



The Center  
*for Law and Justice*

# **2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

Executive Director  
**DR. ALICE P. GREEN**



# From the Executive Director Dr. Alice P. Green

2023 was filled with important successes and some challenges. The Center, along with other governmental and non-profit social justice agencies, struggled through staffing shortages that began with the onset of COVID. Staff retention was found to be a problem as well. These challenges did not deter our small group of dedicated staff and volunteers from honoring our commitment to serve our clients and larger community with professionalism and compassion. We simply buckled down and worked even longer hours to carry out our commitment and I believe we did it well.

Here I make note of only several of the Center's major involvements and successes in 2023 that have had a significant impact on our community.

Early in the year we increased our community action work in support of Jordan Young, a young Black mental health patient who was threatened with a prison sentence even though he underwent more than 26 surgeries after being shot by police officers. We mounted a major campaign that successfully kept him out of prison while he recovered from his life-threatening injuries. We even reached out to Bryan Stevenson of the national Equal Justice Initiative and the Reverend Al Sharpton of the National Action Network. His office sent a key representative to make a strong statement about the issue of bringing more support to those with mental health issues.

Another of our major campaigns this year focused on the community's growing concern over our juvenile justice system and its use of secure facilities and prisons. We attempted to draw attention to the Albany County Zero Youth Detention Task Force, which I chaired. After three years of working to complete the Report, the finished product, with recommendations, was submitted to the County Executive for his response. Although the County has not publicly informed the community of the Report, we started planning for a public discussion of the Report in 2024.

My two recent books, *We Who Believe in Freedom* and *Outsider* were used to prompt community discussions about the Center, racism, activism, and social justice. They were also used to raise funding for the Center. Many requests from community groups and institutions to schedule presentations and discussions of these issues were realized. We conducted sessions at area colleges such as the State University of New York at Albany, Siena, and Russell Sage College and churches, libraries, and book clubs in several local communities and the Adirondacks region.,

Towards the end of 2023, the Center held an important retreat to continue our strategic planning and rebranding of the Center and develop a new mission statement to clarify our major role in the community and improve our responsiveness to community needs in the future.

## **Our Mission**

The Center for Law and Justice advances community understanding of the legal/political system and advocates for equal justice.

## **About the Center**

The Center for Law and Justice was founded by Dr. Alice Green in 1985, and marked its 38th anniversary in 2023. During its existence, the Center has served low-income and disadvantaged communities in the Capital Region through services, education, and advocacy. Before founding the Center, Dr. Green was a social worker and a teacher, and earned a doctorate degree in criminal justice and three master's degrees – education, social work, and criminology. The common thread in the Center's work has been finding freedom, not just for individuals, but by working to change structural racism.

## **The Center for Law and Justice employs three major strategies to accomplish its objectives:**

- Individual empowerment
- Advocacy
- Community education and organizing

## **INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT**

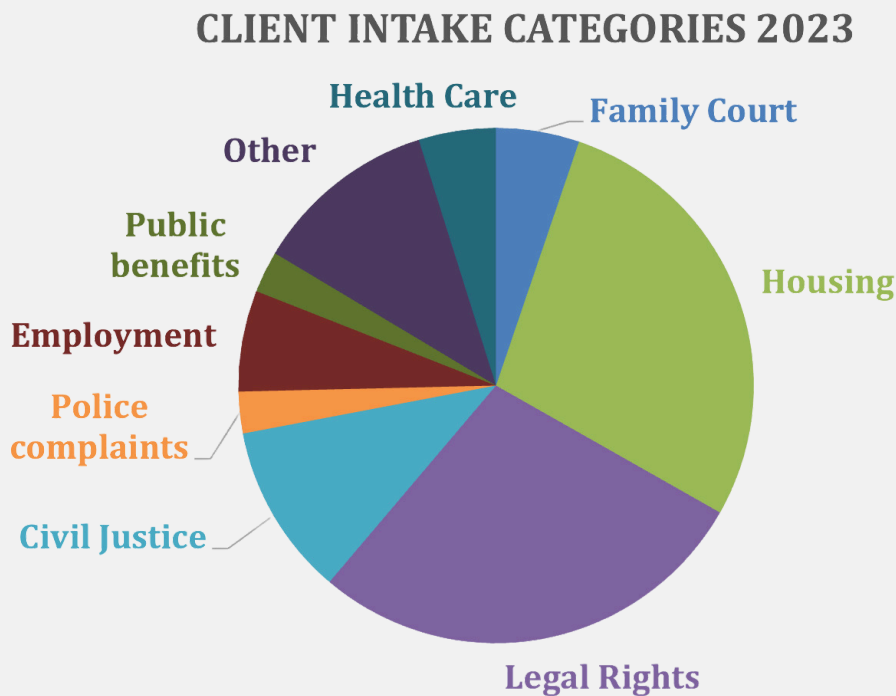
### **Client Intake and Referral Services**

The Center for Law and Justice (CFLJ) responds to calls Monday through Friday from community members seeking help with issues such as criminal justice, legal rights, civil justice, housing, discrimination, social services, post-incarceration challenges,

and health care. Center staff members provide support to callers while educating them about ways they can be empowered to help themselves. Referrals to community resources are sometimes made, as well as interventions with agencies when appropriate and requested. Appointments for services are encouraged.

In 2023 the Center provided direct service or made referrals for 268 client issues through its intake and referral process. The top intake categories in 2023 were:

- 75 Legal Rights
- 75 Housing
- 43 Criminal Justice
- 29 Civil Justice
- 17 Employment
- 16 Incarceration complaints
- 14 Family Court
- 13 Health care
- 7 Police complaints
- 7 Public benefits
- 31 Other



### **The Center also:**

- Responded to 114 letters from incarcerated people.
- Provided hundreds of copies of Capital Region Connections to incarcerated people and those previously incarcerated.
- Provided a limited number of vouchers to those in urgent need of food or transportation to medical appointments, funded by Albany Medical College.
- Helped clients apply for assistance with heating costs provided through New York state's Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).

### **Legal Information from Volunteer Attorneys**

Although the Center is not a law firm, legal information and advice are provided by attorneys who volunteer their time for the Center. Some areas of the law that have been addressed include:

- Criminal
- Immigration
- Divorce
- Custody
- Discrimination

In addition, the Center is supported by the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York. When referred by the Center, they help CFLJ clients with legal issues such as housing, public benefits, re-entry from incarceration, work force issues, and unemployment. The Albany County Public Defenders Office has also provided help to clients of the CFLJ.

### **Albany Medical College Partnership**

"Health Equity Project" (HEP) services are provided to clients of the Center through a partnership with Albany Medical College. The HEP is part of the service-learning curriculum at Albany Medical College and participating medical students learn about public health, health policy, and the social determinants of health through their relationships with community organizations and the residents they serve.

It is widely recognized that the social determinants of health, including navigating the healthcare system and accessing care, have a significant impact on the health of individuals and communities. Since 2016, the Albany Medical College Division of Community Outreach and Medical Education has worked with clients of the Center for Law & Justice to address issues related to healthcare and the social determinants of health through the Health Equity Project. Students from Albany Medical College and the University at Albany School of Public Health work under supervision from Albany Medical College and CFLJ staff to help clients with these issues.



## Center for Law and Justice



In 2023 the Health Equity Project provided 289 services (410 meetings and phone calls) to Center clients on health and related matters. Services included help with:

- Social support (25)
- Social determinants of health (95)
  - Housing
  - Food
  - Case management
  - Domestic violence
  - Benefits
  - Employment
- Finding and accessing health care providers (45)
- Patient empowerment (65)
  - Advocacy
  - Appointment preparation
  - Billing
  - Provider communication
  - Records, letters
  - Complaints
- Medical transportation (21)
- Health insurance enrollment and issues (23)
- Other miscellaneous services (15)



## Capital Region Connections

The Center produces, updates, and distributes this free guide for residents of the Capital District and people currently or formerly detained in jail or prison. An electronic version can also be found on the Center’s website. It is a valuable resource for those reentering the community after being incarcerated, as well as for anyone trying to navigate the Capital Region’s human services. It provides information on the topics listed below.

- First steps
- Community supervision
- Financial assistance
- Housing
- Food resources
- Health resources
- Substance use disorder
- Mental health resources
- Counseling
- Finding a job
- Educational resources
- Voting
- Veteran benefits
- Senior citizen resources
- Refugees, immigrants
- Legal resources
- Community resources
- NY State prison system
- Sex offender rules
- Probation
- Courts

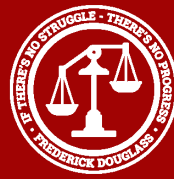
## WAGE Center/Renaissance

Representatives of the WAGE Center/Renaissance come to the CFLJ once a week to assist our clients who are seeking employment. They help with job applications, resume preparation, and interview practice, and can also help plan transportation to jobs and help secure child care. Another service is High School Equivalency/TASC preparation for testing.

## ADVOCACY

### The Jordan Young Case

Jordan Young is a Black Albany native who was shot and nearly killed by Albany police while in the throes of a mental health crisis in January of 2022. He was walking his dog when he was unjustifiably approached and stopped by two Albany police officers and thereafter shot multiple times in the torso by a member of the Albany Police Department. Jordan was charged with Menacing a Police Officer and Attempted Aggravated Assault upon a Police Officer, which carries a mandatory term of imprisonment.



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Jordan almost died, and endured two dozen surgeries to save his life. The Center advocated for the District Attorney to stop efforts to have him tried and ultimately imprisoned, which we believed would amount to a death sentence because of his ongoing medical care needs that could not be met in prison. The Center also built a coalition of community members, criminal justice organizations, advocates and allies to stand with Jordan. Several thousand individuals and organizations signed a petition to District Attorney Soares demanding that he drop the charges.

Although the petition to drop charges was not successful, the “Just Mercy for Jordan” campaign of the CFLJ in 2023 was instrumental in achieving a plea deal to minimize Jordan’s prison time.

## **Albany County Zero Youth Detention**

In 2019, Albany County Executive Dan McCoy asked Dr. Green to chair the county’s Zero Youth Detention Task Force. The task force consisted of county and community leaders, experts and advocates involved with youth justice to explore best practices in order to help shape collective efforts to reduce youth detention in Albany County. The County Executive and Dr. Green recognized that youth detention is a public health, behavioral health and legal concern that touches lives across a diverse spectrum of our community.



As Task Force Chair, Dr. Green formed four working groups to provide subject matter expertise and analysis for different elements and areas of the juvenile legal system. The working groups were organized as follows:

- Public Health Concerns for Youth and Families
- Community Service and Education
- Current State of Juvenile Detention System
- Racial and Ethnic Disparities

Meetings and progress were delayed in the early years of the Task Force due to the impact of COVID-19 and staffing changes at Albany County. In 2022, the Task Force finalized their report and recommendations to Albany County. The recommendations were categorized into the five Albany County Zero Youth Detention Roadmap Objectives, as follows:

- *Objective 1:* Lead with racial equity
- *Objective 2:* Prevent youth from entering the juvenile legal system by focusing upstream and on systems to have the greatest impact
- *Objective 3:* Divert youth from further law enforcement, formal legal processes, and secure detention, and into community-based options
- *Objective 4:* Support youth and families to reduce recurrence of legal system involvement and increase healthy outcomes
- *Objective 5:* Align and optimize connections between systems to increase effectiveness

During 2023, CFLJ staff met with county staffers to discuss the report and encouraged Albany County to release the Task Force report and recommendations to the public. Although there was not a public release or discussion of the report in 2023, in early 2024 the county posted the report on their website. The CFLJ continues to advocate for a public discussion of the report and its recommendations.

## **COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND ORGANIZING**

### **LEAD – Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion**

LEAD is a nationwide program that was first implemented in Seattle in 2011. The city of Albany was an early adopter in 2016, with the leadership of Dr. Green and in partnership with Albany City and County.

The Center’s Executive Director, Dr. Alice Green, is a member of the LEAD Policy Coordinating Group for the City of Albany; the Center also supports the Operations Working Group. The LEAD program is a community-based police diversion approach with the goals of improving public safety and public order, and reducing unnecessary justice system involvement of people who participate in the program. The people who participate often become involved in the criminal justice system because of addiction, mental illness, homelessness, and poverty.

Police officers exercise discretionary authority to divert individuals to a community-based, harm-reduction intervention for law violations driven by unmet behavioral health needs. In lieu of the normal criminal justice system, individuals are instead referred into a trauma-informed intensive case-management program where the individual receives a wide range of support services, often including transitional and permanent housing and/or drug treatment.

The Center continues to advocate to reduce the growing disparity between diversions for White and Black residents, with LEAD having a much higher diversion rate for White residents. In addition, the overall number of diversions continues to be low, with a small percentage of eligible cases being diverted at the discretion of police officers.

## **“Know Your Rights” for Albany High School Students**

The Center for Law and Justice delivered “Know Your Rights” summer classes for high school students who participated in the Summer Youth Employment program. These classes serve to educate students on the best practices for dealing with law enforcement contact, including practical safety tips and suggestions for de-escalating tense situations that may occur on the street or in school.





# Dr. Alice Green the Author

Following her book released in 2022, *We Who Believe in Freedom - Activism and the Struggle for Social Justice*, Dr. Green published a memoir in 2023 entitled *Outsider: Stories of Growing up Black in the Adirondacks*. Alice Paden Green learned a harsh reality about race growing up Black in a predominantly white area. "Outsider: Stories of Growing Up Black in the Adirondacks" details many of Green's experiences as her family grappled with poverty, race, and acceptance in the mid-20th century. This memoir, prompted by a recent gathering of Blacks and whites in the Adirondacks for a discussion on race relations, explores perceptions of Black families in the 1950s and '60s and whether Blacks are still viewed as outsiders or welcomed with open arms in this four-season, recreational playground still dominated by white residents.

Due to the publication of these books, Dr. Green received a large number of requests to do lectures and presentations about them, as well as about the work of the Center for Law and Justice.

## **Work in the Adirondacks**

Dr. Green has participated in statewide discussions about how to re-purpose several prisons in the Adirondacks which have closed or will be closing. She has also contributed to documentaries about how prisons in the Adirondacks have separated families, when men from New York City are sent hundreds of miles away from their families. The majority of Blacks living in the ADK are in prisons, and the racism of white people living there has discouraged families from visiting.

Dr. Green hosts a yearly summer program which welcomes writers of color from across the country, particularly New York City. The guest writers stay at the Paden Retreat for Writers of Color in a fully-equipped cottage located on her family's compound in Essex, New York. In addition, she participates in a committee of the Adirondack Experience museum to explore ways to increase racial diversity in the region.



## **The H.O.L.L.A Group**

During 2023 Dr. Green became involved with the H.O.L.L.A group (How Our Lives Link Altogether!) based in New York City. It is a transformational grassroots youth program which provides healing-centered youth organizing training, youth development services, and non-traditional approaches to healing, education, and community relationship building. Previously incarcerated men and women transfer intergenerational wisdom through the H.O.L.L.A Healing Justice Movement. The group also seeks to acquire land in the Adirondacks to pursue farming and a reconnection to the land; Dr. Green is helping them with that pursuit.

## **Alice Moore Black Arts and Cultural Center**

The Alice Moore Black Arts and Cultural Center (AMBACC) became a program under the CFLJ during 2023. Named for Dr. Green's grandmother, it is located at 135 South Pearl Street in Albany and will be a center for art and cultural programs for the community; a space for community conversations; and eventually provide space for apartments as well. AMBACC will operate under the leadership of Dr. Green, Mark Bobb-Semple, Charles Touhey, and Willie White. The center held a Kwanzaa celebration at the end of December, and hosted community conversations in early 2024 to obtain input on programming from community members.



*The Alice Moore*  
BLACK ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER

## Financial Information

The Center for Law and Justice is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization that is required to file a Form 990 annual report on its financial status. That report is a public document available for examination.

The work of the CFLJ is made possible due in large part to volunteers and private donors. Volunteers include private citizens, local attorneys, and a diverse group of student interns from colleges and universities. Many of the Center's student interns come from Albany Medical College and the University at Albany School of Public Health. During 2023, financial donations to the Center came from individuals, foundations, and companies including:

Carl Touhey Foundation

Kathlene Thiel

Delmar Presbyterian Church

Albany Medical College

Tides Foundation

LEAD Grant

PB&J Foundation





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### Current Staff and Volunteers

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Jeremy Clement, Policy Analyst  
Yomika Bennett, Program Analyst  
Darryl Johnson, Office Safety and Re-entry Advisor  
Mary Ellen Frieberg, Volunteer (Annual Report)  
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