

ANNUAL REPORT

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER

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OVERVIEW

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The Gender Equality Law Center (GELC) is a Brooklyn-based 501(c)(3) non-profit law and advocacy organization committed to advancing laws and policies that promote gender justice and racial equity. Our mission is to use the law to break down legal and societal barriers that prevent individuals from having equal access to opportunities to succeed and advance in our society because of their gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity—with the recognition and eradication of those specific to the intersection of gender and race.

GELC's work falls into four primary program areas: advancing economic security for women, enforcing sexual harassment prevention, combatting pregnancy and caregiver discrimination, and promoting LGBTQ+ rights. While all of GELC's work protects the rights of individuals who face social, institutional, and legal discrimination on the basis of gender, the focus of our work is to help empower low-income individuals who would not otherwise have the opportunity to access legal representation, or who may not even know about their legal rights. To meet this goal, GELC employs a blend of strategies, including: counseling through our confidential hotline, impact litigation, legislative reform, technical advice to the private bar, and "know your rights" training.

While our primary mission is to expand and enforce protections against gender discrimination, all of our work takes into account that gender-based discrimination is rarely inflicted or experienced in a vacuum. Many other intersectional factors play a role in limiting opportunities and advancement. Because of this intersectionality, our work combatting gender discrimination almost always involves confronting discrimination on the basis of race, national origin and immigration status—which means our target community is primarily low-income and from historically marginalized groups.

Last March, at the beginning of the pandemic, GELC expanded its mission to include responding to questions and concerns of low wage workers in New York seeking information about workplace COVID-19 related issues, including, but not limited to, information about wage replacement, paid sick and family leave benefits, and health and safety issues. A significant number of the callers to GELC's hotline over the past 11 months have been from communities of color or individuals whose first language is not English and many are undocumented. Working in tandem with GELC's mission based work, our COVID relief work responds to the increased and exacerbated needs of low-wage workers.

MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER

Dear Friends, Allies and Supporters:

2020 was truly a year like no other! So many of us had physical, mental and economic challenges. No one has escaped this year unscathed.

As a relatively new not for profit, the challenges in meeting the demand for our services while at the same time raising sufficient funds were significant. But I am proud to say we persevered and are better positioned to provide more services and assistance for our clients in 2021.

Among our accomplishments this past year, we expanded our outreach and services to include providing counseling and advice to hundreds of workers in New York State, the majority of whom were low wage earners. We helped them access information about unemployment insurance benefits and paid sick and family leave, particularly critical for these workers during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. All the while, we witnessed the disparate impact of the pandemic on women, particularly women of color, who were displaced from their jobs or forced into the untenable position of choosing to care for their families or forgo the income of a job. We chose to redress many of these disparities clearly already in existence but now exacerbated by the health and economic ramifications of COVID-19 by ramping up our advocacy efforts to address these disparities, including joining force with several nationwide coalitions to advance both legislative and policy changes to protect women, particularly women of color whose economic security has been further threatened and undermined during 2020.

On the litigation front, we filed several new legal actions in 2020 seeking redress for, among others, a Latina construction worker assaulted on the job, a male truck driver punished for taking family leave, a teacher fired for complaining about being sexually harassed by a student, the hostile work environment experienced by a female inspector for refusing to engage in a sexual relationship with her supervisor and two male construction workers fired for taking time off from work to recover from COVID-19. We also signed onto several Amici (Friend of the Court) briefs helping to push forward the protections of various anti-discrimination laws to protect women and LGBTQ+ individuals.

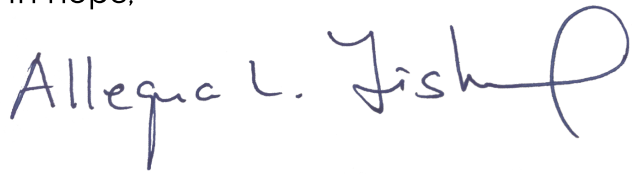
MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CON'T

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER

Finally, as part of GELC's commitment to confront and address racism within the legal profession we have joined various bar association committees seeking to enhance diversity in the profession. Individual GELC staff members also engaged in conferences, committees, workshops and leadership trainings to confront racism in the legal profession. This work must continue.

We have persevered through a tough year but gotten so much stronger. With GELC's committed and passionate staff we have accomplished more than we ever thought possible while combatting financial and logistical challenges. I look forward to a stronger and better year going forward.

In hope,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allegra L. Fishel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "F" at the end.

Allegra Fishel
Founder & Executive Director



LEADERSHIP

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Susan Crumiller
Board President



Bonita L. Betters-Reed
Board Secretary and Vice President



Chandra K. Smith
Board Treasurer



Elizabeth Reinhardt
Board Member



Shareema Abel
Board Member



Sean Harvey
Board Member



Allegra L. Fishel
Board Member

GELC started 2020 with three new members of the Board of Directors: Chandra K. Smith, Shareema Abel, and Sean Harvey. Months later, we welcomed Elizabeth Reinhardt to the Board. Chandra became the Board Treasurer and Susan, Bonita, Chandra and Elizabeth joined GELC's Director of Development, Alex McAdams, in launching a Development Committee, which was critical in implementing a very successful Annual Appeal in support of our work.

We are saddened by the end of Bonita's term in January of 2021, but thank her for her dedication to the mission of GELC and for her leadership in developing systems, Board responsibilities, and campaign processes that will help ensure the success of GELC programming, including by building a sustainable fundraising pipeline. In 2021, we will continue to grow a diverse and skilled Board of Directors which will help GELC grow in the coming years.

LEADERSHIP

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER

STAFF



Allegra L. Fishel
Founder and Executive Director



Alex McAdams
Director of Development



Gabriela Rendon
Staff Attorney & Outreach Coordinator



Siobhan Klassen
Staff Attorney



Madeleine Morawski
Legal Fellow



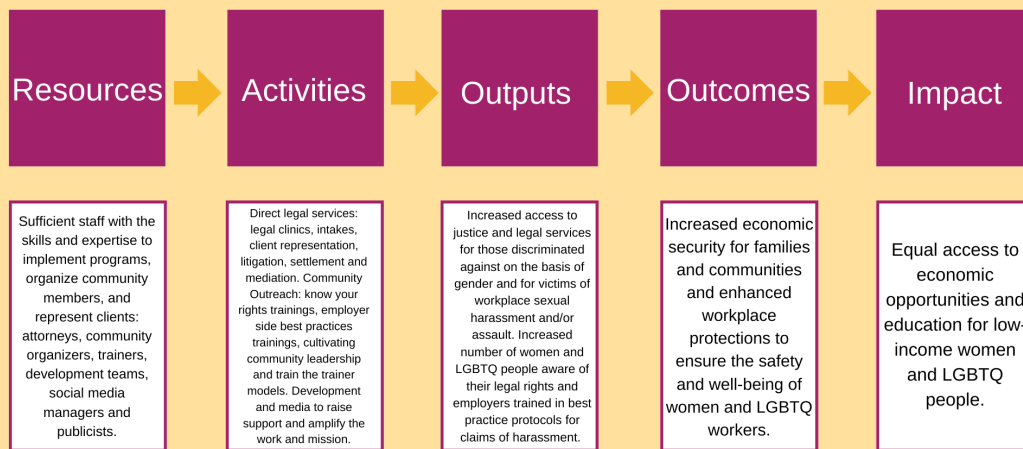
Chelsea Maddred
Social Media Manager

GELC's staff is led by the fierce direction of Executive Director, Allegra Fishel, with 2020 leadership support from the Director of Programs and Policy, Lauren Betters, and the Director of Development, Alex McAdams. Lauren left GELC in February of 2020 and Legal Fellow and Community Outreach Coordinator, Gaby Rendon, was admitted to the NYS Bar Association later in 2020 ending the year as a Staff Attorney. In 2020, we also hired a part-time Staff Attorney, Siobhan Klassen, a part-time Social Media Manager, Chelsea Maddred, and welcomed a Legal Fellow, Madeleine Morawski. Additional support staff, including legal interns and volunteer attorneys, are critical to our success.

IMPACT

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER

How We Create Change



Direct Services

In March of 2020 as the first Pause Order was being issued by Governor Cuomo, GELC pivoted to expand its counsel and advice services beyond its original mission-based work. Starting in mid-March, GELC opened up its confidential legal hotline to assist to all New York workers seeking information about wage replacement, health and safety issues pertaining to return to work and benefits related to sick or family leave as related to COVID-19. Our intake from a variety of sources, increased to helping as many as 50 individuals per week through to the fall of 2020, including referrals from our hotline, other attorney referrals and technical advice we provided to other lawyers about their clients.

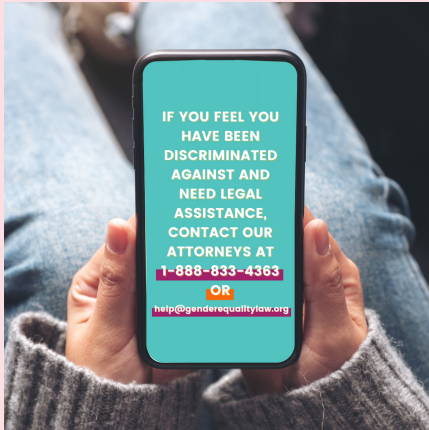
While the number of intake callers seeking counsel and advice about COVID-19-related issues is declining, we still receive calls from individuals needing information about benefits and leave protections, in addition to our more mission-based intake related to gender discrimination.

Litigation

GELC took on several new matters in 2020, including filing three new lawsuits in federal court, one in State Court and several others at various administrative agencies, including the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the New York City Commission on Human Rights. While several cases were stalled in court and in administrative agencies due to the pandemic they are now ramping back up. We anticipate several other lawsuits to be filed in 2021. In addition to these cases, we are also representing an additional 15 cases in various forms of non-litigation advocacy.

IMPACT

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER



Amicus Briefs

GELC signed onto two Amici briefs in 2020: one in support of a Pennsylvania Court brief seeking to exclude evidence of sex trafficking of rape victims in a criminal case and the other combatting the Trump's administration's Executive Order excluding medical treatment for transgender employees.

Legislative Advocacy

GELC worked with various coalitions on various pieces of legislation, including

- Helping to pass the New York Emergency Paid State Paid Sick and Family Leave Law
- Providing comments to the U.S. Department of Labor on regulations implementing the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act
- Submitting comment to the NYC City Council on implementing the NYC Pregnant Workers Fairness Act
- Working with the National Stop Sexual Harassment Network (a network of women's advocacy organizations around the country) to strengthen local and state anti-sexual harassment laws in various states around the country
- Gathering narratives to help efforts to strengthen the NYS Paid Family Leave Law.
- Supporting various national pieces of legislation to enhance sexual harassment and violence protections on the job. For example, we supported California Representative Ted Liu's Bill to require reporting, accountability and increased investigations at publicly traded companies.
- Signing onto various petitions in support of the federal Family Act (promoting paid family leave), the federal Pregnant Worker's Act (providing for reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers), and the federal Equality Act (which would make discrimination against LGBTQ employees illegal by statute).

IMPACT

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Policy Work

Throughout 2020, GELC staff worked on a number of policy initiative along with partner groups and coalitions. These include:

- Working with the organization PowHer and its 20 or so member organizations to help create the employment section of the Roadmap to Create Inclusive Gender Justice in NY and organizing around its release.
- Joining and working with the Equal Pay Today Campaign (a group of 25 or more women's rights advocates around the country) to develop strategies for addressing gender disparity in pay across the United States with an emphasis on low wage workers.
- Working with the New York State Paid Leave Coalition to develop legislative and policy initiatives with regard to various paid leave laws in New York State.

"GELC's representation changes the lives of their clients forever, and all those impacted by the policy changes it demands."

Susan Crumiller
President, GELC Board of Directors



Committees/Coalitions/Leadership Trainings

GELC staff joined committees and coalitions on behalf of the Organization:

1. Gaby Rendon joined the following new coalitions: Generation Gender Equality, United States of Women, and One Fair Wage
2. Madeleine Morawski joined the Gender Discrimination Committee of New York Affiliate of National Employment Lawyers Association ("NELA/NY")
3. Allegra Fishel joined or helped create the following committees and coalitions and received leadership training through: Undoing Racism Executive Leadership Training, Community Resources Exchange Leadership Training (sponsored by the New York Women's Foundation – an eight month leadership course), Co-founder of the NELA/NY's new "Dismantling Our Privilege-White Allyship Group", Originating member of the National Employment Lawyers Association's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Group, Ongoing member of NELA/NY's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Group

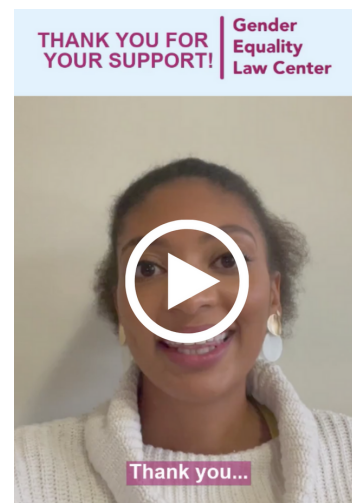
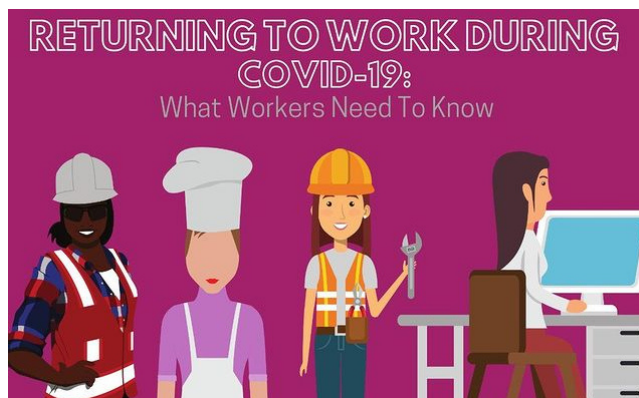
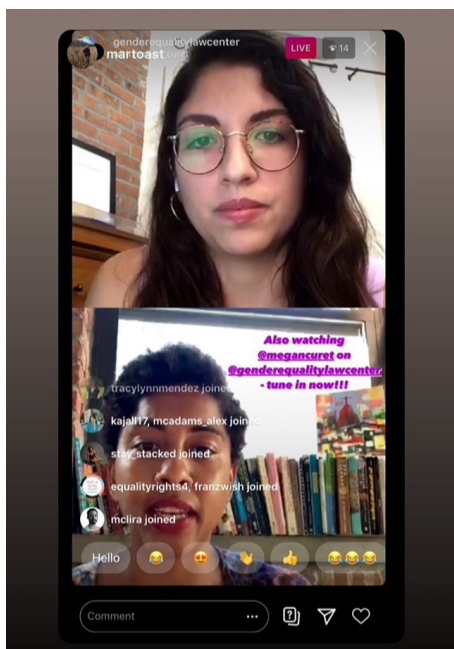
These organizations are in addition to the many other organizations, coalitions, and committees that GELC staff continue to participate in.

VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

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Highlights

In response to the pandemic, GELC pivoted its programming to best serve and engage with our community through virtual programming. Some of this included Instagram Live discussions with local activists, advocates, and community members, virtual know your rights trainings, and disseminating information through short videos encouraging community engagement.



To learn more about our programming and upcoming events visit us on social media:



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ylaw



@genequalit
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SUPPORT

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Organizational Partnerships

We see partnerships as being critical to the effectiveness and success of our programming. Through partnerships and coalition-building, we take a more holistic approach to social change by supporting shared goals, exchanging data to help identify need, and working jointly to best serve our constituents with the greatest impact. Some of our partners include:

- Make the Road NY
- NOW/NYC
- Safe Horizon
- PowHer NY
- New Immigrant Community Empowerment
- National Advocates for Pregnant Women
- Worker's Justice Project
- Ujima: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
- Gender Justice
- National Women's Law Center
- NELA
- Equal Rights Amendment Coalition
- Cornell Workers' Rights Coalition
- New Women New Yorkers
- Center for Anti-Violence Education
- NYC Anti-Violence Project
- Brooklyn Legal Services
- Urban Justice Center
- A Better Balance
- Generation Ratify

Institutional Funders

GELC is extremely grateful to have received continued institutional support from the New York Women's Foundation in the form of a very generous multi-year general operating support grant, as well as two grants from The New York Bar Foundation in support of our Workplace Victims Law Project and our COVID Relief Project, and a grant from the Brooklyn Community Foundation in support of our COVID Relief Project. Additionally, we were awarded funding from the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund in support of our litigation on behalf of low-wage workers who have experienced gender-based discrimination or harassment. Thank you also to Outten & Golden, The Darnell-Moser Charitable Fund, and Rich & Bander, LLP, from whom we also received support.



SUPPORT

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER

Individual Donors

Individual donors are not only one of the critical financial backbones of our organization that gives us the ability to do the work we're doing, but their contributions are also a meaningful representation of the community's support of our work. We are very appreciative of our major donors, one-time donors, and sustaining recurring donors. In 2020, we tripled our recurring donor base, which is an incredibly important piece of our projected annual income. We also welcomed about a hundred new individual donors to our base. Because of this, we are not able to thank them all by name, however, we would like to highlight a few, below.

Change Makers

Shareema Abel
Bonita Betters-Reed & Gary E. Reed
Jenny & Jon Crumiller
Susan Crumiller & Arastu Chaudhury
Elisabeth Genn
Richard Greenspan
Anne Hunter
Rich & Gina Kelley
Sean & Regina Kenney

Freddie Markowitz
Brendan V. McAdams
Norma Montagnino Gemza
Juliet Moser
Amy Oppenheimer
Elizabeth Reinhardt
Rachel Strutt
Diane Tillotson
William Zagata



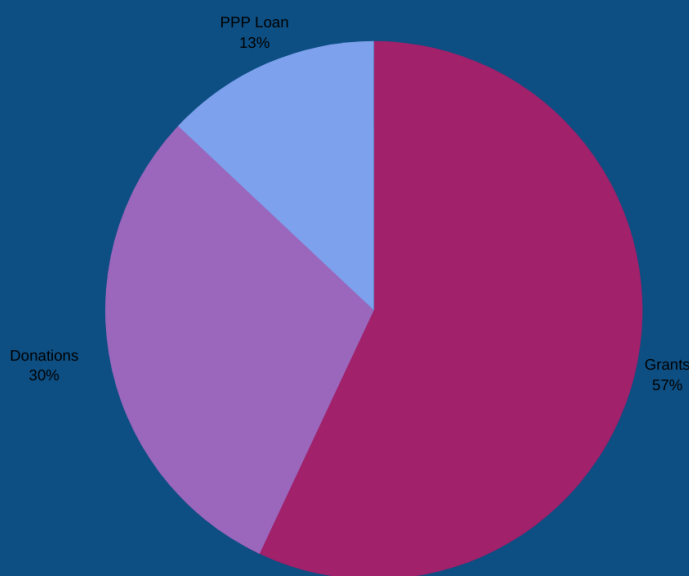
THANK
YOU

"I chose the Gender Equality Law Center to donate to because I have a good friend who is a transwoman and has faced so many difficult moments where she has felt helpless or victimized. And, as a woman myself, I have often been a victim of gender inequality in the workplace. I believe it's important to help through charitable donations—that's my outlet: I want to help as many people as possible and educate those unaware of how severe gender inequality truly is."

-GELC Donor

FINANCES: REVENUE

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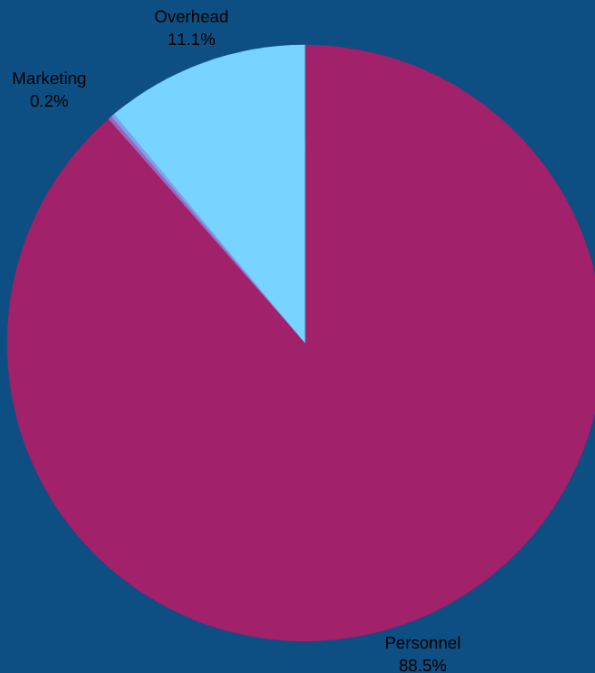


Our total revenue in 2020 was consistent with our 2019 revenue and did not increase as much as we projected due to the loss of attorney fees in 2020 because of temporary court closures during the pandemic. But even despite the pandemic, GELC secured five institutional grants including the second year of a two-year \$120,000 grant from The New York Women's Foundation (making it our third year as a NYWF grantee), two grants from The New York Bar Foundation totaling \$4,500 in support of both our Workplace Victims Law Project and our COVID Relief Project. In addition, we received \$16,750 from the TimesUp Legal Defense Fund in support of our litigation and an \$11,200 grant from NYU Public Interest for the hiring of a Legal Fellow. Along with this institutional funding, we also were lucky to receive a forgivable loan from the Paycheck Protection Program.

In 2020, we had our most successful end of year campaign yet— bringing in close to \$55,000 in unrestricted individual donations, up to \$25,000 of which will be matched in early 2021 from our generous corporate donor Rich & Bander, LLP. Additionally, our recurring donor based tripled in 2020 and we cultivated relationships with and secured a donation from a new major donor. This support has allowed us to increase our capacity which enables us to take on more clients and cases. By increasing our capacity in taking on more cases now that courts have reopened, GELC will continue to recoup attorneys fees in those we litigate which contributes to a large portion of our projected revenue for 2021. It is a unique fundraising model that strengthens both the sustainability and the capacity of the organization and allows us to serve more people.

FINANCES: EXPENSES

GENDER EQUALITY LAW CENTER



Our total expenses in 2020 were \$196,411, resulting in a loss of \$12,351. However, because of revenues in GELC's bank account, we were able to absorb the loss without any negative outcome. Our overhead expenses are minimal due to the fact that we have office space in a collaborative work space which includes utilities and shared office equipment. Due to the pandemic, we had downsized this space mid-year as we were unable to go into the office and work. We have since released this space as we predict that we will not be returning to the office until the Fall of 2021 at the earliest. Otherwise, the majority of expenses in 2020 were related to personnel and staffing, professional fees, and licensing for our attorneys.

The federal government through an IRS Guidance Rule, allowed employers to delay payment of employer-paid Social Security taxes for employees on its payroll. Repayment is to be made in two payments at the end of December 2021 and again by December 31, 2021. GELC took advantage of this program and has budgeted the first of two payments to be made as repayment in the year 2021.

"When I found the Gender Equality Law Center, they put the pieces back together and became the voice I needed to be heard and taken seriously. GELC became my fiercest advocate."

- GELC Client



This report was created by Alex McAdams with graphics made by Alex McAdams and Chelsea Maddred on behalf of GELC

amcadams@genderequalitylaw.org

Gender Equality Law Center