BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF
Board of Directors

R. Daniel Beale
Dentons

Norman M. Brothers, Jr.
UPS

Janine Brown
Alston & Bird

Robert Preston Brown
McKenney’s Inc.

Michael Canaras
The Home Depot

Stephen D. Councill
Rogers & Hardin

Von A. Dubose
DuBose Miller

Stephen Kay
Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta

Sheandra R. Clark (deceased)
Delta Air Lines

Tywanda Harris Lord
Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP

Joel M. Neuman
The Coca-Cola Company

J. Marbury Rainer
Parker, Hudson, Rainer & Dobbs

John H. Rains IV
Bondurant Mixson & Elmore LLP

David F. Reid
Eversheds Sutherland

Dan Robitaille
Community Volunteer/Philanthropist

JaKathryn Ross
Georgia-Pacific

Lawrence A. Slovensky
King & Spalding

R. Gary Spencer
Attorney

Christopher Turner (Chris)
Ernst & Young

Michele Young
Attorney

Staff

Leadership Team

Doug Ammar, Esq.
Executive Director

Julie Smith
Impact Director

Brenda Smeeton, Esq.
Legal Director

Ermis Zayas
Development Director

Atoya Johnson
Social Services Director

Legal Services

Brenda Smeeton, Esq.
Legal Director

Rachel Holmes, Esq.
Managing Attorney, Criminal Defense

Lisa McGahan
Policy Director

Erin Donohue-Koehler, Esq.
Pro Bono Coordinator

Paige Jann, Esq.
Supervising Attorney,

Molly Scott, Esq.
Clinic Coordinator

Ann Colloton
Policy & Outreach Coordinator

Ross Brockway, Esq.
Staff Attorney

Breona Ward, Esq.
Staff Attorney

Robert Arrington, Esq.
Staff Attorney

Uyen Nguyen
Davidson Impact Fellow

Emmy Williams, Esq.
Equal Justice Works Fellow

Elizabeth Rainwater
Equal Justice Works Fellow

Dominique Madison
Intake Supervisor

Emily McDougald
Legal Intake Specialist, Defense

Darrin L. Sims, Jr.
Legal Intake Specialist, Reentry

Social Services

Atoya Johnson
Social Services Director

Shane Dershimer
Social Worker and Prison Coordinator

Zandria Redding
Reentry Employment Specialist

Resource Development

Ermis Zayas
Development Director

Jacob Geerlings
Development Manager

Brandon Carmichael
Development & Communications Administrator

Impact & Operations

Julie Smith
Impact Director

Erika Curtis
Communications Manager

Genny Drash
Office Administration/Bookkeeping

Advisory Board

Alfred B. Adams – Chair

Kathy Ashe

Ellen Brown Landers

Tim Floyd

Peter Gabel

Marc Gary

Bruce Green

Philip (Phil) E. Holladay, Jr.

Gared Jones

Dr. Bryant T. Marks

Rev. George Maxwell

Michael Leo Owens

John A. Pickens

David Ross

John F. Salter

Larry D. Thompson

Justice Leah Ward Sears

Susan Whitlock

David Lee Windecher

Sponsored by Greenberg Traurig, LLP and UPS, Inc.

Elizabeth Rainwater

Sponsored by The Clorox Company

Dominique Madison

Community Volunteer/Philanthropist

JaKathryn Ross

Georgia-Pacific

Lawrence A. Slovensky

King & Spalding

R. Gary Spencer

Attorney

Christopher Turner (Chris)

Ernst & Young

Michele Young

Attorney
For nearly 35 years, GJP’s work has focused on Georgia’s criminal justice system, with the mission to make our state more just and equitable. As interest in our work has grown, particularly this year, we have found it useful to revisit “the system” as well as GJP’s interventions within it.

This past year, GJP has reached more people than ever before. Through our direct service work, GJP positively impacted over 6,000 individuals. Our historical policy success with SB 288 – a second chance bill which will make certain convictions eligible for record restriction in Georgia for the first time – will affect approximately 1.5 million Georgians as of January 1, 2021.

Thanks to the generous support of the Kendeda Fund and others, GJP’s work is expanding. At this time, more than any other, our holistic, systemic, and optimistic approach to tackling difficult issues creates an opportunity for long-term change. A simplified overview of the stages of the criminal justice system is illustrated below:

1. **THE SYSTEM IN THREE PARTS: FRONT END, MIDDLE & BACK END**

   **FRONT END:** Engagement in the criminal justice system begins with law enforcement (e.g. police, arrest, prosecution)

   **MIDDLE:** Should someone be found guilty, they might be sentenced to jail or prison

   **BACK END:** Encompasses everything post legal case and post incarceration, including probation, parole, reentry, and the impact of a criminal record (convicted or not)

2. **GJP’S INTERVENTION**

   GJP’s work touches every aspect of the criminal justice continuum with two goals: reduce the number of Georgians under correctional control (that is, people in jail/prison or on probation/parole) and reduce reentry barriers for formerly-incarcerated and justice-involved Georgians. Our work encompasses our three-pronged approach to drive impact: direct service, policy work, and community engagement.
EXPANDING EXPUNGEMENT IN GEORGIA

For over a decade, GJP has worked to expand record restriction (commonly known as “expungement”) in Georgia. We successfully advocated for several changes in the law since 2013, but a comprehensive solution for convictions was elusive and left Georgia behind most of the country in recognizing rehabilitation. In 2019, GJP ramped up efforts by establishing the Second Chance for Georgia Campaign to expand expungement, supported by many individuals and 74 organizations, congregations and nonprofits. Those efforts culminated in August of this year when Governor Brian Kemp signed a “second chance” bill – SB 288 – into law!

SB 288 had a broad base of support from community organizations and businesses. Many businesses wrote letters and reached out to voice support of the bill including UPS, The Coca-Cola Company, The Home Depot, Newell Brands, McKenney’s, and other major Georgia employers. GJP, along with our partners at the Metro Atlanta Chamber, were able to garner bipartisan support in both the state Senate and House.

This new legislation will provide a process for rehabilitated Georgians to move beyond their criminal history. SB 288 benefits Georgians with a record as well as protects employers from liability, ensuring they can hire the candidate most qualified for the job. This law creates an opportunity for an estimated 1.5 million Georgians (primarily misdemeanors) to restrict certain convictions from their criminal record – a first for Georgia.

This new law takes effect on January 1, 2021 and will be the first of its kind in the history of Georgia. Prior to this legislation, almost all convictions stayed on a person’s record for life. SB 288 now adds Georgia to a list of 42 states that allow rehabilitated individuals to access economic, housing, and educational opportunities that were previously unavailable to so many Georgians.

We are very proud of the success of the Second Chance Georgia Campaign and the passing of SB 288, but we aren’t finished. GJP will carry this momentum forward, and in the coming months and years we will build support for legislation that will reduce barriers to occupational licensing, expand expungement of felony convictions, reform Georgia’s probation practices, reduce driver’s license suspensions for non-driving offenses, and improve child support guidelines for low income families.

SB 288 will expand expungement to certain convictions, a first for Georgia. The new law will go into effect January 1st, 2021 and will benefit an estimated 1.5 million Georgians.

Pictured left to right: Rep. Houston Gaines, Fulton County Solicitor General Keith Gammage, Sen. Tonya Anderson, Governor Brian Kemp, Amy Lancaster-King (Director, Workforce Development, Metro Atlanta Chamber), Brenda Smeeton (Legal Director, Georgia Justice Project), Tamyka Sims (GJP Client and Campaign Advocate), Sen. Brandon Beach
This year, we have all witnessed the national outrage brought about by the high profile incidents of police brutality and racially-motivated violence experienced disproportionately by Black citizens throughout the country. George Floyd, Jacob Blake, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks and countless others have had their lives taken far too often by the policing system. As Americans fill the streets to protest for justice for their lives, there is an equally loud cry for reform of the criminal legal system as a whole.

At Georgia Justice Project, we have spent over 30 years fighting for both systemic changes to our criminal and legal institutions, while also standing with our clients over the years; providing zealous advocacy, support, and defense. In this momentous time in American history, we remain steadfast in our commitment to enact change and provide support to those who need it most.

HERE IS HOW GJP HAS SHOWN UP IN THIS MOMENT:

- Mobilized GJP attorneys to represent people arrested while protesting.
- Took on several clients who were arrested through the protests to receive our record restriction and social work services.
- Partnered with community groups to identify individuals needing assistance.
- Appeared at demonstrations to act as legal observers that monitor, record, and report on any unlawful or improper behavior against demonstrators.
- Held virtual information sessions for individuals arrested while protesting in Atlanta.

- Georgia has the highest rate of correctional control in the country – 1 in 18 Georgians is either in prison, in jail, on probation, or on parole at any given time, double the national average.
- 4.3 million people have a Georgia criminal record, approximately 40% of adults in the state.
The economic uncertainty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has been especially challenging for the many Georgians with a criminal history, who were already experiencing unemployment, housing insecurities and economic instability due to barriers caused by a criminal record. At GJP, we are committed to giving holistic support that our clients need to provide for themselves and their families.

Here are just a few ways GJP has adapted to continue to provide services in this uncertain time:

**CRIMINAL DEFENSE**
Defending our clients accused of a crime remotely, as courts are holding virtual hearings.
Advocating for early release of our incarcerated clients to protect their health and safety.

**EXPUNGEMENT**
Holding our monthly “First Fridays” criminal records clinic remotely, where staff and volunteer attorneys consult potential clients on their criminal records.
Worked with the State Bar of Georgia to hold the first virtual expungement summit in the state.

**PROBATION AND REENTRY**
Created a “Know Your Rights” guide that seeks to help individuals under probation navigate the rules for probationary supervision during COVID-19.
Advocating with probation officials to adjust reporting and fees during the COVID-19 crisis.

**SOCIAL SERVICES**
Adapted our annual Back to School Event to a drive-through format, where our families could pick up the school supplies they needed safely.
Thanks to funders, we were able to provide emergency funds for our economically vulnerable clients with the help of individual donors and grants from our foundation partners.
In over 30 years of service, Georgia Justice Project has incrementally expanded and improved our scope of work to reach as many Georgians as possible impacted by the criminal justice system. This year, our efforts were bolstered by a significant multi-year grant by The Kendeda Fund, a pillar of Atlanta’s philanthropic community.

The Kendeda Fund identified GJP as a leading organization in this work, and chose to significantly invest in our mission & future. Their support allows us to amplify our three core beliefs: that people without means deserve to have the same quality of legal representation as people with means; that a variety of issues are at play for individuals encountering the justice system, and therefore, a holistic approach that addresses their legal issues and the underlying issues that led to the arrest will increase the chance of positive outcomes and reduce recidivism; and that effective policy reform is based on experience working in the system and with those impacted by it, and by working in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders.

This grant will be transformative for GJP for years to come, allowing us to grow our administrative infrastructure, increase and nurture our staff and, potentially, make capital investments to ensure GJP’s longevity in the community. More importantly, this grant allows us to leverage additional dollars to secure our direct service programs while freeing us up to expand our policy work and drive systemic change. We are excited and humbled by this amazing opportunity. Our deepest gratitude to Kendeda for joining us in this fight for a Georgia that is better, safer, more equitable, and more just.
Willie came from a very poor family and at his young age he was wrapped up in selling drugs on the Westside of Atlanta. He and his girlfriend already had a child to care for, while not being much older than kids themselves. Willie didn’t know his father at the time, so he had no real guidance on what fatherhood should be. When John met Willie, he was in jail for serious charges – murder and armed robbery – after a drug deal had gone wrong.

When the new staff attorney, Doug Ammar (now GJP’s Executive Director) first spoke to Willie, he was taken aback by the polite and intelligent teen in front of him. Recalling the experience, Doug says, “what I remember about meeting him then was that he was so pleasant and sharp. I remember thinking – how could such a nice young man end up in so much trouble so young?” But Doug knew the surrounding issues and Willie’s environment that led to his arrest. This was at the height of the crack epidemic, and Willie was a kid trying to survive.

Willie’s charges were serious, and he was convicted of his crimes. He spent the next 30 years of his life in prison, but GJP never left him. We don’t just defend our clients in a courtroom—win or lose—we stand with them as they rebuild their lives. For Willie, this meant regular visits and care packages from our staff, and transportation for his girlfriend and son to visit him and keep the family connection intact. It meant making sure his son had the supplies he needed for school, and his family had support in their critical times of need. It meant advocating on Willie’s behalf to the parole board.

It wasn’t all GJP though - Willie spent his 30 years in prison focusing on his own learning, healing, and the healing of his family. He stayed connected with his girlfriend (now wife) and his son. For a large portion of his incarceration, Willie was a mentor and leader inside of the prison system. He was assigned to Metro Reentry Facility (MRF) as an official “mentor” to the younger population – a new role the prison incorporated to help address reentry needs for those housed there.

Last year, after three decades, Willie was released to a transitional center and began working. He dedicated his time there to prepare for his return home. He married the mother of his son, and helped support them financially. Willie was unfortunately met with more adversity after losing his job as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic – but even then, he faced the problem head on, and GJP was able to help him with some critical financial needs thanks to emergency funds from donors.

Willie’s story of success is one we are very fond of at GJP – we believe all people deserve a second chance and an avenue for redemption, and Willie is an example of how successful that mission can be. Willie inspires us as we work to help others in similar ways, and his strong bond with his family reminds us of why we do the work we do. When asked about his experience with GJP, Willie remarked, “It often helps to realize that someone else is there. I hope GJP knows they’re in my heart, and that I will always care.”
Earlier this year, we were saddened to learn some tragic news - a valued Board Member of Georgia Justice Project and Assistant General Counsel at Delta Air Lines, Sheandra Clark, passed away unexpectedly. Sheandra was a true spokesperson for GJP’s work, and volunteered to serve clients through our criminal records clinic. We are so grateful to Sheandra for all she has done for our clients and mission.

Since volunteerism was a passion of Sheandra’s, GJP Board of Directors & staff chose to honor her memory by introducing the Sheandra Clark Volunteer Lawyer Award. Each year, we will award this honor to an attorney in the community who, like Sheandra, has demonstrated exceptional commitment to service as a volunteer for GJP.

Additionally, with the generous support of Delta Air Lines and other family, friends and colleagues who have asked to honor Sheandra’s legacy at GJP, we have created the Sheandra Clark Empowerment Fund. The proceeds of this fund will be used to support the advancement of individual Georgia Justice Project clients as they attend school or training or enter the job market.

If you or your company would like to learn more about legal volunteer opportunities with GJP, please contact Erin Donohue-Koehler. (404) 827-0027, ext. 236 erin@GJP.org

Volunteerism has always been at the core of GJP’s values. We rely on a small army of dedicated volunteers to meet the needs of directly impacted people, and the need is great. Over half a million Georgia residents are under correctional control, approximately 4.3 million people have a Georgia criminal history, and over 370,000 parents are under court order to pay child support in Georgia to care for over 550,000 children.

Doug Ammar (GJP) with Sheandra Clark (Delta Air Lines)

Doug Ammar (GJP), Sheandra Clark (Delta Air Lines), Peter Carter (Delta Air Lines, and Dan Beale (Dentons) at the 2019 Grass Roots Justice Awards

GJP also welcomes seasonal interns every year from undergraduate, social work and law school programs, and we rely on our interns to plan our Back to School and Holiday events, conduct research for cases and our advocacy work, assist our attorneys with their caseload, and provide administrative support.
**IMPACT ON OUR COMMUNITY**

6,738 people assisted with criminal justice issues

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- **RECORD RESTRICTION SUMMITS**: 10 events hosted with 1,208 attendees
- **COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**: 89 presentations to 4,726 attendees

**LEGAL REPRESENTATION**

- **HOLISTIC CRIMINAL DEFENSE**: 81% of cases resulted in non-convictions
- **CRIMINAL RECORDS**: 537 people had barriers to housing or employment removed
- **REENTRY LAWYERING AT METRO REENTRY FACILITY**: 246 returning citizens served

**SOCIAL SERVICES & EMPLOYMENT**

- **FAMILY SUPPORT**: 629 clients and family members assisted
- **PRISON SUPPORT**: 20 clients in prison received ongoing support
- **EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT**: 467 people received employment information/support
- **EMERGENCY COVID SUPPORT**: GJP distributed $47,500 in assistance to 88 families

**BILL PASSED: SB 288**

- Estimated 1.5 million Georgians positively impacted

**ADVOCACY**

- **JUSTICE DAY & SECOND CHANCE DAY**: 468 attendees in support of criminal justice reform
- **SECOND CHANCE FOR GEORGIA CAMPAIGN**: 1,230 individuals and 74 partner organizations supporting expanded expungement in Georgia

**FINANCIALS: $2,726,598**

- Foundations: $1,725,967
- Individuals: $366,272
- Corporations: $82,187
- Fee for Services: $77,295
- Contributed Services: $448,516
- Other: $26,361

**OPERATIONS REVENUE TOTAL**

- **EXPENSES**: 85% Programs, 12% Fundraising, 3% Management

**COMMUNITIES IMPACTED**

- 52% Communication Education
- 18% Expungement Summits
- 17% Social Service & Employment Support
- 13% Legal Representation

---

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the impact of various programs and initiatives that have been implemented to assist and support individuals affected by the criminal justice system. Each section highlights specific achievements and the number of people served, contributing to a better understanding of the overall impact on the community. The financial section outlines the revenue and expenses, providing insight into the sustainability and resources allocated for these efforts. The chart visualizations help in illustrating the distribution of resources and the extent of community engagement.
CHANGE IS BOTH VITAL FOR THE STATE’S LONG-TERM PROSPERITY AND THE RIGHT THING TO DO FOR REHABILITATED INDIVIDUALS.

“If someone has made a mistake, not only should we NOT hold it against them for the rest of their lives, but we should also honor their rehabilitation and give them access to life’s essentials.”

Doug Ammar, GJP Executive Director