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## Letter to Our Readers

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## Letter to Our Readers

### Authors

Mecca Wilkinson, Elle Topacio, Jay Kasperbauer, Miranda Bolin, Sabrina O'Connor, and Shaundranique Perkins

## DePaul Journal for Social Justice

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Dear Readers,

My name is Mecca Wilkinson and as Editor-in-Chief, I just want to thank you for supporting the 2023-2024 Journal for Social Justice's Spring publication. Volume 17, Issue 2 of the Journal for Social Justice is the fruit from the labor of an amazing group of people that I have had the pleasure of working with during the last year of my law school career. As you will see from the individual letters below that each board member has contributed, I was honored to lead a journal that had an amazing meeting of the minds and true comradery regarding the entire group's passion and dedication to all things social justice.

Over the past year, this journal has allowed me to be an advocate and explore so much of a world that is so close to my heart. Being a woman of color, I am constantly surrounded by and experiencing *in*justice socially. However, I find my strength in making a pathway for others to express themselves and amplify their truths – the journal fulfilled this for me, and so much more. From the new staffer members that expressed a passion and were eager to join the journal and jump into assignments, to my fellow board members who all consistently jumped at the opportunity to take on any task to further build the journal into something they were proud of, I can honestly say that leading this journal was my favorite experience of law school.

I would be remiss to mention that the chance to work with the authors of this publication was nothing short of inspiring. We maintained our goal of working with authors who were either representing the community they are writing in support of or whose livelihoods are dedicated to advocating for social justice. I have found that this is the way to really make the journal's mission true, and I thank the authors for trusting us with all of their hard work.

It is bittersweet to leave this amazing experience as I graduate and move on to my next journey, but I am forever grateful to DePaul Law and the friends I made that supported the full team of the Journal for Social Justice.

I hope that you enjoy this publication as much as we have enjoyed curating it for you all!

Mindfully,

Mecca Wilkinson



Editor-in-Chief

*DePaul Law Journal for Social Justice, 2023-2024*

Dear Social Justice Reader,

My name is Elle Topacio, and I had the distinct privilege this year of serving as the Executive Symposium Director for the Journal for Social Justice. When exploring possible topics for the event, I daily read the news and was always drawn to the criminal law section. It was depressing and discouraging reading about shootings, carjackings, robberies, and crime rampant across Chicago.

Unexpectedly, I came across something phenomenal. I read about a man who was wrongfully convicted of murder and spent 35 years in jail for this legal mistake on the part of the system. In 2023, after years of litigation and tirelessly protesting his innocence, he was ultimately freed. I instantly knew that I wanted to shine a light on exonerations and got to work. I am proud to say that I executed the Journal's 2024 Symposium on Wrongful Convictions: Crisis and Resolution.

By working with the team on the journal and the time I spent dedicated to planning the symposium, I've learned that at the core of the legal system is human compassion and integrity. The system fails the moment we fail each other. **Never** give up on your character.

Thank you for picking up our issue, and I hope you find each piece fulfilling!

Always,

Elle Topacio – Executive Symposium Director

Dear Readers,

My name is Jay Kasperbauer and I served as the journal's Executive Submissions Editor. Reviewing submissions over the course of the last year has been demanding, simply because there are so many discussions deserving of readers' attention. While endlessly sifting through essays, I was shocked by how many unique and varying perspectives can exist on the same general topic.

I was encouraged to consider the many variations we saw just on U.S. citizenship, and presented with hard hitting questions such as: What sorts of inadequacies arise when those entering the U.S. unlawfully are detained in rural jails, hundreds of miles from immigration lawyer networks? How should restorative justice be administered for non-citizen sex traffic victims brought into the U.S. unwillingly? Why are U.S. citizens of insular areas like Guam and Puerto Rico treated less favorably than their U.S.-born counterparts? How can unfavorable tax policies be fixed for U.S. nationals who live abroad temporarily? And finally, how are artforms like film and literature perpetuating immigrant stereotypes? Each investigation represents a broader topic but with a unique, captivating vantage that the journal focuses on exploring.

I feel fortunate to have reviewed these and so many other discussions written by expert practitioners, researchers, and students eager to make an impact. The unique pieces that ultimately make up this edition are the finest examples of the many extraordinary discussions that reached our inbox.

Sincerely,

Jay Kasperbauer – Executive Submissions Editor

Dear readers and social justice advocates,

My name is Miranda Bolin, and I am honored to have served as one of the Executive Articles Editors of the Journal for Social Justice at DePaul University College of Law. In this position, I (along with my brilliant Co-Executive Articles Editor, Sabrina O'Connor) facilitated the editorial process to ensure the articles' suitability for publication, while aiming to preserve the tone and personality of the authors' messages. I am proud to have worked with such a passionate and intelligent group of people comprising of our Executive Board and research staff.

I am further proud of the Journal for Social Justice's role in providing a unique perspective on legal scholarship, one that is often overlooked in academia. The Journal creates a platform that highlights the voices advocating for social justice reform, while also amplifying the voices of those who have personally experienced social *in*justices. In my role on the Executive Board, I have read and been inspired by numerous articles featuring these important topics, and it has been a pleasure collaborating with the authors to bring their stories to our audience.

I want to express my gratitude to everyone that reads and supports the Journal for Social Justice and allows these important stories to be heard. Thank you!

Kindly,

Miranda Bolin - Executive Articles Editor

Dear readers,

My name is Sabrina O'Connor, and I had the privilege to act as Executive Articles Editor alongside the extremely talented Miranda Bolin. I feel extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to serve in a role that unequivocally lifts the voices of authors and scholars that advocate for social justice reform. The ability to oversee the editorial process of articles preparing for publication has been both unique and unforgettable. As an Executive Editor I strived to highlight each author's strong message while producing an article that reflects the time and effort dedicated by the authors, the executive board, and our support staff.

I am privileged to have been a part of promoting the mission set out by the DePaul University College of Law Journal for Social Justice. I am in awe of the many facets of social justice that both scholars and members of our community have dedicated themselves to researching and advocating for. I am inspired by their experiences and dedication. Likewise, the entirety of the Executive Board has displayed a level of dedication to uplifting the voices of others in a way that has left a permanent imprint on me. I will carry their care and efforts with me in all of my professional and personal endeavors.

I am grateful to each and every person who takes the time to read the Journal for Social Justice and reflect on the many *injustices* that are present in the legal community. It is your dedication to learning that promotes change.

With Gratitude,

Sabrina O'Connor- Executive Articles Editor

Dear Readers,

My name is Shaundranique Perkins, and I served as the Executive Managing Citations Editor. As an editor and board member of DePaul's Journal for Social Justice, I hope this publication serves as a stage to amplify the voices of the marginalized and challenge systemic injustices in our legal systems. We are firmly committed to advancing equity and fairness in social justice issues both locally and globally.

Growing up as a Black woman, I have witnessed pervasive injustices in society. This firsthand experience drives my unwavering commitment to the Journal for Social Justice and fuels my journey through law school. I believe we, as global citizens, have a collective responsibility to champion social justice.

During my undergraduate studies, I immersed myself in criminal law and legal studies, eager to understand the dynamics between law, individuals, and our justice system. Engaging in public interest law allowed me to connect with my community and serve as a citizen shaping our collective destiny.

The Journal of Social Justice provides invaluable opportunities to explore our legal system's reverberations and hone skills not only as an attorney unafraid to confront complexities but also as an individual. However, we encounter obstacles—flaws in the legal system, entrenched stereotypes, and a lack of resources and education. As attorneys, we must illuminate these injustices and advocate for those silenced by oppression.

DePaul's Journal for Social Justice sheds light on society's obscured realities and provides a platform for legal discourse, aiming to spark dialogue and catalyze change. We hope our readers will embrace these conversations, share revelations, and join us on the journey toward a brighter, more just tomorrow.

Real change begins in the crucible of conversation.

Yours truly,

Shaundranique Perkins – Executive Managing Citations Editor