law
UCLA School of Law
University of Michigan Law School
The University of Mississippi
The University of Mississippi School of Law
University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School
William & Mary Law School
Yale Law School



VALUE OF *PRO BONO* PARTNERS' IN-KIND DONATIONS

2020	2021
\$292,093	\$588,115

**THANK YOU TO OUR
SOCIAL JUSTICE
PARTNERS**

MCJ offers our deepest thanks to the many law firms, advocacy groups, and community advocates that collaborate with us. Together, we are the they.

ACLU of Mississippi
Back Bay Mission
BancorpSouth
BankPlus
Black Lives Matter of Mississippi
Capital Area Bar Association Young
Lawyers Division
Catholic Diocese of Jackson
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
Counter Narrative Project
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Delta Design Build Workshop
Disability Rights Mississippi
East Biloxi Community Collaborative
El Pueblo
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 Policy Institute

Indianola Promise Community
Youth Council
Jackson Free Clinic
Jackson Medical Mall Foundation
Liberty and Trust Company
MacArthur Justice Center
Magnolia Bar Association
Mercy Housing and Human Development
Mississippi Access to Justice Commission
Mississippi Alliance for Public Safety
(MAPS)
Mississippi Association for Justice
Mississippi Association of Educators
Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable
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 in Action
Mississippi Low-Income Child
Care Initiative
Mississippi Parent Training and
Information Center
Mississippi Prison Reform Coalition

Mississippi Religious Leadership
Conference
Mississippi Rising Coalition
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 Legal Defense Fund - Southern
Prisons Working Group
NAACP, Biloxi Branch
NAACP, Gulfport Branch
NAACP, Mississippi State Conference
Nollie Jenkins Family Center
North Gulfport Civic Club
North Gulfport Community Land Trust
North Mississippi Rural Legal Services
OneVoice
Parents for Public Schools-Jackson
Peoples Advocacy Institute
Racial Equity Community of Practice
RECH Foundation
Rethink MS
Rural LISC
Self-Help
Soria City Civic Organization
Southern AIDS Coalition
Southern Echo
Southern Mississippi Planning and
Development District
Southern Poverty Law Center
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Rights Unit
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Students Organization
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**2021 MARKED THE
CLOSE OF A CHAPTER
IN MCJ HISTORY WITH
THE DEPARTURES OF
REILLY MORSE AND
BETH ORLANSKY.**

Reilly Morse, past president and CEO of MCJ (November 2013 December 2019), left the organization to pursue new paths as a fine artist. MCJ reached significant milestones under Reilly's leadership, including the establishment of the George Riley Impact Litigation Project.

Beth Orlansky, MCJ's director of advocacy, retired in 2021. Beth helped shape every campaign at MCJ for nearly two decades. Her mentorship of young attorneys and interns inspired the next generation who will take up the fight for social, racial, and economic justice.

MCJ welcomes gifts in honor of Reilly or Beth and the difference their work has made for Mississippi. To make a donation that extends their MCJ legacy, visit mscenterforjustice.org/donate.

“THROUGH ITS UNFLINCHING ADVOCACY FOR RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR MISSISSIPPI'S MARGINALIZED CITIZENS, MCJ IS POSITIVELY IMPACTING THE LIVES OF ALL MISSISSIPPIS.

MARY AND SAM MILLER, MCJ Supporters • New York, New York

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AT DECEMBER 31, 2020**
(With Comparative Totals for 2019)

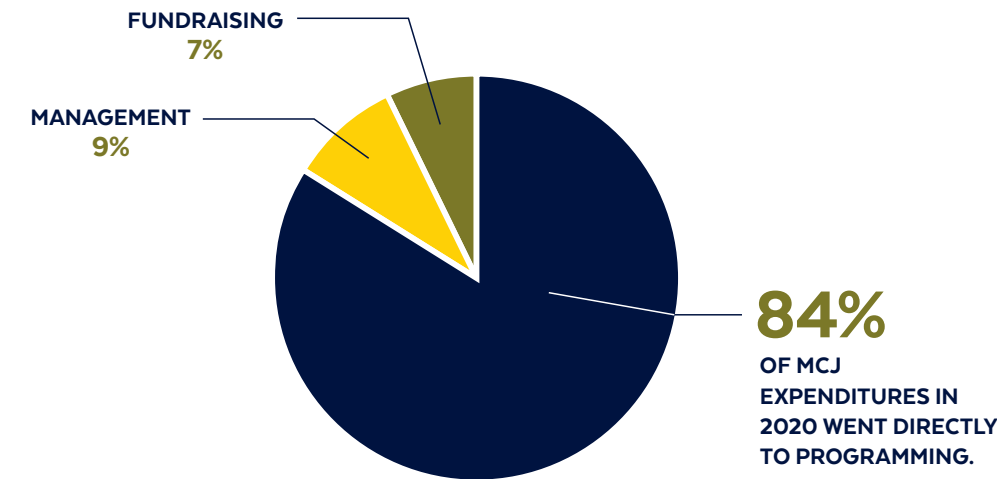
	ASSETS	
	2020	2019
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 1,633,413	\$ 251,959
Restricted cash	600,000	700,000
Receivables, net	3,068,383	1,017,957
Prepaid expenses	21,600	38,703
	<u>5,323,396</u>	<u>2,008,619</u>
BUILDING, FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT, AND LEASEHOLD IMPROVEMENTS, net	251,701	259,085
OTHER ASSETS		
Deposits	10,810	10,822
	<u>\$ 5,585,907</u>	<u>\$ 2,278,526</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	\$ 71,395	\$ 35,774
Accrued expenses	121,597	97,297
Immigration bond pass-thru fund	152,500	150,000
Payroll liabilities	1,012	636
Deferred revenue	17,067	-
Loan payable	-	75,000
	<u>363,571</u>	<u>358,707</u>
NET ASSETS		
Without donor restrictions		
Undesignated	1,584,787	195,094
Designated by the Board	225,440	-
With donor restrictions	3,412,109	1,724,725
	<u>5,222,336</u>	<u>1,919,819</u>
	<u>\$ 5,585,907</u>	<u>\$ 2,278,526</u>

**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020**
(With Comparative Totals for 2019)

	2020		2019	
	Activities without donor restrictions	Activities with donor restrictions	Total	Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUES				
Contributions	\$ 1,278,856	\$ 246,570	\$ 1,525,426	\$ 1,698,611
In-kind contributions	292,093	-	292,093	1,138,555
Grants	700,000	3,393,131	4,093,131	1,520,264
Contract services	171,983	-	171,983	28,661
Attorney fee donations	-	-	-	17,650
PPP forgiveness revenue	477,378	-	477,378	-
Other income	6,607	-	6,607	7,789
Net assets released from restrictions	1,952,317	(1,952,317)	-	-
	<u>4,879,234</u>	<u>1,687,384</u>	<u>6,566,618</u>	<u>4,411,530</u>
EXPENSES				
Program services	2,746,007	-	2,746,007	4,108,487
Management and general	279,662	-	279,662	339,215
Fundraising	235,996	-	235,996	344,959
	<u>3,261,665</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,261,665</u>	<u>4,792,661</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS - OPERATING	<u>1,617,569</u>	<u>1,687,384</u>	<u>3,304,953</u>	<u>(381,131)</u>
NON-OPERATING: RETURN OF GRANT FUNDS (Note 10)	<u>(2,436)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,436)</u>	<u>(9,065)</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	<u>1,615,133</u>	<u>1,687,384</u>	<u>3,302,517</u>	<u>(390,196)</u>
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	<u>195,094</u>	<u>1,724,725</u>	<u>1,919,819</u>	<u>2,310,015</u>
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	<u>\$ 1,810,227</u>	<u>\$ 3,412,109</u>	<u>\$ 5,222,336</u>	<u>\$ 1,919,819</u>

EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020
(With Comparative Totals for 2019)

	2020			2019
	Programming	Management & General	Fundraising	Total
	<u>\$ 2,746,007</u>	<u>\$ 279,662</u>	<u>\$ 235,996</u>	<u>\$ 3,261,665</u>

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

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

The global pandemic and resulting economic fallout only strengthened MCJ's commitment to its mission. Increased donor support and strong leadership allowed MCJ to enlarge its capacity to fight injustice.



***"IT'S BEEN SAID,
IF YOU DON'T KNOW
MISSISSIPPI, YOU DON'T
KNOW THIS COUNTRY."***

To me, this means that MCJ's victories, whether they be small or large, are victories for the whole country. And defeats are simply reasons to keep pushing forward to show the rest of the country that justice can, eventually, be achieved."

JOANNE EDGAR
MCJ Supporter • New York, New York

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2020 Mississippi On the Potomac Honoree

Donald B. Verrilli, Jr.
Former U.S. Solicitor General
MCJ Board Member

2020 Champions of Justice

Barbara Lipman
Educator

David Lipman
Civil Rights Attorney
MCJ Board Member

Stanley “Rip” Daniels
Owner of WJZD Radio, Real Estate
Developer and Preservationist

2021 Mississippi on the Potomac Honorees

Congressman Jamie Raskin

Nan Aron
Founder and Past President of the
Alliance for Justice

2021 Champions of Justice

Dr. Leslie-Burl McLemore
Civil Rights Activist and
Political Leader
Former MCJ Board Member

Beth Orlansky
Former MCJ Director of Advocacy

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New York Times Bestselling Author
of The Hate U Give, On the Come
Up, and Concrete Rose

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Impact Litigation Initiative

“THOSE FIGHTING
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
HAVE OFTEN BEEN
SOLITARY FIGURES.

While they were part of a ‘movement,’ we relied on their individual courage and sacrifice. They, and sometimes they alone, stood in the gap and fought the fight. Today, we are not waiting for the heroes to appear. *They* is we – the Mississippi Center for Justice. Today, we have an organization committed to rooting out racial, social, and economic injustice wherever it is found, dismantling Mississippi’s systems of injustice, and standing in the gap for all of us. But we cannot stand in the gap without *you*. Join us in the fight. Together, we are the *they*.”

WALTER BOONE, PARTNER, BALCH & BINGHAM LLP • CHAIR OF THE MCJ BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TO DONATE, VOLUNTEER, OR FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
THE MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE AND HOW YOU CAN
BE A PART OF THE FIGHT FOR RACIAL, ECONOMIC,
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, VISIT [MSCENTERFORJUSTICE.ORG](https://mscenterforjustice.org)

“MISSISSIPPI AND I HAVE AN INTERESTING RELATIONSHIP. THERE’S SO MUCH THAT I LOVE ABOUT THIS STATE, BUT THERE’S SO MUCH I WANT TO CHANGE ABOUT THIS STATE.

When we look at all the problems our great state has, all of the changes that need to take place, it can get super overwhelming. But. We. Can. Change. Mississippi...Whether it’s by activism or making ourselves heard or calling out something that needs to be called out, we can change Mississippi. It starts with you. It starts with me.”

ANGIE THOMAS, *New York Times* Bestselling Author of *The Hate U Give*, *On the Come Up*, and *Concrete Rose* • 2021 MCJ Pathfinder

MISSISSIPPI
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE