



NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD
LAW FOR THE PEOPLE SINCE 1937



DISORIENTATION HANDBOOK

Creating Your Own Progressive Legal Education



To learn more about NLG national committees, please visit:

NLG.org/committees

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Practice Being a People's Lawyer!

You have unlimited possibilities to better society through your practice of law. Each of you is unique in how you can apply your talents, skills, and creative energies to find ways to use the law to advance justice. If you are like most incoming law students you probably will hear that attorneys cannot mix activism with the practice of law. Your law school experience may reinforce this notion. The purpose of this Disorientation Handbook is to provoke you to challenge traditional notions of how one must practice law and to suggest ways to make your three years of study more enriching and challenging. The National Lawyers Guild strongly recommends that you begin your work as a “people’s lawyer” while in law school.

Your most important lessons are going to come through your interactions with the people—and causes—you represent. The most significant preparation you will need in practice is not the careful analysis of the argument of the opposition, as necessary as that is. What is decisive in preparation is knowing your own people and, out of your relationship with them, coming to understand their

thinking, their analysis of the problems facing them, and their perception of the solution, of what must be done. Avoid the pitfalls that so many young lawyers often fall into. Most new lawyers feel that the problems involved are strictly legal and, because they know the law, they have the answers to the problems and know what to do. Consequently, they do not listen to the people involved. And time after time, by focusing so strongly on the legal issues, these attorneys miss the actual problems and fail to develop the approaches really required.

The test for a people’s lawyer is not always the technical winning or losing of the formal proceedings. The real test is the impact of the legal activities on the morale and understanding of the people involved in the struggle. No matter how experienced, clever, and resourceful a lawyer may be, the most important element is still the informed support and active participation of the people involved. Without this, a legal victory has very little meaning indeed.

—Arthur Kinoy (1920-2003), *Guild attorney*



NLG Legal Observers attend an action in Ferguson, MO in 2014 (Photo: Cece McGuire)

History of the National Lawyers Guild

In 1937, progressive lawyers established the National Lawyers Guild as the first national integrated bar association and an alternative to the American Bar Association. For over eight decades, NLG has been the most extensive network of public interest and human rights legal activists in the United States.

As a radical legal organization, the NLG supported causes unpopular with government and business interests. Guild lawyers provided assistance to FDR's New Deal and his effort to reform the Supreme Court, helped organize the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and drafted model labor and social security legislation. As an organization, the NLG was in favor of unemployment insurance, labor relations acts, and civil rights legislation. Guild lawyers fought racial discrimination in cases such as *Hansberry v. Lee*, the case

that struck down segregationist Jim Crow laws in Chicago. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Guild members founded the first national plaintiffs personal injury bar association, which became the American Trial Lawyers Association (ATLA), and pioneered storefront law offices for low-income clients, which became the model for the community-based offices of the Legal Services Corporation.

During the McCarthy era, Guild members represented the Hollywood Ten, the Rosenbergs, and thousands of victims of anticommunist hysteria. Unlike all other national civil liberties groups and bar associations, the Guild refused to require "loyalty oaths" of its members; it was therefore labeled "subversive" and targeted by the US Justice Department. The NLG was openly critical of the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover, who ordered covert actions against the Guild—including several burglaries of

the NLG office. The Guild further attracted FBI attention when it drafted a report on FBI surveillance practices in 1949, showing the FBI was engaged in warrantless wiretapping, illegal mail covers, and warrantless entries. The Guild's criticisms of the FBI infuriated Hoover and led to decades of harassment and repression.

The Guild's targeting by Hoover and McCarthy led to such a decline in membership that the future of the organization was uncertain. However, by the 1960s, membership grew once again as the organization took up the struggle for civil rights. The NLG set up offices in the South and organized thousands of volunteer lawyers and law students to support the civil rights movement long before the federal government or other bar associations. Guild members represented the families of murdered civil rights activists and defended thousands of civil rights activists who were arrested for exercising basic rights. Cases initiated by NLG lawyers established new federal constitutional protections in ground-breaking Supreme Court cases such as *Dombrowski v. Pfister*, which enjoined thousands of racially motivated state court criminal prosecutions; *Goldberg v. Kelly*, the case that established the concept of "entitlements" to social benefits that require Due Process protections; and *Monell v. Department of Social Services*, which held municipalities liable for brutal police officers.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970, the NLG members continued to provide legal support to emerging social movements. Guild members represented Vietnam War draft resisters, antiwar activists, the Chicago 7 after the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention, and GIs who opposed the war. Guild members also defended FBI-targeted members of the Black Panther Party, the American Indian Movement, and the Puerto



Arthur Kinoy being dragged from the hearing room of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1966.

Rican independence movement and helped expose illegal FBI and CIA surveillance, infiltration, and disruption tactics detailed in the 1975-76 COINTELPRO hearings that led to enactment of the Freedom of Information Act. Guild members argued *U.S. v. U.S. District Court*, the Supreme Court case that established that Nixon could not ignore the Bill of Rights in the name of “national security” and led to the Watergate hearings. The NLG defended prisoners who protested the conditions at Attica and provided legal counsel to the Wounded Knee occupation when the Oglala Sioux asserted their sovereignty.

By the 1980s, the priorities of the Guild shifted as new social movements came to the forefront. Members joined the struggle for recognition of the United Farm Workers, supported movements for LGBT rights, and provided legal assistance to the anti-nuclear struggle. NLG lawyers pioneered the “necessity defense,” and began challenging the use of nuclear weapons under international law, eventually resulting in the World Court declaration that nuclear weapons violate international law. During this period, the NLG published the first major work on sexual orientation and the law, as well as the first legal practice manual on the HIV/AIDS crisis.

In 1989, the Guild prevailed in a lawsuit against the FBI for illegal political surveillance of legal activist organizations. The suit, which had been filed in 1977, revealed the extent to which the government had been spying on the NLG. Since 1941, the FBI had used over 1,000 informants to report on NLG activities, disrupt Guild meetings and conferences, and infiltrate policy-making bodies of chapters and the national organization. Under the 1989 settlement, the FBI turned over copies of roughly 400,000 pages of its files on the Guild, which are now available at the Tamiment Library at New York University.

In the 1990s, Guild members mobilized opposition to the Gulf War, defended the rights of Haitian refugees escaping from a



The Committee to Assist Southern Lawyers, c. 1963. The Committee depended heavily on the work of young law students to ease the immense burden of civil rights cases filed by just a handful of Southern attorneys. During the first summer, at least 65 Guild attorneys went south to support the increasingly bold and dangerous work of CORE, SNCC, and the SCLC. From left: Len Holt, William Goodman, Denise Kessler, Joe Jordan, Ed Dawley and Emma Gregory.

U.S.-sponsored dictatorship, and began to define a new civil rights agenda that includes the right to employment, education, housing, and health care. As a founding UN-NGO, the Guild participated in the 50th anniversary of the UN and Guild members authored the first reports that detailed U.S. violations of international human rights standards. The Guild established the NLG National Police Accountability Project to address the issue of widespread police violence and played an active role in opposing NAFTA and in facilitating and supporting the growing movement for globalization of justice. Guild members were playing an active role in encouraging cross-border labor organizing and in exposing the abuses in the maquiladoras on the U.S.-Mexico Border.

As the 21st century began, the NLG was supporting global justice, environmental, animal rights, racial justice, and information activists, as well as whistleblowers, anarchists, and Muslims targeted by the US government. The Guild joined with environmental groups to oppose numerous harmful pipelines projects, supported cases against surveillance by the National Security Agency and the US Army,

and engaged in many other projects that directly challenged government and corporate practices. Guild members lobbied Congress and worked with the House Judiciary Committee in an effort to repeal the worst aspects of the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act. Members also filed the first challenges against the use of military tribunals and the detention of prisoners from Afghanistan.

Guild members defended protestors falsely charged in response to their political organizing. The Guild's Mass Defense committee created the Green Scare Hotline—a legal resource for activists being targeted by police or the FBI as well as the AnNLG project dedicated to defending hacktivists. When Occupy encampments spread across the country in 2011, the NLG was on hand to offer legal support. After the election of Donald Trump, the NLG assisted with the organization of legal support for the massive protests on inauguration day, and worked with the over 200 people mass arrested by DC police on J20.

In recent years, the NLG has continued its long tradition of supporting BIPOC movements. Guild members provided legal support nationwide when protests erupted after the continual killing



Law Strikes Back rally organized by the NLG at Foley Square in NYC in response to the election of Donald Trump

of black people by the police, most notably in Ferguson, Baltimore, Charlotte, NYC, Louisville, and Minneapolis. NLG members traveled to Standing Rock and helped form the Water Protector Legal Collective, which provides ongoing assistance to those arrested for their resistance to oil pipelines. Through formal resolutions, the NLG membership voted to support the abolition of prisons and police. In 2018, the Guild endorsed the nationwide prison strike and contributed to legal support in the aftermath. When the Trump administration began targeting immigrants and other marginalized communities, Guild members organized courthouse demonstrations across the country in a day of "Law Strikes Back" actions. The NLG supported anti-fascist counter-demonstrators who challenged the increasing number of white supremacist groups and rallies. In 2020, the NLG Mass Defense Program played a central role after the police murder of George Floyd, providing legal representation to 20,000 arrestees during the uprising. Guild staff and members set up legal and jail support hotlines across the country, provided training and education to thousands of organizers and attorneys, and assisted activists targeted by federal prosecution and grand jury investigations.

From the beginning, the Guild has been consistently active on the

international front as well. In the 1940s, Guild lawyers fought against fascists in the Spanish Civil War and World War II and helped prosecute Nazis at Nuremberg. The Guild was one of the nongovernmental organizations selected by the U.S. government to officially represent the American people at the founding of the United Nations in 1945. Members helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and founded one of the first UN-accredited human rights NGOs in 1948, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL). The NLG supports self-determination for Palestine, opposed apartheid in South Africa at a time when the U.S. Government still labeled Nelson Mandela a "terrorist," and began the ongoing fight against the blockade of Cuba. In the 1980s, spurred by the need to represent Central American refugees and asylum activists fleeing U.S. sponsored "terror" in Nicaragua and El Salvador, the Guild's National Immigration Project began working systematically on immigration issues. The Guild exposed the illegality of U.S. intervention in Central America that became even more widely known as the "Iran-Contra" scandal. In the 21st century, Guild members continued to support social justice struggles internationally, regularly sending delegations to Gaza to document Israeli atrocities, monitoring elections in Haiti, Venezuela, and Honduras, holding "People's

Tribunals" to highlight injustices in Brazil, the Philippines, and Mexico, and coordinating with progressive legal groups in Cuba, South Korea, Japan, and Puerto Rico.

Unlike many other bar associations, the NLG's mission and work has been openly and proudly anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, and anti-imperialist. Through its membership of thousands of legal activists organized through 20+ national committees, 65+ local chapters, and 125+ law school chapters, the Guild continues to fight for the rights of people and ecosystems to be held more sacred than profit.

For more on surveillance of the Guild, read the NLG report "Breach of Privilege: Spying on Lawyers in the United States" (2014), which examines the long history of surveillance of the legal profession and the NLG in particular (nlg.org/breach_of_privilege).

For more on the Guild's history, visit the interactive timeline on the website (nlg.org).

NLG Radical Law Student Project

It has become a truism that many are drawn to law school initially to further social justice, only to end up working in areas of the law that have little potential to serve these ideals. The most common reason cited for this is economic: the average law student now emerges into practice with well over \$100,000 in debt. However, this is not the only factor. In most universities, the culture and pedagogy of legal education tend to emphasize commercial law over public interest fields and the intellectual pressure of law school undermines student's commitment to their ideals. Very often students feel very little support within the institution, and a subtle pressure to abandon the political and moral values that informed their decision to pursue law in the service of the people.

In order to combat these trends, the National Lawyers Guild has initiated the Radical Law Student Project, which includes a collaborative Radical Law Student Manual (RLSM) outlining organizing campaigns undertaken by NLG students as well as a growing faculty network of NLG scholars. The RLSM builds on the NLG Disorientation Manual by presenting an extended analysis of contemporary legal education as well as concrete strategies to change the culture of law school using examples from other students who have successfully fought for improvements in their institutions. Topics covered include the dominant legal career narrative, the psychological effects of law school, teaching and grading practices, barriers to legal education, tuition increases, law student debt, radical faculty and curriculum, contemplation and the law, starting and reviving NLG chapters, and advice for life as a new lawyer.

The Radical Law Student Project (RLSP) is designed as a tool to change law school culture from the inside out. We start from the assumption that the current practices of legal education can be challenged and improved through the organization and determination of students and their allies. We identify the structures and unspoken assumptions that maintain the elite and conservative nature of law schools, and by extension, of the law itself. The belief that legal education can and must change is a radical assertion. The overall effect of being in law school is to isolate students from their values and from each other and to re-frame social, ethical, and political issues in the dry and obtuse language of the law. We challenge this version of law school and offer analyses and tools to create a new kind of legal education—one that will teach how law can be used for the benefit of people over property.

Changing the practices, pedagogy, and expectations of law school in order to transform the culture of legal education will not be an easy process. Remember that you are not alone! The NLG offers a nationwide community of lawyers, law students, legal workers, and scholars who can



assist you in changing the conditions at your law school. Our experience comes directly from the research and organizing of other NLG law students and faculty, who can support your efforts to make similar changes at your law school.

To learn more about the NLG's legal education initiatives, please email NLG Director of Research and Education Traci Yoder at traci@nlg.org. You can read the entire Radical Law Student Manual online at nlg.org/radical-law-student-project/

Further suggested reading:

A Handbook for Social Justice Activists Thinking about Law School by Nikki Demetria Thanos

For Those Considering Law School by Dean Spade

Letter to a Law Student Interested in Social Justice by Bill Quigley.



■ Lewis and Clark NLG and BLSA on the 2016 NLG Day of Action to Support the Movement for Black Lives.

Students in the Guild

Law students currently represent one-third of the Guild's membership and carry out a substantial amount of the programmatic work done in the name of the NLG. Guild students continually pour new ideas and energy into the entire organization and bring their experiences from other contemporary movements for social change to their Guild work. They represent both one of the most active elements of the present Guild as well as, literally, the future of the Guild.

Law students take part in every level of decision-making in the organization and, since law students were admitted into the NLG in 1970, they have consistently pushed for various kinds of organizational change and development. Recently, for example, law students have been at the forefront of efforts to integrate an anti-racist perspective into Guild work and make us more accountable to the communities we work with.

The Guild organizes on various levels and each aspect of the Guild is open to your input and ideas. Here's a brief outline of the different ways law students fit into the Guild's overall structure:

At the Law School Level:

At the majority of law schools in the country you can find a Guild presence, challenging the rest of the law school to "disorient" themselves, think outside the box, and, above all else, organize. You should seek out the Guild chapter at your school as soon as possible. If the chapter is inactive, talk to affiliated students about getting it going again and use the advice given in this handbook for starting a new chapter. The National Office can also help you with organizing resources and recruitment ideas.

Student chapters are widely recognized as crucial to much of the Guild work that happens from year to year. Because chapter members see each other so often, ideas for and implementation of projects are often discussed and planned at length—creating an environment that is more conducive to coming up with a well-organized and dynamic program than if most of the communication was over email or the phone. This helps form some of our tightest-knit chapters that can mobilize quickly and efficiently around issues. For these and other reasons student chapters have

proven to be one of the National Lawyers Guild's greatest strengths.

At the Local Level:

The Guild can be an inroad to relationships with the progressive lawyers, legal workers, and jailhouse lawyers in your area. If there is an active chapter in your area, get in touch! Many chapters have ongoing programs that you can get involved with. Some students serve on the steering committee or board of the local chapter as a representative from their law school chapter. Others primarily work with the local chapter, participating in designing, or coordinating their programs. Meeting the attorneys and legal workers active in the local chapter could prove invaluable to your legal education; this could be your source of mentors, volunteer opportunities, future job prospects, not to mention a fountain of wealth for your political and social life.

If there isn't an active chapter in your area, chances are that there are Guild members near you waiting to be contacted. Call the National Office to find them, then search them out and start organizing with them!

At the Regional Level:

The Guild is divided geographically into nine regions: Far West, Northwest, TexOma, Midwest, Southwest, Mideast, Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern. A Regional Representative, elected by the region's members, represents each geographic area. Every spring each region holds a regional conference that students are often very active in planning. These conferences, and regional listserves, will be instrumental in meeting and forming relationships with your future comrades, colleagues, and maybe even co-counsels across your state and in the surrounding states. Students are also eligible to serve as RVPs!

At the National Level:

Organizing happens on many different fronts at the national level. The national student network operates as a "student caucus" that meets formally once a year at the National Convention. The caucus elects two Student National Vice Presidents (SNVPs) who serve a two-year term and represent the students to the National Executive Committee (NEC).

The national student email list, as well as the strong personal connections made at regional and national meetings allow the chapters to coordinate as a national network. NLG students also coordinate for national actions: every year in March, student chapters from across the country hold simultaneous events that call for the abolition of the prison-industrial complex in our national Student Week Against Mass Incarceration. Student chapters hold press conferences, have speakers and speak-outs, and educate their fellow classmates by tabling or fliering the school. Other student-led projects include the NLG Radical Law Student Project and days of action against rising student debt. In addition



University of North Carolina NLG students in 2019

to attention-grabbing national actions, chapters support each other across state lines by sharing resources, strategies, and action plans that worked for their chapter.

The national committees provide various opportunities for you to be active nationally and work with the experts in the areas of law that interest you. From the Military Law Task Force to the Labor and Employment Committee, there is a niche for you! The committees all have email lists (some have several if they have sub-committees or working groups) and meet in person annually at the National Convention and sometimes in other locations throughout the year. Many operate their own websites and some even have paid staff persons. Each committee has a chair that you can contact about getting involved; this information is on the Guild's website (www.nlg.org) and is listed inside the front cover of this manual. For descriptions of each committee, see the end of this manual.

There is a national office in New York City that operates as the administrative wing of the organization, produces the publications, plans the National Convention with the host chapter, handles the finances, and helps network all the various levels, committees, projects, and people of the organization. The NLG Director of Research and Education works at the National Office and is in

touch with all the student chapters, committees, and members of the NEC and can help you navigate the different levels of the Guild, answer your questions, and provide support.!

At the International Level:

That's right—it doesn't stop with the national level. The Guild is a member of several progressive international legal coalitions and Guild members attend these meetings across the globe. Our International Committee is especially active. We have sent delegations to the Middle East, Haiti, Cuba, Honduras, Venezuela, and Mexico (to name just a few countries) and students have been launched into exciting, cutting edge legal work through their participation.

Get Involved!

Join the Guild and join thousands of radical, committed individuals who are using the law in creative ways to build and strengthen the movement for justice. To officially become a member, just go to nlg.org/join and become a part of the most progressive legal network around!

—Traci Yoder,
Director of Research & Education

Getting Critical

By this point in your school reading, you may be wondering how it is possible that most every professor clings to the notion of the law as a neutral, objective force that is the embodiment of justice. In fact, there are exceptions. Most law schools these days have at least one critical theorist on the faculty. The professor may be a critical legal scholar, a critical race theorist, a feminist legal theorist or a critical queer theorist..

Critical Legal Studies (CLS) has been called a movement, a political location, and a method, among other things. Whatever its appellation, CLS has become a recognized area of study among law students and professors. CLS contends that the law is shaped by the political and moral beliefs of the lawmakers. CLS seeks to show how the legal order systematically reflects, generates and reinforces poverty and class inequity as well as sexism, homophobia and racism. This method of criticism has its roots in the deconstructionist movement in philosophy.

In a similar fashion, Critical Race Theorists argue that the "objective" view of a judge is merely the judge's privileged ability to protect his or her subjective understanding as the understanding of all people. As the vast majority of judges are white men, CRT argues that this privileged viewpoint ignores the experiences and interests of people of color. There is also a movement within CRT against the intellectual deconstructionism of CLS in favor of pursuing the more immediate need for positive rights legislation.

Feminist Legal Theory criticizes the "male voice" of the law. It starts with the premise that the law is created and taught in a voice that is rigid, limited and without emotion. In particular, the use of precedent perpetuates male supremacy. Because the Constitution was written by men and has, for the most part, been interpreted by men, reliance on historical precedent is bound to benefit men first. This has been particularly criticized in the areas of rape law, pornography regulation, and reproductive rights.

Finally, a new group has recently appeared in the field of Critical Studies.

Queer theory builds upon feminist challenges to the idea that gender is part of the essential self, and upon gay/lesbian studies' close examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual acts and identities. The theory's goal is to destabilize identity categories, which are designed to identify the "sexed subject" and place individuals within a single restrictive sexual orientation.

Transgender theory emphasizes the importance of physical embodiment in gender and sexual identity. Transgender theory integrates this embodiment with the self and socially constructed aspects of identity through the lived experiences of those with intersecting identities. Thus, it provides a theoretical basis for reconciling feminist



Angela Davis and Guild member Doris Walker arrive at Santa Clara Court for the first day of Davis' trial on murder charges and aborted escape of George Jackson, 1972.

and queer theoretical scholarship with social work practice and advocacy, with regard not only to issues of working with transgender people but also to larger issues of group identity and social oppression.

The following is a partial listing of published critical legal scholars. They are categorized for the sake of convenience, but the work of many of them focuses on the intersection between two or more bases for oppression:

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On queer/trans studies: Gabriel Arkes, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Leslie Feinberg, Michel Foucault, Rosemary Hennessy, Robert McRuer, Scott Morgensen, Jose Esteban Munoz, Jay Prosser, Jasbir Puar, Derek Rosenblum, Eve Sedgwick, Dean Spade, Eric Stanley, Susan Stryker, *Gender and Sexual Identity: Transcending Feminist and Queer Theory* by Julie Nagoshi, Craig Nagoshi, and Stephan/ie Brzuzy."

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On race and ethnicity: the works of Robin Barnes; Derrick Bell; Stephen Carter; Kimberle Crenshaw, Richard Delgado; Angela Harris; Alex Johnson; Emma Jordan; Kenneth Kalst; Mary Matsuda; Shelby Steele; Patricia Williams; Iris Marion Young; and *Strangers From Different Shores*, edited by Ronald Takaki.

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On feminism and essentialism: the works of Leslie Bender; Naomi Cahn; Kimberle Crenshaw, Diana Fuss; Angela Harris; Catherine MacKinnon; Mari Matsuda; Martha Minow; Deborah Rhode; Elizabeth Spelman; Patricia Williams; Heather Ruth Wishik; and Iris Marion Young.

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And from the general critical legal movement: the works of Peter Gabel; Duncan Kennedy; Mark Tushnet; and *The Politics of Law*, edited by David Kairys.

Changing the Fabric of the Law

What does it mean to work “for the people” when, as people of color, and women of color, we are working within a field disproportionately dominated by white males? It means our very presence is an act of resistance.

For people of color in the field of law, we are confronted with a sea of white faces—on both the Left and the Right—who purport to “speak” for us, to “save” us from our communities, and to “save” our communities from themselves. We are “instructed” on who we are and what we should become in order to be the most “effective” advocates of the law. We are “taught” that when we speak out on issues of importance to communities of color, we have “an agenda,” and that the “impartial” legal advocate must be objective and dispassionate when discussing issues of justice and equality. But we know from experience that the law is decidedly not race and gender neutral, and that the legal system in this country was founded on structures that enshrine racism and oppression. The language of the law perpetuates race, class, gender and heterosexual privilege. As a result, we often find ourselves challenging professors, fellow students, co-workers—and all too often, our comrades in the movement—calling on them to confront their own racism and other exclusionary practices.

As people of color, we are diverse and have complicated identities; we face discrimination, glass ceilings, sexual harassment, homophobia, classism, and ageism. We uniquely experience the criminalization and incarceration of brown and black men and women in the criminal justice system. For those of us who speak out against oppression, to work in the field of law and take part in the struggle for justice without analyzing race and privilege would be to disconnect ourselves from our histories and our experiences in this society. We challenge the misguided

notion that racism is a problem of the past and that it is our “focus” or “obsession” with race that perpetuates racism. We reject the “color blind” approach to race in the United States for the distorted and deceptive ideology that it is. We are forever mindful of the massive structural change that needs to happen in the law in order for the law to truly represent the people.

In the face of this constant struggle, the experience of being a person of color in the field of law can be alienating, enraging, and isolating—until you realize that you are a part of a movement of other folks of color struggling along side with you, and that with our allies we can push for radical, progressive change in the law, in our communities, and in our own social justice movements.

The United People of Color Caucus (TUPOCC) of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) was born out of this resistance—formed out of a pressing need to address issues of race and equality within the organization. As progressive people of color, we bring unique experiences to the Guild. We are motivated by the possibilities of justice and solidarity, and emboldened by the history of our ancestors who taught us to raise our fists and voices against racism and oppression. We are empowered by the reality of a contemporary struggle against racism that is present and real. We are a reminder that the NLG, like all other institutions, must look internally at its own patterns and practices, in order to ensure the social justice ideals we seek to support on a global level are reflected within the organization. We realize that our work together and with our white allies will only help the Guild increase its capacity to achieve its longtime mission to eradicate racism.

—Ranya Ghuma and Renée Sánchez, Guild attorneys and TUPOCC Co-Founders



▮ Pace Law NLG students during the 2015 NLG Black Lives Matter Law Student National Day of Action

No Student Chapter at Your Law School? Start One!

Chapters sometimes grow out of organizing around a particular political issue. Other times, informal groups of people who have come together over frustration with the legal system decide to affiliate with the Guild. Maybe a few people seek out like-minded folks to join in starting a chapter.

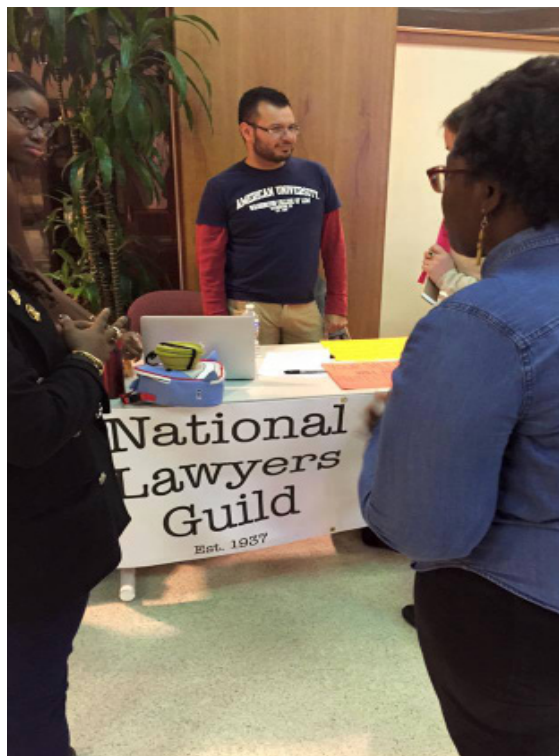
Whatever the original impetus, a small core group of people is necessary to provide the crucial spark to get the chapter off the ground. A solid footing is an important prerequisite for a successful chapter and potential chapters are urged to lay careful groundwork.

In law school, interest in the Guild can be stimulated by announcements of meetings and activities on bulletin boards, special orientation activities, and articles in the school newspaper. If there is no local Guild chapter, informing and involving legal workers and lawyers can be more difficult. Approach people who represent political activists, defendants in capital cases, tenants organizations, or who are involved in other social justice-oriented work. Members of a few chapters are working on ways to involve jailhouse lawyers as active members of their chapters. Get in touch with your Regional Representative and the National Office for ideas and support. Contact nearby chapters for more ideas.

Participation in regional and national meetings is an important aspect of chapter building. Meeting such a concentration of progressive legal people can be inspiring to people who feel isolated legally and/or politically. Those who attend such meetings often go on to be the more active chapter members so encouraging attendance from the chapter is crucial, even if it means raising some money to help pay for transportation.

While programmatic work is the lifeblood of a Guild chapter, it can be the most difficult aspect to develop. Several chapters have found one or two day retreats helpful in brainstorming and planning chapter work. One way to start is talking with community and other progressive local groups. Also, seek out members of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, NBLSA, Outlaws, La Raza Legal Alliance, and other sister legal organizations to explore the possibilities of joint work.

The organizational structure of a chapter is also important to its success and will be a basic strength of its work. Factors here are strong leadership, active participation in decision making by all chapter members, and a regular means of communication.



NLG students tabling at American University in Washington DC

Chapter structures vary widely: assess the needs of your particular situation, and talk with your Regional Representative, the National Office, and members of other chapters for ideas.

Join us in building the Guild, and progressive legal work around the country!

—Tom Berning and Candy Culin

Checklist for Starting a New Chapter

- ❑ **Contact the National Office.** Now. They can get you everything you need to get started, as well as list you among the student chapters on the website and put you in touch with Guild contacts in your area so that you can get involved in local activities. It's possible that there are other member students and member professors already on your campus, and the N.O. will help you find them. The N.O. exists for support—it has tons of publications, recruitment resources, and can help you connect with other Guild members. Ask the N.O. to also send you Disorientation Handbooks and other publications for you to hand out at your first meeting or while tabling campus involvement fairs.
- ❑ **Get recognized on campus.** Talk to other student organizations and your school administration to learn what is required of a new student group on campus. If you need to submit a constitution and bylaws to the student bar association or administrators, see the student section of nlg.org or contact the N.O. for samples. If you need a faculty advisor, try your critical studies department (or an equivalent) or ask the N.O. if there's a Guild professor on staff.
- ❑ **Host your first meeting.** Put up fliers with information about the meeting around school and announce it in as many places as you can: school email lists, social networking sites, campus web forums, classroom chalkboards—everywhere! If it's the beginning of the school year, schedule a time during 1L orientation to table for new members—talk up the Guild and plug the first meeting.
- ❑ **Organize around an issue.** See what people want to work on—a campus issue, something in the local community, a national campaign, or Guild programs. Once you find an issue or two, get going! It's important to harness your energy and run with it. Invite people from nearby NLG chapters and committees, and search the web for community organizations, sister legal organizations, and campus groups who are working on these issues to the initial planning meetings: you'll build critical relationships, learn what's already being done, and plot the best ways to support current projects as Guild students. In all things social justice, unity is key.
- ❑ **Communicate.** It is impossible to stress the importance of regular meetings, but realistically, not everyone will make all of them, and not everything will be resolved at them, either. Contact the National Office so we can set up an NLG listserv for your new chapter so that organizing can continue even when you can't all get together.
- ❑ **Join the Guild.** Applications are available online and on the last page of this Disorientation Handbook, so have everyone fill one out and send it with their sliding scale dues to the N.O. or to the local staffed chapter if you live in New York City, Michigan, Massachusetts, or in the Bay Area. Los Angeles students join for free as dues are subsidized by LA attorney members.
- ❑ **Get organized.** Once you have a solid group of people, elect or organize your decision-making structure. You can organize your “leadership” or chapter body in whatever way fits best: some chapters elect a President, VP, Secretary, and Treasurer; some chapters have two chairs and several board members that oversee projects; and other chapters adopt a collective model with two contacts chosen to communicate with and receive notices from the Regional Representativess, National Office, and other Guild entities. Your chapter, your call. Contact the National Office with the names and information of two principal contact people for the new chapter.
- ❑ **Get what's coming to you.** Law schools earmark thousands of dollars for student groups and activities. Once you're official, talk to your school administration about setting up a budget and securing funds for all your plans. Also look into funding for travel to the Guild's national and regional conventions. And don't forget to ask established student groups for tips—there are almost always tricks to the process.
- ❑ **Vigilance!** There may be people who at first weren't interested in the chapter because it didn't have a clear identity or defined projects—recruit them! Talk about what sets the Guild apart from other organizations, what you are working on, and always encourage others to participate in meetings and events. Make it clear that they can bring their own ideas and projects to the group as well.
- ❑ **Always feel free** to call the National Office and your Regional Representative(s) for contact information in your area, to discuss ideas, or to tell us about the work you are doing so we can share it with other members. The national student coordinator is always eager to talk about radical projects, campaigns, and actions, but is also there to help you brainstorm around the less exciting—but equally critical—items on the agenda: everything from how to run a better meeting to how to plug into the network. Also see the student page of the NLG website for organizing tips, fellowship information, sample documents like budgets and bylaws, and contacts for the other NLG student chapters.

Radicalizing Your Law School

Ideas for Achieving Curriculum Reform, Integration, Personal Satisfaction and Rewarding Jobs

In 1946 a National Lawyers Guild article recognized four crucial reasons to bring law students into the organization: 1) to effect fundamental law school curriculum reform by addressing deficiencies with the case method, lack of contact with practical problems of the bar, and problem resolving techniques; 2) to provide fuller personal integration with the profession while still at law school; 3) to help erase discrimination in legal education; and 4) to assist with post-graduate employment through the Guild's Neighborhood Law offices, since over 80% of the student bodies were veterans.

Sixty years later, the dominant law school curriculum and teaching methods still fail students. This model is harmful to young lawyers' ability to make autonomous decisions about the way in which they practice law, and to how justice is administered in this society. It discourages students from thinking independently about what they can do as lawyers, and instead encourages them to adhere to a status quo model that may espouse values contrary to their own.

A better model integrates multiple teaching models—clinical experience, activist experience, professional mentoring, legal research and writing, creative job opportunities—and instills in students the value of thinking and functioning autonomously. A more effective law school curriculum incorporates a critical analysis of the moral and political content of law. Students are entitled to, and should demand, a wide range of models of how law can be practiced, and the tools to comprehend the social import of their work and the power they possess as students. The legal profession and society at large will benefit from this. Here are several key areas to focus on:

Create Culture that Rewards Rather than Punishes Activism.

Give academic credit for initiating or participating in actions that directly help local communities. For example, students may invite Guild members to conduct trainings at law schools on how to serve as legal observers at local events. Students who attend trainings and serve as legal observers during a semester receive one or two academic credits by presenting a paper outlining key points learned at the training and put into practice at documented rallies. More real life training often comes from this experience than from a semester in the classroom—you learn how to collect information for possible use at trial, how to talk with those who have been arrested, and how to inform them of their rights, including the right to remain silent.

Students can work during winter and spring breaks with asylum seekers, detainees, and other non-citizens seeking immigration status in South Florida or on

the U.S./Mexico border by volunteering with agencies at the forefront in the fight for immigrants' rights. Arranged through the Guild's National Immigration Project, participating students employ advocacy skills in a context quite different from a clinic or classroom. Students can also participate in Guild military law trainings and delegations to other countries. Students should encourage law schools to give academic credit for such work and to aggressively promote such endeavors in school literature.

Professors/Placement Offices Provide Examples of Alternatives to Corporate Jobs.

Ask your professors and law school's job placement office to expand non-corporate job opportunities. Graduates can advance the goals of political and social movements by working as a public defender or for a nonprofit legal services organization. Non-corporate work isn't just in the non-profit sector—consider pro-labor firms, pro-plaintiff firms, or private practice. Certain government jobs provide opportunities to preserve and/or enforce the rights of the people or to enforce regulations imposed on corporations. Examples of agencies with enforcement opportunities include the Environmental Protection Agency, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Trade Commission, the National Labor Relations Board and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or their state equivalents.

Require Clinical Experience in Public Interest.

Clinical programs should be expanded and mandated. Some law students never have the experience of seeing first-hand the needs of their communities or of collaborating with those representing victims of police misconduct, battered women, a person about to be evicted, or someone whose immigration status jeopardizes their rights. Such work sensitizes students and fosters a commitment to serving the community after law school. Pro bono placements can legitimize the practice of working with underserved communities and reveal its many rewards.

Professor David Dominguez describes a clinical seminar in which students learn the art of "redemptive lawyering." In "Redemptive Lawyering: The First (and Missing) Half of Legal Education and Law Practice (37 CAL.W.L.REV. 27 (2000)) he says that lawyers are predominantly conceived as "problem solvers" who step in to usher people through an arcane judicial system designed to handle disputes that could not be resolved privately. Professor Dominguez argues that instead of merely solving problems, lawyers could empower

community organizations to tap their own resources as advocates and problem-solvers by building relationships with other organizations, government service providers and businesses. Redemptive lawyering “seeks to cut the legal system down to size” by creating “a responsible network of caring relationships and effective collaboration.” Rather than viewing the lawyer as someone who reacts when someone calls on her to settle a dispute, redemptive lawyering views the lawyer as an instrument in building a civic community less dependent on the legal system and more reliant on its own networks to fulfill people’s needs.

• • • • • **Redemptive lawyering views** • • • • •
• **the lawyer as an instrument** • • • • •
• **in building a civic community** • • • • •
• **less dependent on the legal** • • • • •
• **system and more reliant on its** • • • • •
• **own networks to fulfill people’s** • • • • •
• **needs.** • • • • •

Law School Administration Should Commit to Hybrid Model of Teaching.

The Socratic method still has some value in helping students think on their feet, avoid intimidation, develop some competency in public speaking, and learn to analyze and speak about caselaw. But it should be combined with the other frequently used problem-solving methods of teaching, in which students apply rules of law to written fact patterns, more along the lines of how practicing attorneys work.

Legal writing and research should be integrated into each course, in addition to the introductory course required in all schools. Writing forces students to think analytically, express themselves cogently and envision a real-life audience more similar to real life than the classroom environment offers.

Because law professors already serve as role models for students, and because most students develop professionally in their first legal job, law schools should institute a formal mentoring program. In the early days of legal education, apprenticeship in an attorney’s office provided an alternative to law school before taking the bar exam. This real world experience would serve students, and the legal profession, well.

Students Participate in Making Changes.

Students should supplement their legal studies by working to effect positive systemic changes in their law schools. They can do this in several areas: admissions; financial aid/loan repayment assistance; student government; faculty/academic committees/alumni/public relations; career planning and faculty diversity. You can learn about the admissions process to ensure that it is asking itself the right questions and that the students, faculty and staff understand how its admissions process works. Loan repayment programs are critical to ensure that students opting to pursue public interest careers can be assisted in meeting their debt obligations. Student government is a highly effective way in which

to promote changes in the curriculum, from allocating student activities funds to speaking as the “legitimate” voice of the student body when dealing with administration. Students need to work to ensure that this voice is reflective of the range of interests and people comprising the student body. Faculty and academic committees are influential places to decide what courses are required and what new faculty will be hired. Often these committees are

unaware that they can play a role in promoting public issues. Involvement with alumni affairs can be a means of promoting a more diverse, public-interest-oriented agenda, as many alumni might be interested in helping to fund such initiatives. Students should maintain pressure on law school faculty and administrators to recruit faculty from diverse backgrounds.

Career Services Work One-on-One with Students to Find or Create Jobs

That Will Best Suit Their Needs. Law school career development centers should encourage students to think creatively about designing their own public interest jobs (see articles on page 20 & 22). Schools should balance the push toward corporate practice by incorporating grassroots legal organizations and alternative bar associations into their career development resources. The career center should invite guest speakers who have experience in these efforts. Guests should talk about their practice, significant cases they have worked on and the challenges and rewards they experience in their day-to-day practices.

—Heidi Boghosian,
former NLG Executive Director

Work For the Guild This Summer!

Over four decades of Haywood Burns Fellowships

The Haywood Burns Memorial Fellowships for Social and Economic Justice emerged from the Guild's established tradition of providing legal, political and educational support to the important progressive movements of the day. In 1964, the Guild, working with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, sent lawyers and law students south to provide legal support for the emerging Civil Rights Movement in what became known as the Mississippi Summer. In late 1972, New York State indicted 62 prisoners who survived the police assault at the Attica Prison. None of the police officers were indicted despite detailed reports of excessive force. In 1973, the Committee was formed in part to respond to this situation. The Summer Projects Committee sent law students to assist on the defense of the Attica Brothers, to support the growing farmworker struggles in California and to support Native American treaty rights in the Pacific Northwest.

Over the years, the Summer Projects Committee has expanded to fund the work of hundreds of students at organizations that are working to protect and further the civil and criminal rights of oppressed people in the United States. In 1996 the program was re-named the Haywood Burns Memorial Fellowships for Social and Economic Justice after the death of Haywood Burns, long-time radical lawyer, law professor, and NLG president.

Although providing legal work under the direction of their attorney-organizers is still important, the primary mission of the Summer Projects is to strengthen the students' long-term commitment to promote justice and equality.



On Being a Haywood Burns Fellow:

Erin Wasley, Fellow at the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute

I learned a good deal of relevant, historical information while working on the book, "Landmark Cases Left Out of Your Textbooks." Working at MCLI was a rich and valuable experience. Working with Ann Ginger was very educational and inspirational.

Jilisa Milton, Fellow at Equal Justice Initiative

Being a Haywood Burns Fellow in 2018 was one of the most impactful ways the NLG supported me as a Black, feminist, southern movement activist trying to find my way as a law student at the University of Alabama School of Law.

Walid F. Kandeel, Fellow at Mumia Abu-Jamal Defense Committee

The most salient legal skill that I have learned during this Fellowship was about attorney/client interactions and how to deal with very different types of clients. I do not think this particular skill can be taught effectively in a traditional classroom setting because it requires the element of human interaction with individuals who have unique life experiences.

Michelle Petrotta, Fellow at Farmworker Legal Services of NY

I learned about client contact skills, the importance of weighing all the benefits and disadvantages of legal options for a client, and the importance of the client's involvement in making decisions regarding his/her involvement in a legal process. Further, I learned about the plethora of issues that effect migrant farmworkers – from housing and labor rights issues to discrimination and trafficking. This experience solidified my interest in advocating on behalf of marginalized and disadvantaged populations in my future legal career.

Melissa Bond, Fellow at Sylvia Rivera Law Project

My level of client interaction was invaluable. I coordinated communication between clients and other nonprofit groups; such communication skills are not taught in the classrooms. I'm glad that I was able to transcend the "academy" this summer.

Comments from Project Directors

Kareem Shora of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

Ethan, our Fellow, helped ADC assist an additional 50 individuals who contacted ADC for help over the summer. Ethan was an outstanding, professional, and very helpful Fellow.

Kimmy Sharkey of the Georgia Resource Center

The Fellowship provides GRC with additional manpower that helps us more effectively represent men and women on Georgia's death row. Without the Fellow, we would have struggled to meet the emotional, mental needs of some of our clients. She was a huge help, working with clients to maintain their trust in GRC and keep them emotionally stable. The Fellow provided extraordinary assistance during an evidentiary hearing. She transported witnesses, took care of them during the hearing, and supported our client's mother.

Ann Fagan Ginger of the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute

It turned out that the Fellows' lack of knowledge of important human rights cases led us to write a new, critical book with their help: "Landmark Cases Left Out of Your Textbooks."

Gabriel Arkles of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project

The program allows us to recruit law students to work here for the summer who might not have applied otherwise or who might not have been able to work here because of lack of funding. Both years we have found exceptional Fellows of color who could not have taken an unpaid internship. Both years they were fluent Spanish speakers, greatly improving our services to Spanish speaking clients.

Jeffrey Light of Patients Not Patents

Our Fellow assisted in preparing an amicus brief and challenging the validity of a patent on a derivative of thalidomide useful for treating cancer and other diseases. Both of these projects were time-sensitive and could not have been completed without the Fellow's help.



Haywood Burns speaking to the media outside Roosevelt Hospital, October 1971. Emerging from the recovery room where H. Rap Brown was supposedly recuperating from a gunshot wound, Burns refused to say whether the patient he saw was or was not Brown.

Applying for Fellowships

Application information on the summer Fellowships will be posted on the NLG website each year in November.

Check www.nlg.org/fellowships for more information on the Fellows, the history of the Fellowships and upcoming due dates.

Email traci@nlg.org for more information.

A note on Fellowship options: We encourage applicants to identify grassroots and non-traditional work opportunities for which there is a serious current societal need. This could be a small non-profit, a short-staffed community law firm, or an organizing campaign that needs legal assistance. We generally do not provide funding for work at large non-profits or agencies that receive government funding, though we have made some exceptions if the agencies are severely under-funded or if the project is especially compelling.

Student Week Against Mass Incarceration

Following the NLG Law for the People Convention in October 2015, NLG membership adopted a resolution calling for “the dismantling and abolition of all prisons and of all aspects of systems and institutions that support, condone, create, fill, or protect prisons.” In honor of this resolution, in 2016 the NLG expanded our annual Student Week Against the Death Penalty to become the Week Against Mass Incarceration (WAMI). Each year, we ask NLG law school and local chapters to organize events and actions on the topic of mass incarceration and its effects. Guild chapters have organized interactive workshops, community discussions, film screenings, tabling, letter writing campaigns, banner drops, visits to incarcerated youth, and panels on topics such as solitary confinement, school to prison pipeline, immigration detention, transformative justice, and alternatives to incarceration.

The Guild is currently engaged in unique and innovative efforts nationwide to alleviate some of the harm inflicted by the prison-industrial complex and immigration regime. NLG initiatives include the national NLG Mass Incarceration Committee, NLG Bay Area Prisoner Advocacy Network, the Guild Notes column, “Beyond Bars: Voices from NLG Jailhouse Lawyers,” and the Jailhouse Lawyer Manual. NLG members are involved in various initiatives opposing policing, criminalization, solitary confinement, the drug war, capital punishment, and new prison construction. The Guilds members and projects supported the 2016 and 2018 National Prison Strikes. The National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild (NIPNLG) is a national non-

profit organization that promotes justice and equality of treatment in all areas of immigration law, the criminal justice system, and policies related to immigration. The NLG National Police Accountability Project (NPAP) is a non-profit dedicated to ending law enforcement abuse through legal action and educational programming.

In 2020, NLG membership resolved to support the abolition of policing and the 2021 WAMI focused on “Prison Abolition and Beyond,” to include all locations and instances in which people are held against their will, including jails, immigration detention, juvenile detention facilities, psychiatric wards, and more. We also intend the “beyond” to include consideration of the abolition of policing as part of the larger mass incarceration system. The Guild is committed to the abolition of police and prisons and NLG students help educate a new generation of legal professionals about the harms of these systems as well as alternatives.

To learn more about incarcerated Guild members, their concerns, and more resources on prison litigation and organizing, please check out the NLG Jailhouse Lawyer website (jailhouselaw.org). The national student Week Against Mass Incarceration is always held the first week of March. Please email NLG Director of Research and Education Traci Yoder at traci@nlg.org to share the events your school plans. Everyone should post flyers, pictures, and event invites on the WAMI Facebook event page and join the conversation on Twitter and Instagram using #EndPrisons and #Decarcerate. Tweet to us @[NLGnews](https://twitter.com/NLGnews)!



Dr. Angela Davis joined the Lewis and Clark NLG's abolition group at MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility to talk about prison abolition, collective organizing, and critical resistance. The group meets every other week with youth who are incarcerated to have discussions, bring in guest speakers, and work on projects.

Why Join the Guild?



NLG legal observers at Brooklyn rally to demand ICE out of courts, December 2017. (Photo: Tasha Moro)

The National Lawyers Guild has a rich and long history of being a central part of efforts for social justice. While we are very proud of this history, we want you to join the Guild because of its exciting future. Join the Guild because it continues to play a crucial role in social justice struggles. Join the Guild because we need your passion and creativity if we are to continue to adapt in this ever-changing political climate.

The National Lawyers Guild is a national legal organization committed to social change and human rights. We are different from other legal organizations because our first commitment is to progressive structural change to our current system of government. Our work supports the efforts of communities organizing themselves by being a legal resource to their work for social change and self-determination, while also working to make direct change through the legal system.

This is different from legal organizations that prioritize the Bill of Rights, or lobby elected officials. Because the Guild is building relationships with communities on the front lines of campaigns for social justice, we also know that it is important to employ a variety of legal and political tactics in order to enact change. Membership in the Guild is focused on the legal community; we are made up of legal workers, attorneys, law students and jailhouse lawyers. This positions us uniquely as one of a few national legal associations with social justice politics. We encourage members of the Guild to be making long-term linkages with minority bar associations (bar associations of people of color, women, LGBTQ people and others) as a way to make connections between the work that all of us do.

The network that the Guild provides is integral to the success and sustainability of people's lawyers. Many of us know the story of the law student who goes to school with the goal of changing the world, but isn't able to live and work with other progressive students. Slowly these well-intentioned people aren't able to sustain their work without a community of people to build and learn with; without the support and dialogue with other progressive attorneys they

eventually burn out and become de-politicized. Fighting for social justice cannot be done alone.

Involvement in the Guild includes students in a nationwide network of progressive legal people with broad experience in key areas of people's law. Guild members are at the forefront of the legal battles surrounding AIDS, violence related to race, gender, sexuality or nationality, civil rights, military law, immigration law, housing and economic rights, environmental law and international human rights, among others. Through the Guild students have the opportunity to have mentors, be on email lists that provide substantive work ideas, discuss legal strategies and share ideas, and find people to initiate new projects with. This network also proves useful to Guild members in finding jobs, in answering questions about how to proceed in various legal problems and in supporting progressive lawyers when they need it most.

The Guild is larger than the sum of its parts—meaning that as a whole we hold more power and accomplish more than as just a loosely affiliated network of people. We cannot overlook the importance of the Guild as a national organization of legal people, and the impact that we can have on the political development of this country. The Guild is a place where your work, whether it is on a national scale or in your own neighborhood, is linked to the work of thousands of other members of the legal community.

Considering all that the Guild has to offer, the cost of membership is very low. Law student membership is about the price of a night out on the town. In addition to being a member of an incredible organization, you receive *Guild Notes*, other student publications such as this handbook, your local chapter's newsletter, information on Guild publications and committees, voting rights at the national convention and in your local chapter, and much more information about progressive legal organizations and issues.

Join today at nlg.org/join! Dues are sliding scale for students and dues waivers are available by contacting NLG Director of Membership Lisa Drapkin at membership@nlg.org.



"An organization of lawyers, law students, legal workers and jailhouse lawyers...in the service of the people, to the end that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests."

—Preamble to the NLG Constitution

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