



Holocaust Survivors Justice Network

Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.
– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The ground-breaking Holocaust Survivors Justice Network charted truly new territory in delivering pro bono services to low-income individuals on a coordinated, nationwide basis.

With an explorer's spirit and a comprehensive set of guiding materials (including training videos, sample documents, annotated forms, FAQs, and a project website: www.holocaustsurvivorsprobono.org), the Justice Network grew from a pilot program engineered by Bet Tzedek Legal Services and the law firm of Manatt, Phelps & Phillips in Los Angeles to involve more than 130 law firms, corporate legal departments, law schools, and other legal and social service entities in 30 locations in the U.S. and Canada, with a total ramp-up time of less than one year.

The Justice Network's 3,000+ volunteer attorneys have rendered one-on-one legal services to thousands of Holocaust survivors, carefully guiding them through a complex German application for reparations payments, which requires survivors to recount some of the most horrific events of their lives.

Reflecting on his service as the Justice Network's initial volunteer national director, Stan Levy of Manatt speaks for many by saying: "It is one thing to know about historic events. It is something quite different and profound when you actually touch that history through the lives of people who lived it. That moment of meeting with a Holocaust survivor affects you to the very depth of your soul."

The survivors served through the Justice Network are all of advanced age and many are in poor health. It is a true travesty of justice that after enduring one of humanity's darkest eras, more than a quarter of today's survivors live below the poverty line and many more struggle to survive on meager pensions. Indeed, "surviving surviving" has become fraught with its own set of daunting challenges – the Justice Network exists to surmount these challenges.

In addition to helping to procure reparations payments that can enhance each survivor's net worth, the Justice Network also strives to enhance survivors' self-worth. Justice Network volunteers spend hours with each survivor, ensuring that their stories are recorded accurately and that their needs are met. As noted by one survivor's child, "I was impressed by the professionalism of the attorneys ... and moved by their kindness; [it] brought tears to my eyes. Echoes of what I have written here are reverberating from coast to coast. Your work is genuinely appreciated."

The Justice Network succeeds not only by restoring a small measure of justice to Holocaust survivors, but also by facilitating new awareness of the legal needs of this vulnerable population and increasing the level of participation in pro bono work among firms and attorneys in all areas of practice and at every level of experience.

To date, the Justice Network has served approximately 5,000 survivors in connection with the German reparations application. And while the network will continue to serve all who need assistance with that application, it is already moving forward to meet additional legal needs within the survivor community.

Through the guidance of a National Advisory Committee comprised of attorneys from 17 law firms and in-house legal departments in 13 cities, the Justice Network is poised to capitalize on its unique set of coordinated resources and dedicated volunteers to address topics including end-of-life planning and financial service issues that are so pressing for survivors, seniors, low-income and other vulnerable people. By leveraging its innovative infrastructure, the Justice Network will endure and continue to engage volunteers in providing critical pro bono service for years to come.

The Justice Network's volunteers regularly remark upon how their survivor-clients enrich their lives by providing a greater appreciation of who we are, what we have, and the time and place in which we live. "Our" survivors inspire us to believe that we have the inner resources to transcend life's myriad trials and travails.

They are the true heroes.

This award belongs equally to each of our clients and to the literally thousands of individuals who have worked to make the Justice Network a force for good and justice in the world. We are exceptionally humbled to receive recognition for our work from the ABA, which represents the highest ideals of the legal profession.

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.
– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*