

JusticeMatters



STRENGTH FOR TODAY,
HOPE FOR TOMORROW

JusticeMatters Annual Report 2020



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Founded in 2009, JusticeMatters has grown from a volunteer effort into a highly specialized nonprofit law firm. Today we serve at the forefront of anti-trafficking efforts in North Carolina.

Mission: We address the roots and repercussions of human trafficking.

Method: We provide trauma-informed legal services and promote just policies and practices.

Vision: We envision the freedom and flourishing of all people.

We are fueled by faith and our vision
for the freedom and flourishing of all.

A Letter From Libby



Dear Friends,

As we near the end of 2020, I'm celebrating strength for today—and hope for tomorrow!

Over the past year, in the midst of unprecedented global uncertainty and unrest, I've witnessed the strength of our clients, our staff, and our entire team—that includes you!—in new and beautiful ways. Many of us have experienced suffering and loss. Together we've persevered, overcoming obstacles to ensure that our doors and our hearts remain open to serve.

I'm happy to report that with creativity, grit, and God's provision through you, we've sustained both our services and our staff. Prioritizing health and safety, we pivoted quickly to take all services virtual and finished our fiscal year on par with the last—providing empowering legal services to 510 clients and providing education and training to over 750 community members and professionals. Having concluded six years as inaugural chair of the North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission, I turned my full focus to advancing the mission of JusticeMatters within the statewide movement our team has helped build.

The need for our services is growing. COVID-19 continues to devastate the health and livelihood of many in our community, creating and exacerbating vulnerability to human trafficking.

I'm confident, now more than ever, in our mission to address the roots and repercussions of human trafficking in North Carolina for the freedom and flourishing of all. As we look ahead to 2021, I'm filled with hope. Our work is grounded in hope; we are honored to create opportunities for our clients to heal, flourish, and pursue their dreams.

Thank you for your partnership. As we celebrate the past in this report and lay out our strategic plan for the future, I invite you to engage with JusticeMatters at a deeper level in the coming year—to work and journey with us as we bring vision to reality.

May God continue to give us strength for today—and hope for tomorrow!

Gratefully,

Libby Magee Coles

Libby Magee Coles, Esq.
Founder & Executive Director

A Special Thank You to Our Board of Directors:

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NC Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, NC DHHS - Raleigh, NC

We provide trauma-informed legal services

Key Outcomes

- Secured legal protection with a parent/caregiver for **40** individuals (38 children and 2 dependent adults).
- Secured immigration relief for **43** individuals.

"This year we had the honor of representing one of our first T Visa clients—a victim of sex trafficking when she was just 18 years old—in obtaining lawful permanent residency ("green cards") for her, her mother, and her five younger siblings. What a joyous occasion (pre-COVID!) to have our client, her family members, the attorney, and interpreter all squeezed around a conference table while we celebrated their long-awaited grant of legal permanency in this country!"



Cheryl Chew, Esq.
Senior Staff Attorney, Immigration Law Section Lead

Just a Few of Our Key Outputs...

701
calls received requesting services

280
callers provided information and/or referrals

501
clients provided legal services

453
additional children and dependent adults impacted as beneficiaries of services provided to their parent/caregiver


50
petitions for immigration relief submitted

50
custody, guardianships, and adoptions filed (covering 69 children and 2 dependent adults)

...and promote just policies and practices.

Training & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trained 131 professionals and educated 657 community members to better identify and respond to human trafficking.
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advanced best practices and innovative policies at the state and local level, primarily through leadership and service on on 19 (10 local, 8 statewide, and 1 national) task forces.• In February JusticeMatters initiated and presented a letter to the NC Human Trafficking Commission (HTC), signed onto by six leading anti-trafficking agencies, requesting the HTC pass a resolution urging law enforcement agencies to sign off on Continued Presence (CP) in all cases of human trafficking in NC. The resolution was unanimously approved by the HTC in August. CP is a temporary immigration designation for foreign national survivors of trafficking who are potential witnesses in an investigation or prosecution, enabling them to remain safely in the U.S. and access social services while the case against their trafficker is pending.

"This year we celebrated a client's receipt of Continued Presence after 9 months of advocacy and coordination between our team, our client, and both federal and state law enforcement agencies. As a student athlete, our client experienced labor trafficking, a serious sports injury, and years of displacement. Yet he remained determined to attend college and play basketball. The generosity of several community members empowered him to remain in school on a student visa, but without the work authorization or benefits available to trafficking survivors, our client faced ongoing obstacles to stability. Continued Presence opens up these avenues for support as we represent him to secure a T Visa."



Savannah Best, Esq.
Staff Attorney



Libby presents to the Wake County Bar Association (WCBA) in February. Photo courtesy of the WCBA.

"JusticeMatters stands in solidarity with our black and brown clients, partners, supporters, volunteers, friends, and family—you matter.

...As a legal service provider, we witness the impact of systemic racism in both the law and its application....We witness how systemic racism fuels human trafficking and all forms of exploitation. Systemic racism not only creates and exacerbates vulnerability, it also makes it much more difficult to obtain justice and restoration....

And so, we renew our resolve to work for racial justice."

- Letter from the Executive Director, June 2020
(full letter available at justicemattersnc.org/messages/)

About Us

Our staff hails from 8 states, 1 territory, and 4 countries. We hold 11 advanced degrees, house over 20 pets, and raise 15 adopted and biological children. Collectively, our attorneys have practiced law for over 68 years. Although we refuse to watch March Madness in the same room, we all agree that justice *matters*.

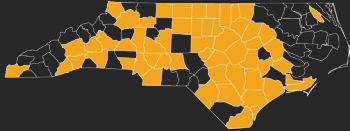


At A Glance...

Staff: **14**

Interns/Externs/Fellows: **9** (Campbell, Cornell, Duke, Gonzaga, and UNC law schools; Meredith College, UNC School of Social Work; Raleigh Fellows)

Reach: **80** Counties in NC



Offices: **2** Durham, NC & Raleigh, NC

Clients: **501** in FY 19-20

Our clients are our neighbors and represent the diversity of ability, age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, race, and religion in our community. We are honored to together call North Carolina home!

Ages: **4 – 76** Years Old

Nationalities: **71+**



Edith Galvan Lopez
Client Services Specialist

"It's been a huge blessing to transition from intern to staff member. As an intern, I was able to start to get into the grit of our work. Now as staff, I get to carry on that work, continue to connect with fellow staff, and forge on in my journey to seek justice."

COVID-19 Response

FEBRUARY

2020

Throughout February, we monitored COVID-19, preparing for potential impact on services and funding.

MARCH

2020

On March 16, we implemented our COVID-19 Programming Plan, pivoting to remote work to continue provision of all services except walk-in legal clinic.

APRIL

2020

On April 1, we secured Paycheck Protection Program funding and implemented our COVID-19 Fiscal Plan.
On April 7, we re-launched our legal clinic as a virtual/tele-clinic.

MAY

2020

Throughout May, June, and July, we continued remote services and planned for phased office re-opening prioritizing (a) the health and safety of staff and clients and (b) good citizenship in our community—doing our part to protect those particularly vulnerable to the health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

JUNE

2020

JULY

2020

AUGUST

2020

Throughout August and September, we focused on strategic planning-reimagining the way we do what we do in order to effectively advance our mission through whatever change and challenge lies ahead.

SEPTEMBER

2020

On September 30, our FY ended.



We miss our Raleigh Fellow, Landon, & celebrate his scholarship to Regent Law!

We miss our Donor Relations Specialist, Jeymi, & wish her all the best in her real estate career!

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Strength for Today— Hope for Tomorrow

JusticeMatters addresses the *roots* and *repercussions* of human trafficking for the *freedom* and *flourishing* of all people. These words—our mission and vision—came alive for me in a deeper way in 2020 as our staff celebrated a T Visa approval with Daniel*, a client we’ve fought alongside for several years.

Kidnapped by a cartel as a child, tortured, and forced to work in a factory under threat of harm to his family, Daniel* escaped and then overcame obstacle after obstacle that threatened to put him back in the hands of his traffickers. As we worked for his T Visa approval, we protected his rights as a victim of crime and helped secure both release from immigration detention and reunification with his family. Now, having finally been granted legal status in the U.S. through a T Visa, Daniel can begin to heal and pursue his dreams in safety.

Strength for Today

Daniel is a survivor of human trafficking: the exploitation of people for labor or commercial sex acts through force, fraud, or coercion. In 2019 the National Human Trafficking Hotline identified 11,500 cases of human trafficking involving over 22,000 victims in the U.S.—over 500 in North Carolina. This is likely only a small subset of cases, as many are reported to other state or local agencies, undetected, misidentified, overlooked, or ignored.

Human trafficking can happen to anyone. However, some people are much more vulnerable than others. **Human trafficking, at its core, is the exploitation of vulnerability for profit.**

This year we represented Ms. Thomas* in securing legal custody of her granddaughter, Lauren*. Abused by her mother who struggled with alcohol abuse and afraid of her mother’s violent boyfriend, Lauren spent much of her childhood searching for love and safety. By the time she was a teenager she knew she could sell her body for a safe place to live—older teens had introduced her to a man who offered drugs and an “easy way” to make money. Increasingly desperate, she started skipping school and was suspended for fighting. When DSS intervened, Lauren told her social worker that she would run away and never be found if she had to return to her mother’s home.

Thankfully Lauren’s grandmother, Ms. Thomas, was able to take her in—keeping Lauren out of the foster care system and away from



Staff and client celebrate a legal victory!

those who would exploit her vulnerabilities. With legal custody, Ms. Thomas now has the legal authority to provide Lauren the stability of a permanent home and obtain academic services, medical care, and therapy for her to begin to heal and complete high school.

Lauren’s vulnerability to exploitation was rooted in her experiences of abuse and exposure to domestic violence. Daniel’s was rooted in the poverty, violence, and corruption in his home country, as well as his undocumented status here in the U.S. And there is growing evidence that many are at heightened risk of trafficking simply because of their gender identity, sexual orientation, or race.

However—praise God!—just as some factors increase vulnerability to human trafficking, other factors provide protection and promote healing.

That’s where JusticeMatters comes in. Our approach is grounded in both the reality of suffering and vision for a more just and equitable world—a world of freedom and flourishing. As a nonprofit law firm, we pursue this vision in two ways: by providing trauma-informed legal services, and by promoting just policies and practices.

At the individual level, we provide legal services that are preventive, addressing the roots of human trafficking, and restorative, addressing the repercussions. At the societal level, we promote just policies and practices to address the broader factors that cause and contribute to our clients’ vulnerability.

Individuals without permanent legal status in the United States (like Daniel), children without the legal security of an adult committed to their care (like Lauren), and survivors of trauma (like both Daniel and Lauren) are at higher risk of human trafficking and other forms of victimization. Legal status (which we secured for Daniel) and legal security (which we secured for Lauren) are foundational protections against these injustices.

As we provide legal services characterized by a trauma-informed approach, we create opportunities for our clients to heal, flourish, and pursue their dreams.



A client shared this verse with us while detained, awaiting his immigration hearing—which he won!

Hope for Tomorrow

By addressing the *repercussions* of human trafficking, we provide survivors with legal tools to rebuild their lives. For Daniel, these tools included protecting his rights as a victim of trafficking and representing him to secure legal status and work authorization. Daniel can now engage safely in our community, work legally to provide for himself and his family, and access medical and mental health care—promoting his healing.

By addressing the *roots* of human trafficking, we work to prevent human trafficking from happening in the first place. For vulnerable children whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them, like Lauren, we help spare them from exploitation. And for children who’ve suffered abuse, neglect, or abandonment and are undocumented, we secure both legal security *and* legal status—greatly reducing their risk of future exploitation.

But for every Daniel and Lauren we assist, there are so many more...



Imagine you’re walking along a river and hear a cry for help—someone is being overpowered by the current. After helping them reach safety, you hear another voice in the water, another, and yet another. Why are so many unable to get out without help? *And why are so many falling in?*

Justice requires righting wrongs, providing our clients with the legal tools they need to get out of the “river” and stop perpetrators—those who “pushed” them in or profited—from exploiting others. But justice is so much more than this...

Justice *also* requires investing our resources to strengthen the fabric of our community, working for the wellbeing of *all* our neighbors—for the common good. Justice requires that we see and hear those at the *margins*, and welcome all into the *center* of the community. *Justice requires that we all work together to prevent human trafficking—that we work for the freedom and flourishing of all.*

As pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer challenged the German Protestant church in 1933, “*[w]e are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.*”

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“We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

At **JusticeMatters** we address injustice in both the content and application of the law, which (whether intentionally or not) results in inequitable outcomes for individuals, groups, and communities. This inequity both causes and contributes to vulnerability, and makes it difficult or even impossible to secure justice for the survivors we serve.

Ultimately, we’re working for a world where no one is trafficked or perpetrates human trafficking. We’re working for the *freedom and flourishing of all people*.

That’s where we ALL come in.

We are all called to generously invest the good gifts God has given us—our resources, skills, education, expertise, and influence—to strengthen the fabric of our community for the freedom and flourishing of all.

**May God continue to give us strength for today—
and hope for tomorrow!**

* In order to protect the identity of our clients, we have utilized pseudonyms and woven several client stories together into this composite story.

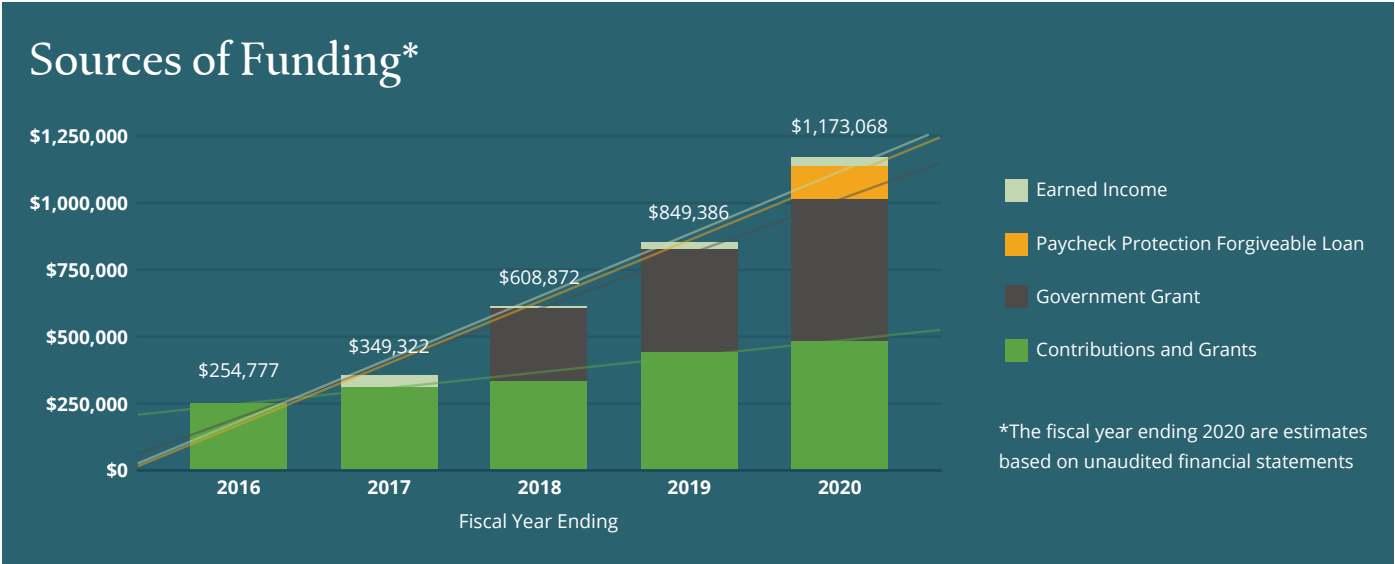
Financials

During this season we've seen God's faithfulness through the generosity of our financial partners, the stability of our federal grant, and the opportunity to access COVID-19 relief through the Paycheck Protection Program.

We're committed to stewarding our resources well. Therefore, our Treasurer and Board of Directors engaged an independent Certified Professional Accounting firm to audit our fiscal year ending September 30, 2020. We'll share audited financial statements once complete.

We're grateful for the support of our donors! You are a part of the anti-trafficking movement, and our staff is honored to serve alongside you. Thank you for your prayers, counsel, and encouragement. Your generosity sustains this work, and we praise God for His provision through you. As we celebrate 2020, we celebrate YOU— we're so glad you're on the team!

On a budget just over **\$1 million**, we provided services valued at approximately **\$3 million** on the market. **x3**



Our legal services are valued around **\$3,000-\$20,000 on the market**, which many can't afford.

We don't charge for our services because *debt and financial insecurity foster vulnerability to future exploitation*. Your generosity equips us to **help without hurting**, promoting **our clients' holistic flourishing**.

A Note From Our Treasurer

"As it was for many other nonprofits, 2020 was a challenging year for JusticeMatters. At the onset of the pandemic contribution revenue declined significantly, and our Executive Leadership and Board of Directors moved swiftly to adapt. We re-evaluated our FY19-20 budget, taking necessary cost savings actions, and were fortunate to receive federal Paycheck Protection Program funding. I'm happy and very grateful to say that JusticeMatters maintained a healthy financial position during FY19-20, providing services without any business disruptions."

Heather Horton, CPA
Board Treasurer

Where We're Headed

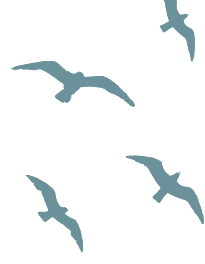
Given the challenges and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and societal unrest in 2020, the Board of Directors and Executive Director commissioned a Strategic Planning Committee to prepare a one-year strategic plan for the FY beginning October 1, 2020. This plan focuses our efforts for the year while providing the flexibility and framework for us to quickly adapt to unforeseen circumstances as they unfold. The Committee will reconvene in early 2021 to begin strategic planning for the next three to five years.

In our current fiscal year we will advance the following strategic priorities:

- P1. Organizational Sustainability:**
Improve organizational sustainability for long-term viability.
- P2. Quality Assurance:**
Continuously improve processes to ensure quality of operations and programs.
- P3. Direct Legal Services Enhancement:**
Enhance legal services to advance the mission.
- P4. Systemic Services Augmentation:**
Strengthen systemic work to advance the mission.

Now, more than ever, the most tangible way you can support JusticeMatters is by contributing financially.

Please visit JusticeMattersNC.org to partner with us for freedom and flourishing!



Human trafficking violates
the inherent dignity and
worth of our neighbors.

We cannot ignore this injustice.

JusticeMatters



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