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Front Matter

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CUNY LAW REVIEW

Edited by the Students of the City University of New York School of Law

Scholarship for Social Justice

City University of New York School of Law
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A JOURNAL OF LAW IN THE SERVICE OF HUMAN NEEDS: 25 YEARS LATER

The 2021-2022 Editorial Board is honored to share the 25th Anniversary Volume of *CUNY Law Review*, CUNY School of Law's flagship student-run journal. With its first issue published in 1996, the then-named *New York City Law Review* was founded to further our law school's motto. The founding committee firmly believed that the journal is "both vital to [students'] own legal education, as well as a much needed addition to the legal community: A Journal of Law in the Service of Human Needs."¹

In the 1990s, early talks about establishing a journal at a law school founded on social justice and public interest were met with some dissent because of concerns that a legal journal may perpetuate the elitism and competition already rampant in the legal profession. The journal was eventually founded in 1996 with persistent support of professors, students, and administrators, but only as an unofficial publication of the law school—hence why it did not use the name "CUNY" in its title. For a legal journal at a public interest law school, it was apt to align its identity with the broader community it was based in: New York City.

Over the past 25 years, the journal has sought to embody the principles of justice, equity, and transformation—always asking if the scholarship centers those who are often shut out from mainstream legal discourse and supports systemic change. The legal scholarship prioritized by *CUNY Law Review* provides a space for critical reflection on limitations and openings for actual justice within the law and aims to create a conversation with movements for justice. In 2005, *CUNY Law Review* inaugurated the *Public Interest Practitioners Section* to "incorporate 'lessons from the field' of public-interest practice."² A 2019 study of law review author backgrounds conducted by the *Harvard Journal of Law and Technology* found that only 3.9% were practitioners, and practitioners "never comprised more than 15.9% of authors in any one journal."³ Yet, *CUNY Law Review* prioritizes legal scholarship from attorneys, legal workers, law students, and other practitioners working alongside frontline communities to create access to justice in light of ongoing injustice every day.

¹ Jonathan D. Libby et al., *Introduction: A Journal of Law in the Service of Human Needs*, 1 N.Y. CITY L. REV. 1, 3 (1996).

² *Introducing New York City Law Review's Public-Interest Practice Section*, 8 N.Y. CITY L. REV. 232, 232 (2005).

³ Stephen Thomson, *Letterhead Bias and the Demographics of Elite Journal Publications*, 33 HARV. J.L. & TECH. 203, 209, 246 (2019) (investigating, in part, the proportion of academic, practitioner, and judicial authors at top-50 law school journals).

In 2013, we launched the *Footnote Forum* to serve as an online companion to *CUNY Law Review*'s print publication.⁴ *Footnote Forum* seeks to push the boundaries of the legal canon and publish essays, articles, poetry, podcasts, and interviews by students, academics, practitioners, policymakers, advocates, and other nontraditional authors.

In addition to publishing articles and a podcast in our 25th Anniversary Volume, we hope to expand the reach of our publication by launching the *CUNY Law Review Blog*. Using the motto "Breaking Down Barriers to the Law," the *CUNY Law Review Blog* aims to make legal scholarship accessible to audiences beyond the legal community by publishing short, timely pieces on pressing social justice issues.

As the Editors of the 25th Volume of *CUNY Law Review*, we produced this journal while our CUNY Law community struggled to heal after losing members due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. For many it was difficult to go about business as usual—teach, attend classes, and serve our clients' needs—while the seemingly endless pandemic highlights systemic inequality that has been the bedrock of United States history. No institution is immune from the dysfunctions of a society operating on anti-Black, capitalist, heteropatriarchal, ableist, imperialistic, and overall oppressive systems. Not even CUNY. Our school, too, has struggled with the all too well known anti-Blackness and racial toxicity that plagues law schools, and which has impeded our school's ability to uphold the foundational principles of public interest.⁵

This first issue of Volume 25 features restorative justice practitioners, legal clinic directors, doctors, currently and formerly incarcerated individuals, academics, students, journalists, and lawyers. The articles respond to some of the most critical challenges of our time, as well as the harms caused by the law and legal institutions.

Looking forward to the next 25 years and beyond, *CUNY Law Review* will continue to operate with the objective of transforming the law, and with the belief that excellent scholarship, informed by the perspectives of those most affected by injustice and oppression, is a vital component of justice.

2021-2022 *CUNY Law Review* Editorial Board

⁴ The first *Footnote Forum* piece was published simultaneously with the seventeenth volume of the *CUNY Law Review*; see Franke Deale, *Reflections on the History and Future of the Voting Rights Act in the Wake of Shelby County*, 17 CUNY L. REV. F. 1 (2013).

⁵ For an archive of student activism sparked by the March 2021 departure of former Dean Mary Lu Bilek following her anti-Black statements, see *CUNY Student Activism Archive* available at <https://medium.com/@CUNYLawActivismArchive>.

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