

NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD OF CHICAGO

Newsletter September 2013



76th Annual NLG National Convention

The 76th Annual NLG National Convention will be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico from October 23 to 27, 2013. There is still time to register for this historic convention. This year, Puerto Rico marks the 115th anniversary of the U.S. invasion. Since 1898, Puerto Ricans have struggled to end U.S. colonial control. Thousands have gone to prison in the name of independence. The NLG has a long history of supporting Puerto Rican independence activists and this fall, NLG members are invited to celebrate that history and build solidarity at the 76th Annual Law for the People convention in San Juan, the first ever Puerto Rico Guild convention. This will be a historic convention and an important affirmation of the NLG's solidarity with people seeking self-determination in Puerto Rico and around the world. All Chicago Guild members are encouraged to attend this Convention.

At the convention the 2013 Law for the People Award will go to **Judith Berkan** and Chicago's own **Jan Susler**, both long time NLG members united in their work with the Puerto Rican independista movement. Jan Susler's work on behalf of political prisoners' and prisoners' rights spans decades; since 1982 she has worked with the People's Law Office in Chicago. For over three decades she has represented Puerto Rican political prisoners, and she served as lead counsel in the efforts culminating in the 1999 presidential commutation of their sentences. Congratulations to Jan for this well deserved honor!

In addition to workshops and meetings the Convention will sponsor excursions and walking tours to explore Puerto Rican history and culture. And then there is always the warm sun of the Caribbean!

For more information about the convention go to the NLG website. <http://www.nlg.org/Convention-2013>. For articles regarding various aspects of Puerto Rican history, politics and political struggles, go to <http://www.nlg.org/PRWritings>.

The Chicago NLG newsletter will be published and distributed to our membership quarterly. We urge members to submit articles and pictures relevant to the NLG to Sandra Tsung, stsung1@gmail.com, Joanne Kinoy, jkinoy@gmail.com, or Lorry Sirkin, lorrysirkin@gmail.com. We are also always looking for people to help with production and layout.

Design by artist [Jamie Solock](#), for inquiries please email jksolock@gmail.com

NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD OF CHICAGO COMMITTEES

Military Law Task Force

The Chicago Chapter of the Military Law Task Force is moving forward. We now have an email: ChicagoMLTF@gmail.com. We have a phone: **(312) 945-MLTF (6583)**. And the greeting on the Chicago NLG voice message has been changed to say, "If you are calling for the Military Law Task Force, please call **(312) 945-6583**". And sometime soon we will have a page on the Chicago NLG website. We are currently working on a number of Discharge Upgrade cases. We are taking referrals for all different types of military law, but are particularly interested in Conscientious Objector cases, other discharge cases and VA Claims. Libby Frank, libby.frank@comcast.net, **(773) 206-4945**.

Labor & Employment Committee

The Labor & Employment Committee is committed to helping support workers and workers' organizations in the Chicagoland area. Members practice in a variety of settings (solo practice, private firm, government, in-house) and in a number of areas of labor and employment law. Past committee projects have included assisting Interfaith Worker Justice with a project to identify and help wage theft victims at a voluntary income tax assistance clinic. The Committee normally meets once a month. For more information or to be added to the list serve, please contact Randy Choiniere at choiniere.randy@gmail.com.

Mass Defense Committee

The Mass Defense Committee (MDC) was formed in February 2011 in response to requests from community allies for legal assistance related to political demonstrations. The committee oversees the Legal Observer Program and providing representation for individuals who are arrested at demonstrations. Recently, MDC members have represented movement allies in administrative hearings and criminal cases resulting from protests against the CPS plan to close 50 public schools. We have also fielded Legal Observers for many demonstrations related to the school closures and other CPS activity that adversely impacts community members. Most recently our Legal Observers were on the ground during the protest against the demolition of La Casita at Whittier Elementary. For more information contact: Ben Meyer at bmeyer1@gmail.com



NextGen Committee

The NLG Chicago Next Gen Committee is a collection of young, progressive and radical attorneys, legal workers, and law students dedicated to social change and building like-minded community.

As a part of NLG Chicago, we are committed to supporting and sustaining the "next generation" of the Guild through mentoring, socializing, organizing, and skill-building. Next Gen hosts Happy Hours on the first Friday of every month (location changes monthly) and organizes CLEs, discussions, and other social events. For more information on the Chicago Next Gen Committee, to get involved in program planning, or to receive Happy Hour postings, please email nextgenchicago@gmail.com.



Jan Susler & Alberto Rodriguez at NLG Storytellers

The United People of Color Caucus (TUPOCC)

The United People of Color Caucus of Chicago is an alliance of lawyers, legal workers, organizers, law students, and other people of color within the NLG community. We are working to increase the diversity of the NLG and expand NLG's involvement in issues that affect diverse communities. If you would like to join us in planning volunteer and educational opportunities for NLG-Chicago members to engage more with issues that affect communities of color, please email chicagonlgtupoccc@gmail.com.

Palestine Solidarity Committee

NLG- Chicago's Palestine Solidarity Committee works in conjunction with NLG's Free Palestine Subcommittee and Palestine Solidarity Legal Support, an initiative partnered with the Center for Constitutional Rights, to support Chicago-area Palestine solidarity activists. Committee members conduct Know Your Rights trainings tailored to issues faced by Palestine activists, provide advice and referrals to activists facing legal issues or other pressure, and organize events related to Palestinian rights issues. To join the Committee or inquire about its activities, contact Dima Khalidi or Ben Meyer - dkhalidi@gmail.com or bmeyer1@gmail.com.

National Police Accountability Project (NPAP)

A handful of NLG members, including several folks from Chicago, formed a national project around issues of police brutality and law enforcement misconduct approximately two decades ago. The National Police Accountability Project (NPAP, www.nlg-npap.org) has grown to include more than 500 members across the country. NPAP is dedicated to ending police abuse of authority through coordinated legal action, public education, and support for grassroots and victims' organizations combating police misconduct. Members participate in a national listserv, CLE programs, and a Section 1983 Subscription Series. NPAP is a non-profit organization of plaintiff's lawyers, law students and legal workers, headquartered in New York City.

In 2008, a local group began meeting and sharing ideas, litigation strategies and sharing experiences in litigating police misconduct cases. The Chicago NPAP is made up of NLG members and nonmembers as well as national NPAP members and nonmembers. Everyone is encouraged to be a member of NLG and NPAP. Attorney Ken Flaxman maintains a list serve for us of more than 75 individuals and regularly provides district court and Seventh Circuit decisions in the area of civil rights litigation. (Email: knf@kenlaw.com) Meetings are held every couple months to discuss various topics and CLE credit is provided through the NLG. For more information or to suggest a speaker or topic for a meeting contact Melinda Power (melindapower@comcast.net) or Janine Hoft (janinehoft@aol.com).



NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD OF CHICAGO ANNUAL DINNER



NLG Dinner 2013

On Friday, November 8th, NLG Chicago's annual dinner will honor various attorneys in recognition of their tireless advocacy on behalf of the Chicago Teachers Union and Chicago Public School students, parents, and employees throughout the City's recent attacks on public education. The honorees this year include Robert Bloch & Josiah Groff (*Dowd, Bloch & Bennett*); Thomas Geoghegan, Sean Morales-Doyle & Michael Persoon (*Despres, Schwartz & Geoghegan*); Robin Potter, Nieves Bolanos, Alenna Bolin, Patrick Cowlin, Matt Farmer, Jim Green & Shankar Ramamurthy (*Robin Potter & Associates*); and Randall Schmidt (*Edwin F. Mandel Legal Aid Clinic of the University of Chicago Law School*). In addition to the award ceremony, the dinner also serves as the time of year when the Chicago chapter holds elections for open board positions. Please be sure that your membership is current in order to cast a ballot. The dinner takes place every year at the Irish-American Heritage Center at 4626 N. Knox. For tickets & additional information, please visit: <http://nlgchicago.org/2013-annual-dinner/>.

Last Year's Dinner

The 2012 NLG Chicago Dinner was held on November 2nd at the Irish-American Heritage Center. The Chicago Chapter honored **Len Cavise** with the Arthur Kinoy Award in recognition of his commitment to the struggle for justice, global equality, and for his tireless mentorship of the next generation of people's lawyers. The dinner's inaugural Next Generation Award was presented to the Chicago chapter's Mass Defense Committee for its outstanding NATO Legal Support Project work. The program included a toast to the honorees by former NLG National President **David Gespass**. Speakers included Alex Han, a Chicago activist and Stand Up! Chicago organizer, as well as Mary Rita Luecke, a Chicago-area attorney and long-time friend of Len Cavise, and Claudia Valenzuela, an attorney with the National Immigrant Justice Center and former student of Len Cavise.

SAVE THE DATE!

On Friday, November 8, 2013,
In recognition of their tireless advocacy on behalf of
the Chicago Teachers Union and Chicago Public School students, parents,
and employees, throughout the City's recent attacks on public education,
the Chicago Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild will honor:

- Robert Bloch and Josiah Groff (*Dowd, Bloch & Bennett*)
- Thomas Geoghegan, Sean Morales-Doyle & Michael Persoon (*Despres, Schwartz & Geoghegan*)
- Robin Potter, Nieves Bolanos, Alenna Bolin, Patrick Cowlin, Matt Farmer, Jim Green & Shankar Ramamurthy (*Robin Potter & Associates*)
- Randall Schmidt (*Edwin F. Mandel Legal Aid Clinic of the University of Chicago Law School*)

Mark your calendar!
Friday, November 8, 6:00 p.m.
Irish-American Heritage Center
4626 N. Knox, Chicago, IL

Chicago NLG Administrator

Hello, my name is Remigio Torres, and I am very excited to be the chapter administrator for the Chicago National Lawyers Guild. I started in April, and it has been wonderful meeting and working with you. For those of you that I haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet, here is a little about me.

I started out as an activist in high school protesting the Iraq War and I remember that my initial exposure to the NLG was after my arrest protesting the 2004 Republican Convention. Later, during my undergraduate career at Northwestern University, I was involved with the Centro Romero, Food Not Bombs, and my student housing co-op. After school, I was a fellow for the Coro Fellows Program in Public Affairs in San Francisco. Next, I volunteered as a writer and presenter for an activist-run radio show in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Upon returning from Ecuador, I spent a year working on immigration cases for the Law Offices of Robert D. Ahlgren, and volunteered for the IVAW and NLG during the NATO summit.

I look forward to all of the important work as your Chapter Administrator, and believe that my many years experience as an activist, along with my organizing and analytical skills will prove a great asset in propelling the Guild forward.



Crossroads Fund 2013

The 2013 Crossroads Fund Seeds of Change benefit was held on April 12th at the Chicago Cultural Center. NLG Chicago was presented with the Donald F. Erickson Synapses Award for the organization's work in representing activists throughout the city. The night's other awardees included Blocks Together and Karen Lewis & the Chicago Teachers Union. The Crossroads Fund has supported grassroots groups working for racial, social, and economic justice in Chicago for over three decades. NLG Chicago's Mass Defense Committee was a grantee of funds from Crossroads, which was instrumental in enabling the NATO Legal Support office to operate during the summer of 2012.

NLG Chicago member, Molly Armour, accepting the Donald F. Erickson Synapses Award, on behalf of the chapter at the 2013 Crossroads Fund Seeds of Change benefit.



LAW SCHOOL UPDATES



Northwestern NLG Chapter

Northwestern's NLG chapter is looking forward to working with an active group of 1Ls who seem to be enthusiastic about getting involved with the Guild. As a new chapter, our primary focus is increasing NLG's presence on campus and increasing the number of members we have engaging in campus events. We were pleased to take six 1Ls to the city-wide Dis-Orientation, and we hope to continue to nurture this interest.

Most of the chapter's formal programming won't occur until the spring. At that time, we'll look for interesting progressive speakers and panelists who can help NLG become more visible on the Northwestern campus. Please contact me if you are interested in being a speaker! We also plan to co-host at least one event with the ACLU, and we're looking into hosting Ajamu Baraka to speak on the Obama Administration and human rights. We will also have a presence on Student Day Against the Death Penalty, at a minimum handing out ribbons and information, and hopefully screening a film as well.

As we ramp up to spring, we hope to give our new students great options to get involved as legal observers, volunteers, and activists. We are delighted that the Northwestern chapter continues to grow!

DePaul Law School

Our first meeting this academic year was held on September 16th. Our two big projects for the year are going to be a prisoner correspondence project (letter writing parties, book behind behind bars, connecting prisoners with legal resources, etc.) and performing know your rights trainings for high school and junior high aged kids in heavily policed neighborhoods. Events already in the works for the semester include: a panel discussion on the recent fast food strikes, a teach in on the prisoner industrial complex, a panel on critical race theory, and a pre-convention event on the Puerto Rican Independence Movement. depaul.nlg@gmail.com



DePaul NLG members (1st row, L to R): Max Suchan, Jacquita Richardson, Jacqueline Horn. (2nd row, L to R): Ryan Levitt, Joseph Williams

Please join DePaul students on THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3rd from 6:30-7:30 on Campus at 2320 N. Kenmore Ave. Chicago, IL 60614 in Room 161 for a viewing of the 30-minute documentary by DePaul student, Danny Morlock, "50: A Tale of CLOSED Skoolz & Big Money" and a discussion about how community members, students and faculty can get involved in taking ACTION against the use of public tax dollars for a stadium for DePaul.

Here is a link to the Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/events/509447042476039/?notif_t=plan_edited

Thank you for your continued dedication,
Erika Wozniak

(dis)Orientation

On Saturday, September 21, over 40 students from all 6 Chicago law schools gathered for the fourth annual city-wide (dis)Orientation. Students from Madison and Northeastern, and Guild lawyers, also attended.

At (dis)Orientation, students learned about the Guild's progressive roots with many examples of the Guild being on the right side of history. In her "Welcome to the Guild!" speech, Molly Armour explored much of the Guild's strong history, the structure of the Guild, and a clear vision forward both nationally and locally.

Students also heard some tips and tricks for surviving law school (and keeping their soul!) from fellow student leaders, including Chicago student representative and Loyola 3L Emily Coffey, Chicago-Kent president and 3L Charlie Burns, Northwestern president and 2L Vikki Otero, and John Marshall president and 2L John ("Jack") McCoy. Students then enjoyed lunch and the ability to meet and mingle with likeminded students.

After lunch, students heard what they won't hear in the classroom: an introduction to critical theory. Chicago Kent's feminist theorist Nancy Marder spoke about the many feminisms and the law, and Alvar Ayala of Workers Law Office P.C. spoke about race and the law and specifically how it impacts low wage workers.

Students then selected to attend either a Legal Observer training or a First Defense Legal Aid training. Skye Allen and Sharlyn Grace trained a group of new legal observers, who are now ready to protect against unconstitutional abuses of police power. Upperclass students were trained by FDLA to protect the rights of those in police custody in the hours before they are charged and a public defender can be appointed.

The final panel explored the many possible career paths a People's Lawyer might take. Michelle Vodenik, Chicago-Kent's Diversity Coordinator and Public Interest career advisor, moderated the discussion and offered advice on pursuing the a career working for the people. Lili Jimenez, Chicago Guild board member and TUPOCC co-chair, explained her career at the Department of Labor guarding against wage theft and pioneering the way for undocumented immigrants who are victims of workplace abuse to receive u-visas. Ryann Moran of Cabrini Green Legal Aid explained her work fighting for the right to housing, especially for those who are at risk of losing their housing as a result of an interaction with the criminal legal system. Jan Susler, partner at People's Law Office, explored her work representing the rights of prisoners and representing members of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement.

Students were then welcomed to the Guild with open arms at NextGen's happy hour at Dylan's. (dis)Orientation 2013 was a success and students left feeling reinvigorated about their decision to attend law school and hopeful about the good work they are on their way to doing.

If you were unable to attend (dis)Orientation but you have questions about the Guild, please contact the Chicago NLG Student Representative Emily Coffey at emily.coffey@gmail.com.



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(left to right) Emily Coffey (3L, Loyola), Vikki Otero (2L, Northwestern), Charlie Burns (3L, Chicago-Kent), and John "Jack" McCoy (2L, John Marshall).