The Campaign for Brooklyn A

Brooklyn Legal Services
Corporation A
Brooklyn A brings more than representation to the poor — important though that is — and more than impressive legal victories necessary as those are. Brooklyn A brings dignity to its clients and supplies a champion for their defense.

... Conrad K. Harper ...
SIMPSON THACHER & BARTLETT

“Rehabilitate abandoned houses, open a day care center, establish an alternative parent-led public school — the list of projects Brooklyn A has helped us and other community groups accomplish is endless.”

... Michelle Neugebauer ...
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CYPRESS HILLS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
OUR MISSION

Since our formation in 1968, the mission of Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A (Brooklyn A) has been to provide high quality, neighborhood-based civil legal services to low-income individuals and families, and their community organizations. The board of directors, management and staff are dedicated to maximizing our effectiveness in serving the community by building close working relationships with grass-roots organizations that share our commitment to social and economic justice.

Brooklyn A serves the communities of Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Bushwick, Oceanhill-Brownsville, East New York, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Cypress Hills, Starrett City, City Line, Flatlands, and Canarsie. Our staff of 31 full-time lawyers, 9 paralegals, and 10 support staff carry out the day-to-day work that makes equal justice a reality for all of our neighbors and community groups.

GOALS OF THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN:

With your help, Brooklyn A is launching a capital campaign to secure its infrastructure and dramatically reduce its day-to-day operating costs. The goals are to:

1. Raise $1.5 million to pay for the renovation and purchase of our Williamsburg office and $1 million to renovate our East Brooklyn office. The acquisition of the Williamsburg site would significantly reduce rental costs as well as generate rental income that together will enable us to invest over $225,000 more per year in providing high quality legal services to our clients and their communities.

2. The Campaign for Brooklyn A has already successfully raised $350,000 to open and operate a third neighborhood-based legal services office in a Citibank building in Bushwick in May 2001. Citibank is very generously providing in-kind support for the office. All renovations are being donated by our outstanding corporate partner, Forest City Ratner Companies; a grant from The New York Community Trust is underwriting added staff costs; and Davis Polk & Wardwell is donating all of the computer technology.

3. Raise $500,000 to retire an old deficit that resulted from drastic, one-time governmental cutbacks between 1997 and 1999. We thought, correctly, that this would be a one-time problem and elected not to reduce our service levels with lay-offs during that period.

"Without the vast amount of legal help provided to us by Brooklyn A and its Community and Economic Development legal team for more than 25 years, our Multi-Service Family Health Center would not exist.

Today, we are providing the Brownsville community with more than 50,000 dental and medical visits annually in a full range of medical services. No longer do our patients have to go to the Emergency Rooms and Medicaid mills. Rather, they receive primary health care from a staff of more than 140 people, many of whom live in the neighborhood... None of this is possible without the close, collaborative, and historic relationships forged with Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A. Paul Acinapura and the other lawyers see us through the financing, planning, regulatory, and other processes."

Maurice Reid
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BROWNSVILLE MULTI-SERVICE FAMILY HEALTH CENTER
• Raise additional funds to implement our three-year Strategic Plan to significantly expand vital programmatic, neighborhood-based initiatives in community and economic development, domestic violence and HIV/AIDS. Every dollar raised in this Campaign, once our first two goals are met, will be used to support this strategic direction. If possible, Brooklyn A would endow these programs in a manner similar to a University Chair.

FULFILLING THE DREAM

Sargent Shriver turned his dream into a reality. In the mid-1960s, free neighborhood legal services programs were launched as an integral component of the federal War on Poverty. This bold new approach sought to provide community-based lawyers to those without the means to pay for them, to help alleviate the systemic injustices of poverty.

A promise made is not always a promise kept, but Brooklyn A is a promise-keeper. Shriver’s vision of high quality, neighborhood-based and run, free civil legal services dedicated to justice and community building has found its apex in the work of Brooklyn A. Since 1968, Brooklyn A has been the preeminent national model of that kind of a free, legal services office.

THE CHALLENGES THAT FACE THE PEOPLE OF BROOKLYN

A decent place to live. A safe environment in which to raise children. A good job. Accessible quality health care. Many people take these things for granted—as they should. But things are far different for the 11 Brooklyn communities with which we work. More poor and under-served people live here than in all of Queens. Our residents confront:

• An unemployment rate above nine percent, and in some neighborhoods as high as 15 percent.
• The highest number of African-Americans living with AIDS in the United States, and the second highest number of Latinos with AIDS in New York City. Eighty-five percent of these are women and children.
• Over 18,000 domestic violence incidents recorded in 1997 by the police precincts serving North and East Brooklyn. Incredibly, 97 percent of those seeking orders of protection had no legal representation.
• Foster care placements that have tripled to more than 50,000 over the last decade in New York City. More than 90 percent of the placements in Brooklyn were children of color from families living in poverty.

“As a non-profit community housing organization in the Southside section of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, Los Sures has a 25 year history of partnering with Brooklyn A’s attorneys. Our organizers work closely with Brooklyn A lawyers to assist tenant associations. Without Brooklyn A, tenants would really be in a lot of trouble. Many of these successful efforts result in low-income tenants being able to acquire and run their own buildings, and sustain them with rents that they can pay.”

Barbara Schliff
Director, Housing Resources Unit
Southside United Housing Development Fund Corporation
(Los Sures)
• Low-level radioactive and hazardous chemical wastes stored just
yards away from where young children at Public School 84 learn
and play.
• Commercial garbage transfer stations in Greenpoint and
Williamsburg that handle more solid waste per day than the entire
New York City Sanitation Department.
• Air that contains toxic levels at a rate 60 times worse than the
national average. Asthma and lead poisoning rates rank among the
highest in New York City.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

It is said that Brooklyn A “does not give people a fish, but rather
teaches people how to fish.” We recognize that it is not enough to
respond to individuals and families facing crises. While individuals
suffer from the particular effects of poverty, the causes of their suf-
fering are often systemic.

Unique among legal services programs in the United States,
Brooklyn A holds that it is equally important to represent the
groups and organizations through which residents work for the
long-term improvement of their communities. Therefore, major
economic development activities are at the core of our program,
with Brooklyn A serving as in-house counsel to more than 100
local organizations and tenant associations.

It is the collaborative nature of all of our work that makes Brooklyn
A a national model. One of every five residents in our communities
lives under the federal poverty level. Brooklyn A has become vital
to their lives, helping them to help themselves, giving them a sense
of empowerment and the will to intervene in determining their
own destinies.

Our dedicated attorneys are essential partners and mentors to local
leaders as they fulfill ambitious and strategic development plans for
neighborhood revitalization. We are at their side, whether navigat-
ing the governmental and regulatory universe of financial and
insurance requirements. We are meeting our historic task to build
self-sufficiency within our communities.

In June, 2000, an evaluation team of national leaders of legal serv-
ices identified Brooklyn A’s Community and Economic
Development work as “the best in the country!”

“Brooklyn A does outstanding and critical
work for low-income individuals and groups
in East New York, Williamsburg and other
parts of North and East Brooklyn...The
appallingly shoddy performance in
Washington and Albany on funding for legal
services only means that private sector
individuals, professional firms and
commercial entities — must stretch —
give — and help. If it is not done,
unfortunate results will surely ensue for legal
services programs for those living in poor
neighborhoods of this grand and affluent city.
These organizations should not be without
help. We cannot fail those who are in need.
Benign neglect must not be the action plan
toward those who are least well off.”

• • • Barry H. Garfinkel, Esq. • • •
PARTNER, SKADDEN ARPS SLATE
MEAGHER & FLOM, LLP
ACHIEVING JUSTICE

Paralleling the great success of our economic development efforts is the ground-zero provision of legal representation to over 5,000 individual clients each year in:

- preventing homelessness,
- advocating for the victims of domestic violence,
- assisting individuals and families that are affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic,
- representing senior citizens,
- helping people-in-need receive the benefits they are entitled to,
- protecting the local environment,
- ensuring the rights of low-income tenants to decent, affordable housing, and
- assuring that families remain whole.

That’s only part of the story. Brooklyn A is there when our communities want to:

- prevent lead paint exposure from the blasting of the Williamsburg Bridge, and implement a proper abatement plan,
- negotiate with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the sale and renovation of large Brooklyn public housing complexes, or
- obtain multi-million dollar bond financing to create new primary care health facilities.

OUR PROGRAMS

Brooklyn A projects are carried out in close collaboration with an extensive network of community development corporations, neighborhood-based organizations, and tenant associations. Together, they are:

The Partnership for Community and Economic Development

As the legal catalyst fueling community-initiated projects, Brooklyn A helps create hundreds of millions of dollars of new and rehabilitated housing; empower tenants; expand dental, health care, and childcare services; develop community centers and nursing homes; and create community-owned businesses and jobs.

To achieve its community and economic development goals, Brooklyn A created a dynamic Partnership for Community and Economic Development. The Partnership is an extensive collaboration among Brooklyn-based community organizations working side by side with colleagues from the banks, corporations, foundations, government, law firms, law schools, and trade unions.

“When the Immigration Program was begun at the Southside Mission in 1977, the first training session in Immigration Law I received was from Marty Needelman at Brooklyn A. Through the years, we have worked closely together on immigration-related matters. In 1997-1998, Brooklyn A and the Southside Mission were joint recipients of a Citizenship Assistance grant from the Soros Foundation. I am personally grateful for the support and assistance from Brooklyn A that the Mission has enjoyed through the years.”

*** Sister Peggy Walsh ***

PROGRAM DIRECTOR
IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROGRAM
SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY MISSION
With Partnership support, Brooklyn A's community and economic development clients are provided with a full range of "in-house counsel" services which include:

- negotiating with governmental authorities,
- corporate and tax advice and representation,
- litigation,
- pre-development coordination,
- drafting and negotiating of contracts, and
- title and loan closings.

**Group Representation Project: Preserving Low-Income Housing**

Brooklyn A remains in the forefront of preserving and protecting the rights of low-income residents. First among these is the right to decent, affordable housing, which is coming under growing gentrification pressures, forcing the displacement of low-income residents. Brooklyn A seeks to expand its representation of local organizations by supporting tenant association efforts to stabilize and save buildings from abandonment, harassment, and gentrification. This project helps to create and sustain low-income apartment house cooperatives and similar ownership entities (mutual housing, condominiums, and tenant-owned business corporations).

**Anti-Domestic Violence Project**

Domestic violence against women is a widespread, complex, and growing epidemic in our neighborhoods. In our overwhelmingly poor communities, the resources available to domestic violence victims are severely limited. Battered women are often forced to seek solutions to their problems without legal assistance, which is virtually impossible. This project provides comprehensive legal assistance for the victims of domestic violence to stop the violence and create new, safe, and independent lives.

**HIV/AIDS Care and Supportive Services Project**

Brooklyn A provides critically-needed legal representation for HIV-positive people who are in danger of losing access to health care services and income support because of new welfare legislation. This is key to the survival of people living with HIV/AIDS because of the chaotic environment created by these welfare and immigration "reforms," as well as managed care.

"Since the early 1990's, Brooklyn A has handled all of our legal needs. Its lawyers are great. I've dealt with lawyers practically all my life, and Brooklyn A's are excellent. They take their time with us. Brooklyn A's lawyers help our organization not only with the endless red tape involved in the development of low-income housing and the negotiating of complex contracts, but also they have a deep, community commitment and sensitivity to local issues. I feel comfortable discussing matters with the Brooklyn A lawyers that I would not necessarily raise with outside attorneys. Our relationship is unique ... all of this comes back to neighborhood preservation. I take the word very seriously. And so does Brooklyn A.

--- Jeffrey Dunston ---

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
**NORTHEAST BROOKLYN HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**
WE CAN Project
The North Brooklyn Welfare Education and Community Advocacy Network (WE CAN) is a dynamic effort to empower our residents and community organizations to meet the challenges of "welfare reform". WE CAN conducts Know Your Rights teach-ins, workshops, regular meetings, a hotline, and much more. It provides legal representation to families who are navigating the current welfare system and trying to make the transition from welfare to work.

Senior Citizen Anti-Eviction and Estate Planning Project
This initiative provides legal services at, and in collaboration with, four senior centers to avert and remedy harassment and illegal eviction of senior citizen tenants. In addition, Brooklyn A helps seniors with estate planning and wills, and provides training on tenants' rights.

The Environmental Project
Lacking the means and influence of more affluent neighbors, our residents have been unable to protect their neighborhoods from the adverse health effects of becoming the City's dump site for environmentally hazardous materials. Among the sites are:
- the City's only radioactive waste storage facility, located next to an elementary school,
- over 300 EPA-regulated toxic waste sites, and
- 33 commercial garbage transfer stations serviced by 300,000 truck trips which now release 100 tons of pollutants every month. Pressure to expand these is coming with the closing of the Fresh Kills landfill in Staten Island.

The Project will develop and implement comprehensive strategies to address the different categories of environmental dangers from solid and toxic waste, sewage, petroleum storage, radioactive materials, and lead poisoning facing our communities.

"The work of Brooklyn A demonstrates the truly creative role that lawyers can play in enabling individuals and communities to control their destiny... The breadth and importance of their community and economic development activities show that Brooklyn A has become an indispensable part of Brooklyn’s social and economic fabric. Through these efforts, their staff is leveraging their good work many times over. Their operations should serve as a model for groups around the City who share the values of raising up the standards of our communities."

...Henry L. King...

PARTNER
DAVIS POLK & WARDWELL
THE CAMPAIGN FOR BROOKLYN A

This may be visionary work, but it is not theoretical or wish-list utopianism. The work of Brooklyn A has real-life consequences for the people of our communities.

For many years now, Brooklyn A has been aggressive and creative in diversifying sources of public and private financial support. Our renowned Partnership for Community and Economic Development generates major economic, pro bono and in-kind support from New York’s law firms, corporations, and foundations. Dynamic, new opportunities for even more effective representation of Brooklyn’s poor and under-served await us as we enter the 21st Century. But we must dramatically increase our resources to meet the growing needs of our communities.

Just as Brooklyn A has helped thousands of Brooklyn residents to buy their own homes and thus secure their futures, Brooklyn A also wants and needs to acquire its own home. With a permanent base in the community, we will be able to devote even more of our resources to fulfilling our mission.

Your leadership will make a real difference in the lives of thousands of individuals and families for whom we work as well as support community-building efforts by more than 100 local institutions.

We encourage your support of, and commitment to, this important effort. To assist in your planning, your gift may be paid out over a 3-to-5-year period. Payments can be made annually, semi-annually, or quarterly.

Your pledge will be gratefully accepted in the form of cash, securities, real estate, bequests and other means. Your contributions are fully tax deductible to the extent provided by law and may create significant tax savings.

Our capital campaign for Brooklyn A represents the critical next step for an organization that has changed the lives of so many people in need. Your generosity will reflect your belief in the mission and ensure the future of Brooklyn A. Quite simply, your support will help determine if the right to equal justice and opportunity becomes a reality in the communities we serve.

"If they (Brooklyn A’s attorneys) didn’t exist, either we’d have to pay private attorneys more than a quarter of a million dollars a year — which we obviously don’t have — or we wouldn’t exist as a developer and manager of (nearly 2000 units of) permanent, low income housing in a program that the NYC Housing Preservation and Development agency considers a model for the entire city."

--- Abdur Rahman Farrakhan ---

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OCEANHILL-BROWNSVILLE TENANTS ASSOCIATION, INC.
THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Regardless of the size of any capital campaign goal, it is the response of the relatively few leadership individuals, foundations, and businesses with the capability to make gifts of substantial size that will determine success.

The importance of such leadership support is underscored by the past campaign experience of countless not-for-profit institutions. In virtually every successful capital campaign, the following giving pattern emerges:

ONE: Sixty percent or more of the funds subscribed will be provided by approximately one to two percent of those who contribute;

TWO: The next 25 to 35 percent of the total secured will be provided by another 10 to 20 percent of the donors; and,

THREE: The remaining funds will come from all other contributors, or 80 to 90 percent of those who make a gift.

In addition, these studies show that, as the size of the objective increases, the greater must be the reliance on the contributors who have the ability to set the pace. It is their gifts that will determine the amount that can be raised, i.e. the actual campaign goal.

The reliance upon leadership giving is even more critical for Brooklyn A. Unlike other institutions which also provide important human services, the recipients of Brooklyn A assistance are among the most financially and socially disadvantaged in our society. No matter how grateful, they are unable to offer more than token financial assistance at best.

Realistically, it can be stated no other way: the critical factor in determining whether Brooklyn A will continue to meet the needs of those it serves rests with those of our friends who know and appreciate the importance of what we do, and who recognize a personal and institutional commitment to do what they can to help meet the need.

It is in this context that Brooklyn A seeks the leadership giving required to direct the way to success by demonstrating a commitment that will inspire others to join at a giving level equal to:

- the challenge to serve the disadvantaged now before Brooklyn A;
- their financial capacity to play a major role in meeting the challenge; and
- their desire to be an active partner in helping to meet the compelling needs of others.

"The lawyers from Brooklyn A have been vital to Nuestros Ninos' own success since we began the day care center in the early 1970's. Brooklyn A's services are invaluable, and we rely upon their ongoing advice and counsel on a myriad of issues confronting the School. In addition, Brooklyn A is providing desperately needed, high quality, neighborhood-based legal services to people of the low-income community of Williamsburg that we serve and cherish. Many community residents as well as our program could not afford basic legal services, and would have big trouble getting by were it not for Brooklyn A."

...Miriam L. Cruz...
ADMINISTRATOR
NUESTROS NINOS
CHILD DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL
THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR COMMITMENT

Your consideration of support at a Leadership Gift level is vital to our success for two compelling reasons:

- **Brooklyn A must rely heavily for support upon the relative few who possess the ability to make leadership gifts.**

  Without your support, and that of others similarly situated, we cannot make up the difference from among the many we serve who cherish our mission but lack the financial resources to make a difference.

- **The leadership giving commitment of our closest friends, made early in the campaign, will set the pace for other leadership giving prospects.**

  Your support now will send a strong message to others about the importance of the campaign and the need for every friend of Brooklyn A to give in accordance with his or her ability to support it.

Whatever your decision, please accept our appreciation for your:

- past support of Brooklyn A,
- interest in our future well-being, and
- consideration of our request for support of the campaign objectives.

Thank you.

“Once, lawyers were an integral part of our nation’s ‘War on Poverty.’ As part of that effort, the federal legal services program was created to provide legal assistance to low-income people and communities across the country. During the last two decades, however, the right of poor people to legal counsel has come under constant attack. With the resulting massive federal cutbacks, low-income communities are now more vulnerable than at any time since the Great Depression. Today, many question whether lawyers have any role whatsoever to play in fighting poverty.

“Having grown up in Brooklyn, I know firsthand the work of Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A. For over 32 years, it has worked very closely with its communities to build collaborative relationships that are a crucial foundation for community empowerment.”

... Jimmy Smits ...

**Actor & Narrator of the Film**

**So Goes a Nation** Community Lawyering in the 21st Century
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MISSION STATEMENT

Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A’s purpose and goal is to provide high quality legal assistance to low-income individuals and groups in the North and East Brooklyn communities of Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Bushwick, Oceanhill-Brownsville, East New York, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Cypress Hills, Starrett City, City Line, East Flatbush, Flatlands, and Canarsie.

The Corporation views legal assistance not only as traditional representation but also as a wide range of permissible activities including, but not limited to, group representation and community education. The Board of Directors, management and staff are dedicated to maximizing the Corporation’s effectiveness in serving the community via close and mutually supportive relationships with effective local grass roots organizations that have a demonstrated commitment to our common goal of social and economic justice.

The printing of this book is made possible by a generous in-kind contribution from the law firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell
"Legal Services brings the promise of liberty and justice alive for all poor Americans—32 million of our fellow citizens. But all of us cannot bring justice to the poor every day. We need a division of labor. By helping Brooklyn A we can participate, every day, in the unending task of creating a more perfect Union and establishing Justice for all."

...Sargent Shriver...

FOUNDER OF LEGAL SERVICES & HONORARY CO-CHAIR OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR BROOKLYN A.