



Justice
Initiative

2023
ANNUAL
REPORT

CELEBRATING OUR FIRST YEAR IN THE COMMUNITY

vijustice.org



Message from the Executive Director

It's been one year since we launched. We have a lot to be proud of. Our 501(c)3 nonprofit organization provides free full service legal representation for expungements, especially youth, on all three islands. This creates a big impact. Each individual who receives a second

chance through our Clean Slate Program brings economic mobility to their family, neighborhood, and island.

The important piece was to partner with the community. One of our primary goals in launching and sustaining was to engage, network, and partner with the local community to create a mechanism for legal cases arising from the local community to come to us. That has materialized. We receive referrals from our community partners and outreach events. Our signature events are exciting conduits for families with children to be introduced to some of our partners, not just to us. It is a 2-way street.

Our community partners are also able give us the links to specific cases, individual issues, and policy gaps to grow our Clean Slate Program and work towards Systemic Change Advocacy. High-impact litigation hasn't started yet, but we knew that it would take longer to get that piece off the ground. Engagement is key. Networking and partnering allows us to be at the forefront to better understand what the problems are and how we can be part of the solution.

We have begun research and data supported policy change. We are able to collect and provide legal research and data – the missing links – that the community, the courts and the legislature need to evolve economic justice policies and poverty law in the Virgin Islands.

There's still more work to do! This is the beginning, but it is a good beginning.

— *Casey Payton, Executive Director*



Fiscal sponsorship at Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands



Inspire change for economic justice, equality, and fairness.

The Virgin Islands Justice Initiative is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization focused on creating opportunities for the poor to succeed through economic justice and poverty law. We provide free legal representation, education, and resources for economic and social mobility.

OUR PROGRAMS

Clean Slate

Free legal representation for expungement proceedings to clear arrest records and marijuana convictions to help people get back to work.

Legal Research & Data Support

Develop Legal Research & Data for Policy Change

Systemic Change Advocacy

High-Impact Litigation & Class Actions

Engage, Network & Partner with the Community

First Year Highlights



Awarded 501(c)3 tax status



Established network of pro bono attorneys and legal support staff



Expanded volunteer & consultant network (data scientist, event & advancement specialists)



Drafted automatic expungement legislation and testified before the VI Legislature



Represented 20 clients with the expungement process in St. Thomas & St. Croix



Produced quantitative and qualitative data study for Clean Slate Program



Received cash donations from 10 local law firms, 7 EDC companies, 3 banks, and 150+ individuals



Developed 4 public service announcements and 2 short films



Launched multiple community engagement events



Received in-kind donations for office and storage space, events, and catering



Garnered 40,000+ views on social media

#VICleanSlate Donor Reception



In the Media

The VI Justice Initiative has been featured in the following:

Print



Television

[Government Access Channel 27](#)



Radio

Analyze This Radio Show WTJX-FM 93.1

Da Vybe 107.9 FM-WLDV

Caribbean Broadcasting Network 90.9 FM

[Level Up Radio Show](#) Radio One AM 1000



Podcasts

ABA Civil Rights & Social Justice Chair Chat

[ViVid Streaming](#)



SIGNATURE EVENTS

Harvest Festival & Pumpkin Patch at Magens Bay



Fall activities for families with children



Barefoot Buddha won the local pumpkin recipe contest with their coconut pumpkin fritters!



Sold 500+ tickets for the tractor hayride!



Children's parade & youth performers

Virgin Islands Sandcastle Festival at Brewers Bay



Professional sand sculptors built a tribute to St. Thomas



The event showcased the talent of local artists



14 teams competed, winning entries received trophies

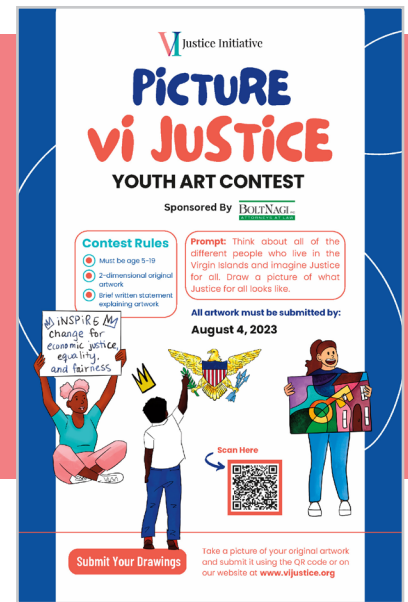
SIGNATURE EVENTS

Picture VI Justice Youth Art Contest & Exhibit at 81C

Purpose:

To provide youth with an opportunity to utilize their critical thinking skills to imagine what justice could look like in the Virgin Islands.

Youth created 2-dimensional drawings, which they uploaded using the camera feature on their phone, and described their picture using their own words. Celebrated and recognized youth artists by featuring their artwork at an Art Exhibit at 81C on September 29, 2023. Trophies, cash prizes, and certificates were awarded.



Anniversary Campaign

Our Anniversary Campaign is more than a fundraising vehicle. It celebrates our founding board members, passionate staff, committed volunteers, generous donors, and community partners. Let's ensure that the Virgin Islands continues to have a thriving independent legal aid to fill gaps and serve Virgin Islanders who cannot afford an attorney.

We invite you to support our sustainability by making a recurring monthly donation (Sustainers' Circle) or annual gift (Founders' Club).

The legal community is the cornerstone of our organization. Consistent annual and monthly donations from attorneys and law firms are essential for the viability of the VI Justice Initiative by supporting our operations, mission, and allowing us to maintain our 501(c)3 status.

Quote from Founding Board Member



Most of the people we serve are the unfortunate result of conditions, trauma, and neglect in our own community, which brought those tender teens and young adults to where they are today. We are thankful that they muster up the courage and have trust and faith that they can overcome and that the VI Justice Initiative will “see them” as they are and step forward to give them a chance.

However, we will not be able to put ourselves out of business until we get the whole community to steer away from the systemic assumptions, conditions, choices, and containment which sets children and young teens up for a harder than necessary life in the Virgin Islands.

Ronald W. Belfon, Esq.

BOARD MEMBER



Client Statements



This process has impacted myself, my community and family. I can use my voice to help others, and help with the process of restoring life after a major and traumatic shift. I can inspire someone to understand not all mistakes and poor choices have to define your life. Especially if you can learn from them and use them as a point of learning and growing.



I am really hoping this process will have a positive impact on my self-esteem and the self-esteem of those closest to me. I hope to enter into the community without scrutiny and judgement for past mistakes... Even though my charges are not egregious, they are still blemishes on my character.



Meet Our Team

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Casey Payton, Esq.



Alex Golubitsky, Esq.
Chairman & Treasurer



Jalicha Persad, Esq.
Secretary



Ronald W. Belfon, Esq.

DEVELOPMENT ADVISOR



Tess
Monsanto-Bailey



Melanie Turnbull, Esq.



Kye Walker, Esq.



J. Russell B. Pate,
Esq., LL.M



Joseph A. DiRuzzo, III,
Esq., LL.M

SPECIAL ADVISORS

Founders' Club

Thank you Founders' Club members for giving \$500 or more over the past year.

\$60,000+

Alex Golubitsky, Esq.

\$10,000-\$59,999

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Perfected Claims
RapierMed

\$7,500-9,999

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Alpine Securities USVI, LLC
USVI Department of Tourism,
Division of Festivals

\$5,000-\$7,499

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Virgin Islands
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Marjorie Rawls Roberts, P.C.
Ronald W. Belfon, P.C.
The Pate Law Firm
IGY Marinas Yacht Haven Grande

\$1,000-\$2,499

Merchants Commercial Bank
St. Thomas Properties
Starkey-Klotzbach Family Fund
Rainbow Connection Fund

\$500-\$999

Community Foundation of the
Virgin Islands
George Marshall Miller
& Associates
Goldman Law Offices, Inc.
Sally Winters, Esq.
Buchar Wellness Center of the
Virgin Islands
Lotus Holdings LLC
Allison O'Boyle
Lauren Myler
Kathleen Grant

Sustainers' Circle

*Thank you to our Sustainers' Circle member
for making a recurring monthly gift:*

Marjorie Rawls Roberts, P.C.

How Can I Help?

Scan the QR Code to
Donate Today



Make an In-Kind Donation

This includes office space, event space, catering for community and fundraising events, equipment, and professional services.

Pro Bono

We need attorneys licensed to practice in the U.S. Virgin Islands to support our litigation efforts.

Volunteer

We need volunteers for our community events and fundraisers!

vijustice.org

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Instagram: [@vijusticeinitiative](https://www.instagram.com/vijusticeinitiative)