

BROOKLYN LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION A

2019 IMPACT REPORT

*building communities
ensuring opportunity
achieving justice*



BROOKLYN LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION A

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I AM HONORED TO INTRODUCE THE BROOKLYN LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION A (BROOKLYN A) 2019 IMPACT REPORT. 2019 was a year of partnership for Brooklyn A. We saw how each person in the Brooklyn A family is an essential thread in the fabric of our organization. Our clients, staff, board members, elected officials, funders, and community partners were each a crucial part of our advocacy for vulnerable New Yorkers. Together we accomplished so much this year to preserve equity for home and business owners, help non-profits expand, and empower tenants to stay in their homes and fight back against negligent landlords.

We built new partnerships and strengthened existing ones to serve our clients better. We held two partnerships breakfasts—one with pro bono partners and the other with funders—to discuss how we could creatively collaborate to serve our communities and build awareness around the issues we face. We worked with elected officials to set up intake in their district offices to further our reach in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods. We played key roles in coalitions advocating for stronger legal protections for tenants, homeowners, and small business owners.

Our clients exemplify the collaborative, resilient, and visionary spirit of Brooklyn A. There is no better way to understand the issues our community faces and how we respond than through the stories of our clients. Each is a unique, colorful thread in our fabric. This year's Impact Report gives you the opportunity to get to know four of our clients—Tammeca, William, Angela, and Damarys.

ANGELA is a single mother who, when threatened with eviction, fought for over a year alongside her Brooklyn A attorney to ensure she and her children could stay in their home in Crown Heights.

TAMMECA is a small business owner whose spin studio provides affordable, culturally relevant exercise classes in Harlem and worked with Brooklyn A to secure a fair, long-term lease for a second location in her community.

WILLIAM is president of his tenant association and has fought for years alongside Brooklyn A attorneys and organizers to get critical repairs for himself and his neighbors in their Prospect Lefferts Gardens apartment building.

DAMARYS is a mother of three who, with Brooklyn A's assistance, saved her family's home in East New York from foreclosure after her lender refused to negotiate a fair loan modification.

New Yorkers are facing unprecedented levels of residential and commercial displacement. However, Brooklyn A was built on the foundation that together, we can leverage our collective strength to build community resilience. In that spirit, our services impacted the lives of almost two hundred thousand New Yorkers in 2019. We are grateful for each thread of our collective whole.

Sincerely,



Jessica A. Rose, Esq.
Executive Director



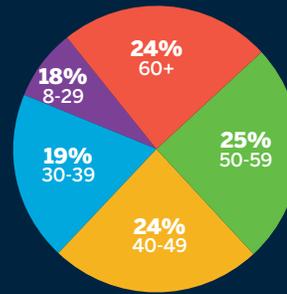
Brooklyn A advances **social and economic justice** and **empowers communities** through innovative, collaborative, high-quality **neighborhood-based legal representation and advocacy.**

WHO WE SERVE

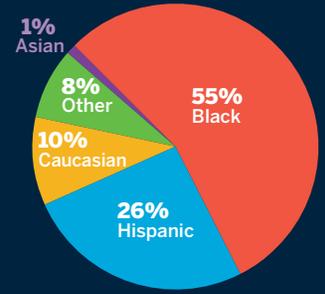
GENDER IDENTITY



AGE



RACE



2019

BROOKLYN A BY THE NUMBERS

192,138
lives impacted by Brooklyn A in 2019

5,106
individuals directly served

2,980
saved from eviction

97 tenant associations supported and organized, involving over **945** tenants

345
small business owners now have fairer leases

30
non-profits supported

116
foreclosures prevented

\$22,526,000
value preserved of homes that were in danger of foreclosure

\$31,071
federal tax refunds returned

\$775,212
federal tax liabilities recovered by the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic

FY 2019 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

NOTE: Brooklyn A changed its fiscal year end in 2019. The financial report reflects a short year from January 1- June 30, 2019.

REVENUE AND SUPPORT

Government Contracts & Grants	\$ 3,775,353
Contributions	61,218
In-Kind Contributions	90,000
Program Fees	224,853
Rental Income	203,500
Other Income	26,038
Total Revenue and Support	\$ 4,380,962

EXPENSES

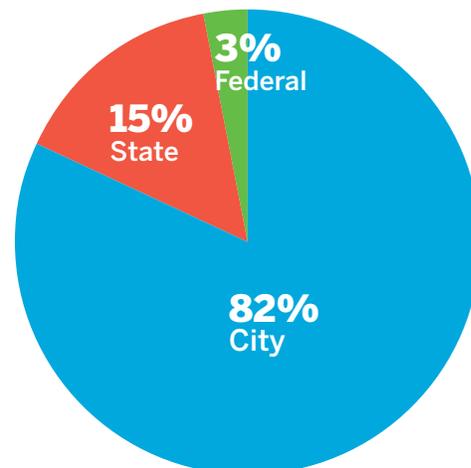
Program Services	\$ 3,735,001
Supporting Services	774,231
Total Expenses	\$ 4,509,232
Change in Net Assets	\$ (128,270)

WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES

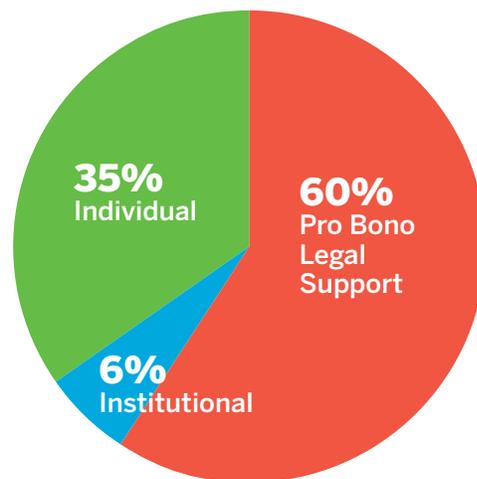
Program Services	83%
Management & General Admin	14%
Fundraising	3%



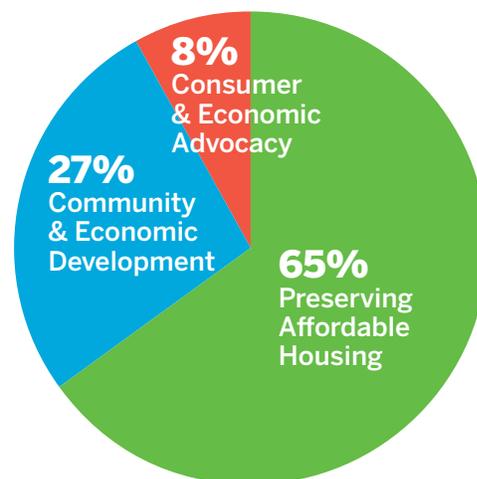
GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS & GRANTS



CONTRIBUTIONS



PROGRAM SERVICES



CONSUMER & ECONOMIC ADVOCACY (CEA)

The CEA program empowers underrepresented consumers to assert their rights in the marketplace and financially prosper.

In 2019, New York City saw more than double the amount of first-time foreclosures (a 114% increase) than were recorded in 2014. Many homeowners are targeted by discriminatory practices by predatory lenders, financial institutions, and home rescue scam artists.¹

When an individual has a tax lien or debt, it automatically deducts from their income, making it challenging to afford other costs of living, especially for those who live on fixed incomes while other costs of living rise.

1. www.propertyshark.com/Real-Estate-Reports/NYC-Foreclosure-Report

We prevent foreclosures and defend against predatory lending. In 2019 Brooklyn A stopped 116 homes from going into foreclosure, a quarter of which are owned by seniors, and over three quarters owned by minorities, saving \$22,526,000 in home equity for vulnerable homeowners. Our legal advocacy impacted the lives of more than 400 individuals and families.

We resolve tax issues with the IRS for low-income taxpayers. In 2019 Brooklyn A represented 131 low-income taxpayers, impacting the lives of 229 people across New York City. Due to our services, \$775,212 were recovered in federal tax liabilities, and \$31,071 was refunded.



MEET DAMARYS

“As a single mother living in East New York, I worked so hard to prevent the foreclosure of my home so that my daughters and I could live peacefully.”

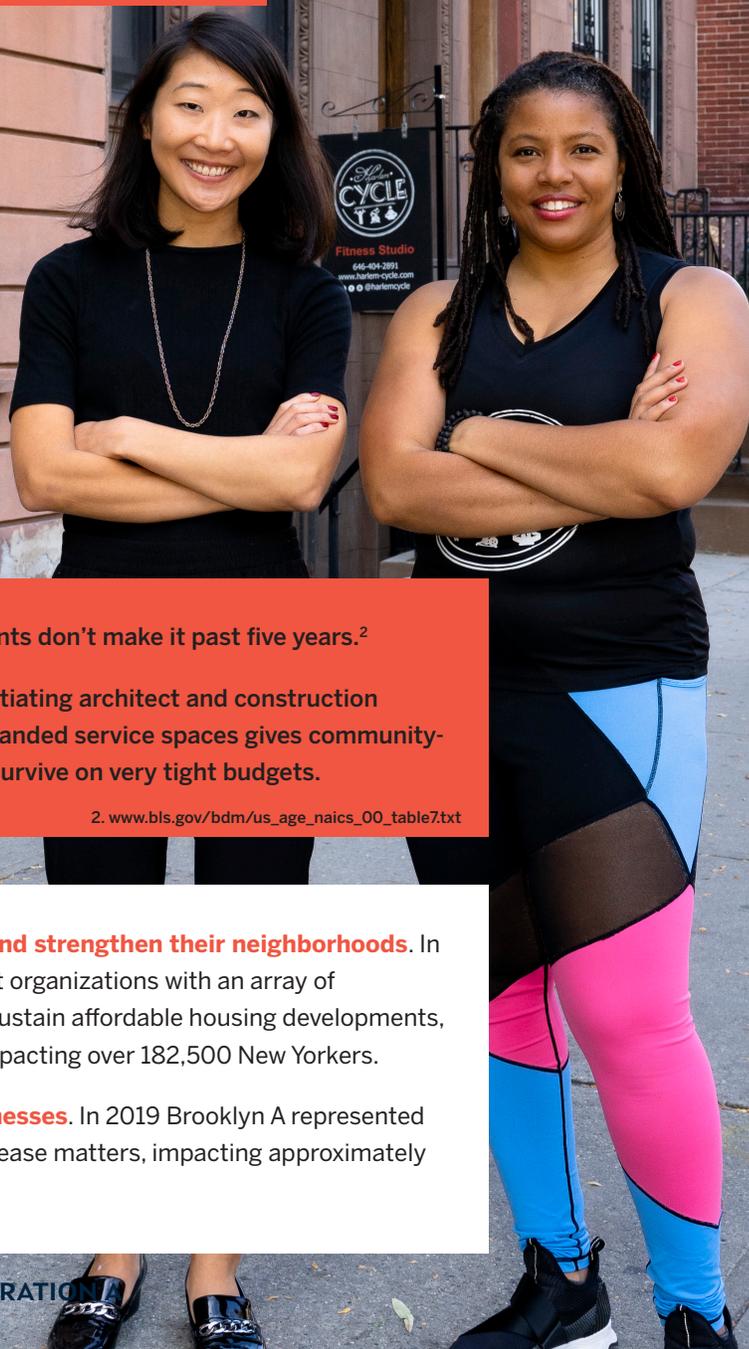
IMAGES ABOVE

LEFT: Damarys and her three daughters in front of their home
RIGHT: Damarys and her attorney, Alex Knipenberg

Damarys is a Head Start teacher and mother of three daughters who has lived in East New York for close to twenty years. She initially bought her home with her former partner. Due to financial hardship when her ex-partner left, Damarys was unable to make mortgage payments on time, and her house went into foreclosure. The mortgage bank refused to negotiate a loan modification or work with Damarys and her family to remain in their home. Damarys was most concerned about maintaining stability for her daughters while they were in school. Attorneys in Brooklyn A's Consumer & Economic Advocacy program assisted Damarys in filing for bankruptcy, stopping the sale of her home, and helped her to change the deed to list her as the sole owner so that she could better negotiate with the mortgage bank. Damarys is now able to enjoy gathering with her family in their home and cooking elaborate meals without fear that her property will be taken away.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (CED)

The CED program provides transactional legal counsel to non-profits and small businesses that sustain and empower low-income communities throughout New York City.



Nearly 50% of new business establishments don't make it past five years.²

Legal representation on matters like negotiating architect and construction agreements and financial closings for expanded service spaces gives community-based organizations a greater chance to survive on very tight budgets.

2. www.bls.gov/bdm/us_age_naics_00_table7.txt

We represent non-profits that support and strengthen their neighborhoods. In 2019 Brooklyn A represented 30 non-profit organizations with an array of development and operational projects to sustain affordable housing developments, community health centers, and schools impacting over 182,500 New Yorkers.

We level the playing field for small businesses. In 2019 Brooklyn A represented 345 small businesses on 475 commercial lease matters, impacting approximately 5,000 employees and their families.



MEET TAMMECA

“Harlem Cycle is the first and only indoor cycling studio in Harlem and offers an accessible option to the neighborhood. To solidify the business in a rapidly changing area, Brooklyn A helped me to negotiate good lease terms for my second location.”

IMAGES ABOVE

LEFT: Tammeca and her son outside of Harlem Cycle

RIGHT: Tammeca and her attorney, Samantha Rauer

Harlem Cycle is a cycling studio that has been located on Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard in Harlem since 2016. Owner Tammeca Rochester’s vision is to provide affordable exercise classes for the community, particularly people of color, in a welcoming environment. It is the only studio of its type in the neighborhood. Attorneys in Brooklyn A’s Consumer & Economic Advocacy program worked with Ms. Rochester on negotiating a lease for her second Harlem location that included protections and provisions that are important to the health of her business.

PRESERVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING (PAH)

The PAH program uses legal and advocacy strategies to preserve and protect affordable housing, prevent evictions, combat tenant harassment and discrimination, and ensure that tenants enjoy the right to safe and sanitary housing.

The predominantly low-to-moderate income neighborhoods of the past have become the epicenter of New York City's "housing boom." As the cost of living rises, landlords are increasingly "incentivized" to force low-to-moderate income tenants out of their apartments—often resorting to destructive and discriminatory tactics to empty their buildings.

If one examines the prices of units available to low-income people—only 1.15% of units with asking rents below \$800 are vacant.³ This shortage means that when people are pushed out of their homes, there are fewer places for them to go, often leaving them homeless.

³ [winnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Making_CityFHEPS-March.pdf](https://www.winnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Making_CityFHEPS-March.pdf)



We use strength in numbers to fight for tenants' rights. In 2019, Brooklyn A represented 97 tenant associations involving 945 residents. Brooklyn A supports tenants and community organizers in forming and representing tenant associations, and participates in community coalitions engaged with the struggle for fair and equitable housing and community development.

We help prevent homelessness and improve people's homes. In 2019 Brooklyn A's legal advocacy prevented 1,153 evictions. Brooklyn A preserves affordable housing for residents in public, subsidized and regulated housing, protects against illegal evictions, advocates for tenants with disabilities and survivors of domestic violence, and restores or obtains government benefits to ensure the ability of low-income community members to stay in their apartments.



MEET ANGELA

“After having lived in my apartment in Crown Heights for 17 years, I fought for over a year to stop my landlord from evicting my family from our home.”

IMAGES ABOVE

LEFT: Angela and her son
RIGHT: Angela and her attorney,
Kristie Ortiz-Lam

Angela has lived in her Crown Heights apartment for seventeen years. Due to financial complications, she owed \$2,000 in rent and was about to be evicted. She took on several jobs to be able to pay rent and qualify for emergency motions for a time extension. While an average of five motions are generally filed, Angela and her Brooklyn A attorney filed 13. Many people would have given up, but she was determined to keep her home for her family. Angela and her attorney are what she calls a “dynamic duo” that fought together to improve Angela’s financial position and save her home.



MEET WILLIAM

“I am proud to serve as the tenant association president because there is a distinct advantage when we work together to maintain and improve services in a building where the owner is doing all they can to drive out rent-stabilized tenants.”

IMAGES ABOVE

LEFT: William and members of the tenant association of 101 Lincoln Road

RIGHT: 101 Lincoln tenant association members with their attorney, Jack Underwood

Brooklyn A represented twenty-two separate households at 101 Lincoln Road in Prospect Lefferts Garden. This building has faced neglect by the landlord, who is on the list of the 20 Worst Landlords in New York City. The building’s strong tenant association, led by William, formed long before they sought the help of Brooklyn A. Brooklyn A and the tenant association’s accomplishments include: getting the landlord to return over \$35,000 to tenants who were overcharged their rent; securing an entrance ramp for the building and reasonable disability accommodations for tenants; and securing a rent reduction order against the building.

COMING TOGETHER TO BUILD AND CELEBRATE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

“As a mother of 3 daughters as well, I admire your ability to stay positive and balance all that had to get done to save your home and maintain stability for you and your family.”

— BROOKLYN A ATTORNEY, TAMARA DEL CARMEN TO DAMARYS AT SMALL PLATES BIG IDEAS



Brooklyn A celebrated with its non-profit client, **Make the Road New York** (MRNY), at the groundbreaking of its new community center in the heart of Corona, Queens. Our Community and Economic Development program represented MRNY in the \$30 million construction financing for the new space. We were excited to participate in this historic moment laying the foundation for an institution that celebrates and supports immigrant communities.

We held two breakfast meetings to discuss how we could creatively collaborate to serve our communities and build awareness around the issues we face. Held in July 2019, the **Pro Bono Breakfast** was attended by various law firms and was hosted by Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP. In September 2019, Citizens Bank hosted a **Partnership Breakfast** that was attended by various funders. Thank you to the hosts and all attendees.



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Supporters of Brooklyn A gathered for “Small Plates, Big Ideas,” an intimate cocktail reception in November 2019, recognizing the incredible achievements of Brooklyn A’s clients, advocates, and the entire community. The centerpiece of the event was a meaningful panel discussion led by Errol Louis, host of NY1’s Inside City Hall, and featuring four client honorees who shared stories of their pursuit of justice.

We united with homeowners, housing advocates, and local officials for numerous rallies this year. In June 2019, we stood on the steps of City Hall to demand that the City Council include \$10 million in expanded funding in the New York City budget to help New York families keep their homes and fight displacement.



“It was a valuable experience to be trained by Brooklyn A attorneys and then immediately have a chance to volunteer at a clinic for small business owners under their guidance.”

— ATTENDEE AT THE COMMERCIAL LEASE REVIEW SESSION & LUNCH



In October 2019 Brooklyn A and our long term pro-bono partner, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP, hosted a free **Commercial Lease Review Session & Lunch** as part of Brooklyn A’s Small Business Support Project. As part of the day’s events, Brooklyn A led a training for attorneys on working with small businesses.

WE ARE BROOKLYN A



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