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# **LawNY Celebrates 50 Years of Advocacy, Equality, & Access to the Justice System**



# LawNY Celebrates 50 Years of Advocacy, Equality, & Access to the Justice System

The start of 2018 marks our 50th year serving the Monroe County community. In 1968, the Monroe County Bar Association (MCBA), in collaboration with Action for a Better Community, formed the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center (MCLAC). Once a storefront location, LawNY® now provides services in collaboration with other legal service providers at the Telesca Center for Justice. The once handful of staff members has grown to nearly 50 in our Rochester Office alone, serving over 4,000 clients per year.

This blog post is to commemorate 50 years of advocacy efforts as well as 50 years fighting for equality and access to the justice system for those who otherwise would not be able to afford it. Check out some headlines the Rochester Office has made since 1968! Below you will also find a schedule of events for how we are celebrating our 50th Anniversary throughout the year.

## *A Look into the Past*

### Legal Assistance has a unique role in the county

**Letters**

AS THE PRESIDENT of the Monroe County Bar Association, I am writing to inform the community of the uniquely important role that the Monroe County Legal Assistance Corporation (MCLAC) serves, with the hope that the County of Monroe will reverse its recent decision to exclude MCLAC from its 1977 budget.

The MCLAC was established in 1968 to furnish legal services to low-income people in civil matters only. It is the only office of its kind in Monroe County.

Unfortunately, it is sometimes confused with the Monroe County Public Defender's Office and the Legal Aid Society. The Public Defender's Office provides legal services to low-income people in criminal matters and the Legal Aid Society provides legal services to people primarily in Family Law matters.

During the eight years of its existence, MCLAC has provided extensive legal services to over 15,000 low-income people in a variety of areas, including housing, public assistance, civil rights, employment discrimination, unemployment compensation,

the need for far greater funds to institutionalize people at a cost of approximately \$20,000 per person per year and the cost of supplying other social and protective services that are inevitably necessitated where tensions and frustrations are not constructively resolved through legal channels.

It is unfortunate and unjustified that the county initially singled out MCLAC by totally excluding it from the 1977 budget while only reducing other agencies by one-third of their 1976 county budgets.

**JUSTIN L. VIGDOR, president, Monroe County Bar Association**

#### Where's concern for the common good?

DURING HIS years in government and in particular the last two, Mr. Ford seems to have forgotten something that our fore-

of people in government and their salaries and free-loading pensions.

In our county we've had to let go quite a few employees, and no salary increases. Why should federal government be different?

I'M IN RECEIPT of a letter from my congressional representative Barber Conable, dated Jan. 16, and I quote his remarks relative to the pay increases in question: "I wrote to the President, strongly opposing the initial proposals as excessive."

Under the present executive congressional pay system, it is possible for presidential recommendations to take effect without approval by Congress. I consider this an evasion of congressional responsibility and have consistently opposed this method of dealing with this issue.

"I believe Congress should be required to vote on any pay increase and that such action should be effective after the next election, so that candidates may seek office with a full awareness of the emoluments to be received."

Jan. 19). The first step must be to inform people that such problems exist now and could get worse.

I particularly liked the suggestion of the National Commission on Supplies and Shortages which urged more recycling and removal of depletion allowances. Both of these measures can reduce waste of our limited natural resources.

The report also called for "more effective consideration of complex and interrelated policy issues" involving resources. One of these must be an awareness that the U.S. population is growing and that this aggravates our problems with resource supplies.

Our population is growing now and will continue even with our low birthrate as long as we have so much illegal and legal immigration. Zero population growth is essential for a responsible natural resources policy and many other reasons.

**JOHN S. BLIEK, 129 Kirklees Rd., Pittsford**

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on Sunday January 30, 1977. Justin Vigdor, President of the Monroe County Bar Association at the time, voices his support for LawNY® (then Monroe County Legal Assistance Center- MCLAC). He points out that during the 8 years in which MCLAC had been open, we had already managed to assist over 15,000 low income New Yorkers. Mr. Vigdor states that MCLAC provides access to the justice system for low-income people "without lawlessness and without violence that might otherwise spring from frustration, helplessness and futility felt by otherwise disenfranchised people."

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on April 30, 2004. The article describes how LawNY<sup>®</sup> tests for discrimination in housing providers. Since launching in 1998, the Fair Housing Enforcement Project (FHEP) at LawNY<sup>®</sup> has championed the fight against housing discrimination in Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Wayne and Yates counties. FHEP investigates complaints of housing discrimination, and where discrimination is found, enforces the Fair Housing Act. Through outreach, investigation, advocacy and litigation, FHEP obtains meaningful outcomes and policy changes for victims of discrimination.

## Lou Prieto stands as fierce ally for low-income people seeking justice



**BRYAN D. HETHERINGTON**  
STAFF ATTORNEY

There are a few people in our community who make a big difference but who don't get the recognition they deserve. They don't seek strong allies, instead they just want to make things better for those they care about. Lou Prieto, the attorney who heads the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, is one of them.



Prieto is more than just an attorney. Lou Prieto heads the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center in Rochester.

*"His Cuban heritage means a great deal to him. He remembers being blamed for things in school that he didn't do because at age 6 he couldn't speak English and his teacher couldn't speak Spanish."*

death. Lou took his lunch across the street to eat with his mom. Lou is a gentle man but a fierce competitor in the courtroom, on the job, winning in everything he does. His Cuban heritage means a great deal to him. He remembers what it was like for his family to be turned down for housing because of their Spanish accents. He remembers being blamed for things in school that he didn't do because at age 6 he couldn't speak English and his teacher couldn't speak Spanish. It is no accident that his office, with his leadership and assistance in doing what is right, is one of the best legal services offices in the country. Hardly trying to correct injustices. It is a result of the leadership of a man who decided that he needs to live his life consistently with his core beliefs in fairness and equality.

Hetherington is chief counsel, Empire Justice Center in Rochester.

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on Sunday, July 8, 2007.

Jason Hoge, Staff Attorney at LawNY<sup>2</sup>, describes LawNY<sup>2</sup>'s collaboration with the grassroots organization Judicial Process Commission to create the Re-Entry Project. LawNY<sup>2</sup>'s Re-Entry unit has been practicing since 2006, helping to remove barriers to employment and housing that those with a criminal record often face when seeking to reintegrate into society after incarceration.

## Re-entry Project smoothes road home



**JASON HOGE**  
STAFF ATTORNEY

Nearly 2 million Americans are held in state and federal prisons with 95 percent due for release over the next several years. Of the 600,000 people released every year, one-third will be reincarcerated within three years. President Bush commented on this growing dilemma in his 2004 State of the Union address: "I ask you to consider another group of Americans in need of help. This year, almost 700,000 inmates will be released from prison back into society. We know from long experience that if they can't find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to reoffend and return to prison."

*Giving people a second chance to join society — profits the community.*

...America is the land of second chances, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life."

To address this issue, in 2006 the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, a nonprofit legal service provider to low-income persons, and the Judicial Process Commission, a grassroots community service provider, started the Re-Entry Project, an innovative community collaboration.

The Re-Entry Project helps individuals returning to our community from incarceration and those who have never been incarcerated but struggle daily to overcome the stigma of criminal records.

The Re-Entry Project helps

remove the legal and social barriers that people with criminal records face when seeking a fresh start. These barriers are counterproductive to successful re-entry into our community and often lead to new criminal activity and eventual reincarceration.

Over the past year, the Re-Entry Project has helped well over 300 people correct inaccuracies in their criminal records for the purpose of obtaining employment, seek permits and professional licenses. In addition, the project helps employers understand the laws pertaining to hiring people with criminal records. The project also provides legal remedies, such as Certificates of Good Conduct, to lessen the den-

### To learn more

For more information, contact Monroe County Legal Assistance Center at (516) 325-2520 or the Judicial Process Commission, (516) 325-7727.

mental effects of a criminal record on employment and housing.

Giving people a second chance to join society as working and productive members profits the community. But providing the path that leads to a better life, as called for by the president, requires the involvement of our entire community.

The Re-Entry Project is one model for successfully helping people with criminal records, a model that may be replicated across the country.

Hoge is lead counsel, Monroe County Legal Assistance Center's Re-Entry Project.

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on Sunday, October 6, 2006. Bryan D. Hetherington, at the time Empire Justice Center's Chief Counsel, highlights Lou Prieto's relentless advocacy efforts throughout the years. Mr. Prieto came to Rochester in 1991 to head LawNY<sup>2</sup>'s Housing Unit. He served as the Rochester Office's Managing Attorney until 2015. In the article, Mr. Prieto discusses how important his Cuban heritage is to him and how it affected his life growing up in America.

### Lawyer honored for housing fight

**MONROE COUNTY**  
**Laurie M. Lambrix**  
 will receive an award of the state bar association.

Laurie M. Lambrix was 15 when the African prince and 1971 made her first check about a career in the law. "It was the first time that I saw racism in my own community," Lambrix said. "I had always been interested in issues of social justice, and in my mind, getting a law degree would help me address some of these issues."

Lambrix, who represents victims of housing discrimination as senior attorney of the non-profit Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, will travel to New York City next week to receive an award that honors a lawyer who dedicated his or her career to the fight for justice.

The New York State Bar Association will present to Lambrix in 2005 Raymond Burns Award, named for a civil rights lawyer who also worked with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and activist Angela Davis before dying in a car accident in 1996. Ms. Lambrix has been with LawNYC for 28 years, spending most of her time representing victims of housing discrimination for LawNYC's Fair Housing Project.

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on Monday, January 24, 2005. Laurie Lambrix, currently LawNYC's Regional Deputy Director of Litigation, is honored for winning the New York State Bar Association's 2005 Haywood Burns Award in recognition of her advocacy work with LawNYC since 1990. The award was named in honor of Haywood Burns, a civil rights lawyer who worked with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and activist Angela Davis before dying in a car accident in 1996. Ms. Lambrix has been with LawNYC for 28 years, spending most of her time representing victims of housing discrimination for LawNYC's Fair Housing Project.

### Legal services unite at Four Corners

**MONROE COUNTY**  
**Harold Kurland**  
 and **Rustin Vickroy**  
 will receive an award of the state bar association.

U.S. District Judge Michael Telesca received a standing ovation at a luncheon at the Four Corners Building on Monday, December 28, 2009. The event was held to honor Judge Telesca for his dedication to the legal services community in Monroe County. Judge Telesca, who has been a member of the Monroe County Bar Association since 1980, was presented with the award by Harold Kurland and Rustin Vickroy, co-directors of the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center. The award recognizes Judge Telesca's commitment to providing legal services to low-income individuals in Monroe County throughout his career.

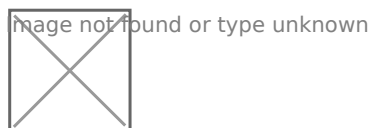
Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on Monday, December 28, 2009. The article describes U.S. District Judge Telesca's dedication to serving low-income individuals in Monroe County throughout his career.

### Telesca Center signals teamwork

**MONROE COUNTY**  
**Harold Kurland**  
 and **Rustin Vickroy**  
 will receive an award of the state bar association.

The Telesca Center for Justice, located at the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, is a new facility that provides legal services to low-income individuals in Monroe County. The center is named in honor of U.S. District Judge Michael Telesca, who has been a member of the Monroe County Bar Association since 1980. The center is a partnership between the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center and the Monroe County Bar Association. The center provides legal services to low-income individuals in Monroe County throughout its career.

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on November 29, 2009. The article highlights Monroe County as the first county in the nation to integrate all legal services provides as well as the local bar association under one roof in order to allow accessibility as well as stronger partnerships between providers.



**Celebrate our 50th Anniversary with us!**

Follow our Facebook Page for dates and more details as they become available.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Description of Activities</b>
<b>March 2018</b>	AmeriCorps Alumni 'Where Are They Now' Lunch	AmeriCorps Alumni of the LawNY Rochester office are invited to have lunch with our current AmeriCorps members.
<b>April 2018</b>	Fair Housing	A CLE on the Fair Housing Act will be offered by attorneys in our Fair Housing Project.
<b>May 2018</b>	Truth in Lending Act 50th Anniversary Workshop	LawNY® staff from our Regional Consumer Project will be holding a workshop offering information on a variety of consumer rights.
<b>June 2018</b>	Re-Entry Providers of Monroe County Meet and Greet	An open house at LawNY® for all re-entry providers in Monroe County. Light refreshments will provided.
<b>July 2018</b>	NOEP Outreach	Our Nutrition Outreach & Education Program (NOEP) coordinators will be out in the community at outreach events offering information about LawNY®'s services and history.

<b>September 2018</b>	<i>LawNY®'s 50th Anniversary Dinner!</i>	Celebrate with us over dinner at the Strathallan's rooftop bar and restaurant on September 27, 2018! Learn more about our work within the community for the past half century and help us thank our community partners for their unwavering support throughout the years.
<b>September 2018</b>	Project Homeless Connect 2018	Our Eviction Prevention Unit will be attending Rochester's annual Project Homeless Connect to offer assistance to homeless individuals or those at risk of homelessness.
<b>October 2018</b>	Elder Law Fair 2018	Our Seniors Legal Services project will be attending Rochester's annual Elder Law Fair to offer assistance in estate planning, elder abuse, and more.
<b>November 2018</b>	Veterans Outreach Center Stand Down Event	Our Legal Services for Veterans Project members will be attending the VOC's annual Stand Down event to offer legal assistance to veterans.
<b>December 2018</b>	Navigator Open House	Our Health Insurance Enrollment Specialists will be holding an open house where attendees can receive refreshments while enrolling in health insurance if needed.



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