

CIVIL RIGHTS & RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



CIVIL RIGHTS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROJECT

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW



YEAR END REPORT 2025

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A MESSAGE FROM CRRJ DIRECTOR MARGARET BURNHAM

Dear Friends of CRRJ,

In a year like none other, and perhaps like none we could have imagined, our Project -- recovering the legacies of racial terror in America and amplifying the voices of those who endure them -- took on special meaning. As ever more toxic rhetoric combined with ever more devastating government action to demonize immigrants and "others," marginalize poor people, vilify people of color and trans people, delegitimize dissent, and bury the rule of law, our work offered an opportunity to demonstrate how, in the formative and long-lasting Jim Crow era, authoritarianism served as the underpinnings of lethal racial oppression. In exposing how law, and legal institutions like the Supreme Court, both constructed and sustained Jim Crow authoritarianism, our work holds alarming portents for today as we are dragged into an abyss of unknown depth and length.

Our work also reprises the voices of the men and women who resisted the atrocities, often at great personal cost. Indeed, our work reanimates protests that, with lethal consequences, mostly fell on deaf ears. For example, Henry Andrews, a Black WW II veteran, was in 1947 killed by Warren County, North Carolina police as he sat, handcuffed, in the back of their cruiser. NAACP representatives traveled from North Carolina to Washington seeking DOJ intervention; they were rebuffed, and their well-publicized visit likely led to a second man's murder. In working with the Andrews family, we step in the shoes of those delegates to our Nation's capital and the hundreds in Warren County who protested these two murders. We perceive our work on a Georgia case in a similar vein. Elbert Tuttle would in 1960 become Chief Judge of the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, but in 1931 he fought vigorously, albeit unsuccessfully, to save from execution John Downer, an innocent Black man charged with rape. The Downer case is on the docket of our Wrongful Executions Project.

As we navigate these unprecedented times, CRRJ has broadened its programs of advocacy, education, and research to support our students as well as the communities we serve. As described in these pages, our extraordinary staff has built on our history as a pioneering institution at the forefront of legal education and public history. The foundation of our work is the Burnham Nobles Digital Archive. In partnership with our colleagues in the Snell Library, in July we released a second version of the database, adding hundreds of records and vastly improving the user experience. Also in July, we hosted a national convening of researchers and archivists in the field of historical racial violence. Attendees shared methods and



agreed to launch a research consortium to strengthen collaboration. Through our Wrongful Executions Project, we have worked closely with major law firms and with the Innocence Project to provide legal counsel to the descendants of Black men wrongfully executed during the Jim Crow era. Our Federal Reparations Project, which we launched in February in California and presented in September at the Annual Legislative Conference of the Congressional Black Caucus, addresses the need to provide relief to descendants of lynching and other forms of lethal historical racial violence. Under the banner of our Racial Redress Laboratory, we collaborated with colleagues across the University to produce a reparations study

for the City of Boston. Our robust educational offerings this year included three courses centering on racial justice issues along with academic talks and internship opportunities, and we supported our partner-CRRJ law clinics in Louisiana and Kentucky. We worked alongside local communities in North Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Georgia, drawing on their insights and expertise to design and produce impactful restorative justice projects. We supported a film project on behalf of a Mississippi family whose story we first investigated in 2014.

It gives me enormous pleasure to share this Year End Report highlighting our scholarship, teaching, and advocacy. We are proud to be a member of a growing network of activists and researchers who are, incident by incident, record by record, unearthing the history and enduring legacy of racist violence in the United States. In our corner of this growing community, we examine the relationship between law and white supremacist ideologies and seek to impel today's legal institutions to address history's pervasive racial harms. We do so even as civil rights laws are being reconfigured in service to white grievance and as the history of racial subordination is being condemned as heresy. Our work ramps up in the face of these absurd, and absurdly dangerous reframings.

We thank you for your support which sustained us this year and look forward to ongoing fruitful partnerships with you.

Cover images: (top, left to right) Records from the department of war, photo credit: Jay Driskell; participants at the "towards justice" conference in oakland, ca, feb. 2025, Photo credit: Louie Reyna. (Bottom, left to right) descendant of Phillip Hatley, with CRRJ research associate Lydia Beal visit Hatley's grave; Melissa Nobles and Margaret Burnham, co-founders of the Burnham-Nobles digital archive. Photo credit: Michael Mann. Inside cover: Professor Margaret Burnham, CRRJ director, civil rights and restorative justice project, northeastern law. Photo by Mark Ostow, 2023.

CIVIL RIGHTS & RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



About CRRJ

The Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project (CRRJ) at Northeastern University School of Law (NUSL) is a mission-driven program of interdisciplinary teaching, research, and policy analysis. We work at the crossroads of race, history, and criminal justice. CRRJ, established in 2007, is a founding project of the Center for Law, Equity, and Race (CLEAR), founded in November 2021 as a Center of Excellence at NUSL. CLEAR was created to strengthen and expand the work of CRRJ and to explore new ways to address the continuing challenges of racial injustice and social inequities.

Offering courses, fellowships, workshops and a digital archive, CRRJ is the preeminent academic center for the study of mid-twentieth century racial violence.

Our original investigations, transformative pedagogies, and top-level scholarship facilitate local and national initiatives to uncover an accurate history of racial terror and reconcile the ongoing damage. Our central research product is the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive (BNDA) a publicly accessible database of more than 1,000 cases of racial homicide in the Jim Crow South between 1930-1954.



(Above): Diagram, illustrating CRRJ's relationship with clear and the center's other central project.

Overview of 2025 Activities

This year, CRRJ offered a clinic and two courses, and provided experiential learning opportunities and internships to undergraduate and graduate students from across the country.

We increased the records in the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive and expanded our user community. We pursued several projects that made use of the records in our collection, including Wrongful Executions, Dignity for Disappeared Ancestors, and Federal Reparations. We led a research team for the City of Boston's Reparations Task Force. Our staff historian, Dr. Jay Driskell conducted significant research for CRRJ's Federal Reparations for Historical Homicidal Racial Violence Project. Launched at a conference at Northeastern University Mills College in February, this work addresses the federal reparations for the victims of lynching and other forms of historical racial violence. Driskell and the team, led by Margaret Burnham, Deborah Jackson and Raymond Wilkes, identified close to 530 incidents of lethal racial violence from all 50 states, spanning the years 1885-1965. These are incidents of homicidal racial violence in which the federal government failed to adequately investigate or prosecute. For more on the Federal Reparations for Historical Homicidal Racial Violence Project, please see page 9.

CRRJ announced the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive v2.0 during the summer of 2025. This expansion introduces 290 new victims and more than 5,000 new documents to the Archive, collected through CRRJ's investigative processes and student clinics. Version 2.0 also extends the Archive's geographic scope beyond the 11 former Confederate states and now features cases from 14 additional cities and states (see page 6 for more). Thank you to all the CRRJ and Northeastern Library staff, as well as the students who researched the cases, for your contributions to this groundbreaking project.

Documenting the History of Racial Violence

Archive Updates

In 2022, CRRJ launched the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive, marking the culmination of 15 years of research, investigation, and preservation. The Archive team processed 18,500 records collected by CRRJ investigators, with the aim to individually catalog 13,000 of those. Unable to complete that cataloging prior to release, they continued this work, processing records for the next Archive release, to include the most recent investigations.

This year, the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive team focused its efforts on outreach for the Archive and prepared for the future version of the project. It was showcased at a variety of conferences in 2025, including the Digital Commonwealth's 19th Annual Conference (see page 15).

The Archive team worked tirelessly to prepare for the Version 2.0 update of the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive. The updated version introduced 290 new victims to the database, along with their corresponding case files, which resulted in over 5,000 new records being made publicly available. Users can see additional source material for existing cases, including newly acquired War Department records, news article clippings, FBI and DOJ files, records from the NAACP, and more. Beyond adding new cases and source material, the Archival update expanded the

geographic scope of the Archive, adding cases of racial violence from Maryland, Delaware, Washington D.C., Missouri, West Virginia, Indiana, Kentucky, and Oklahoma to the original 11 formerly Confederate states.

Following the update, the Archive now holds over 17,490 documents linked to over 1,170 incidents of anti-Black killings. Of those records, all news articles, death certificates, advocacy group records, Federal Agency records, and portraits are fully cataloged.

The Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive also served as the basis of the Racial Violence Data Interoperability White Paper, which is available upon request. The White Paper project drew together researchers and archivists documenting historical racial violence in pursuit of a plan to interoperate collections and realize economies of scale. The paper describes how a national digital project might emerge, including how data dictionaries might be aligned, and it explores questions of governance, standardization, cost-sharing, security and ethical hosting.

By early 2026, users can also expect additional improvements to the BNDA site, including a "saved records" and "bulk download" feature.

Record Collection: Updates from Washington D.C.

Over the last year, CRRJ's staff historian, Jay Driskell, has prepared nearly 270 new cases for the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive (BNDA). Many of these cases were included in the most recent update of the Archive. In addition, the years of waiting for FOIA requests to be fulfilled have finally borne fruit, with several hundred formerly restricted files from the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation released for researchers. These files document federal investigations of instances of racial violence, both lethal and non-lethal. Their inclusion in the BNDA has profoundly enriched our holdings.

Additionally, despite the periodic closures and related staffing crises affecting federal archives during the first year of the Trump administration, Driskell continued his research into the newly available Part X of the NAACP Records housed at the Library of Congress. The richest part of this collection for CRRJ's purposes has been branch files, previously excluded from earlier releases of NAACP records. These include notes on branch investigations into instances of police brutality that are difficult to find elsewhere.

At the National Archives and Records Administration, the past year's research led Driskell to two large collections of records within the files of the Department of War and

Department of Defense. These include the Records of the Office of the Inspector General (Record Group 159) as well as the Records of the Adjutant General's Office (Record Group 407). Both contain extensive investigative files pertaining to various incidents of racial violence occurring on or near military bases, especially during WWII. Once processed, these will significantly expand our understanding between the tectonic social upheavals caused by wartime mobilization and the spike of racial violence that accompanied them.



2025 New Case Investigations

In 2025, CRRJ clinic students investigated roughly 30 cases from Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee, and New Orleans and Shreveport, Louisiana. Unlike previous clinics,

students' cases were selected from newly explored War Department Records, and not entirely on their geographic relevancy to CRRJ's existing canon.

2025 Case Docket

Other cases of historical racial violence investigated by the CRRJ Clinic in 2025:

Alabama

Will Harris: Feb 10, 1945, Birmingham, Jefferson County

Max Livingston: Apr 6, 1945, Birmingham, Jefferson County

Florida

Eugene Curl: Jan 6, 1945, Pensacola, Escambia County

Colwell White: Jul 1, 1945, Malone, Jackson County

Burnie Parker: Jul 28, 1945, Malone, Jackson County

Georgia

George Robertson (Robinson): Aug 20, 1944, Randolph County

Sarah Lightning Lowe: Aug 30, 1944, Atlanta, Fulton County

John Abner Walker: Sep 17, 1944, Oglethorpe, Macon County

Joseph Moore: Sep 22, 1945, Terminal Station, Atlanta, Fulton County

Maynard Vaughn: Oct 13, 1945, Atlanta, Fulton County

Robert Ligons: Oct 26, 1945, Columbus Stadium, Muscogee County

Steve Blanchard: Nov 25, 1945, Appling, Columbia County

William G. Bridges: Dec 11, 1945, Atlanta, Fulton County

Willie Fred Mitchell: Dec 21, 1945, Macon, Bibb County

Drayton Bailey: Aug 12, 1944, Laurel, Jones County

Benjamin Marshall: Dec 26, 1944, Port Gibson, Claiborne County

Joseph Robinson Jr.: Apr 5, 1945, Vicksburg, Warren County

North Carolina

Iris McGee: Oct 8, 1942, Laurinburg, Scotland County

John Southall: Jul 26, 1944, Elizabeth City, Pasquotank County

Curtis Anderson: Jul 29, 1944, Fayetteville, Cumberland County

Ira Mack: Aug 20, 1944, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County

George Pierce: Oct 22, 1944, Wilmington, New Hanover County

Joseph Wright: Oct 29, 1944, Cary, Wake County

Mose Allen Carpenter: Nov 25, 1944, Statesville, Iredell County

Jesse Autry: Feb 26, 1945, Mt. Olive, Wayne County

Roy Philip Brown: May 11, 1945, Acme, Columbus County

South Carolina

Edward Howard Jr.: Aug 23, 1944, Charleston, Charleston County

Sam McGill: Sep 10, 1944, Georgetown, Georgetown County

Socrates Guess: Sep 29, 1944, Bamberg County

Ernest Otis Franklin: Dec 31, 1944, Ehrhardt, Bamberg County

Henry Matthews: Jan 5, 1945, Florence County

Ronald Chisolm: May 16, 1945, Charleston, Charleston County

Leon Sims: Aug 24, 1945, Charleston, Charleston County

The Racial Redress and Reparations Laboratory

The Racial Redress and Reparations Lab of CRRJ provides research, education, and engagement that paves the way for successful projects of repair. Building on CRRJ's archival research, the Lab works from an academic base that is informed by experience in communities and relationships with descendants. The Lab's mission is to engage with policymakers, activists, and community stakeholders to develop and implement conceptual and programmatic restorative justice approaches to the history of racial violence and exclusion. We provide legal and policy research, convening spaces, educational programming, consultation, and on-the-ground assistance.

Case-Based Restorative Justice

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The Laboratory's work in 2025 has centered on local and national efforts to further the case for reparations and on posthumous exonerations. Along with the research our staff and students have conducted to aid the City of Boston's Reparations Task Force, the Lab worked with scholars, advocates and legislators to design a Federal Reparations Project, which seeks actionable frameworks for reparations and community repair.

Phillip Hatley

On June 21, 2025, following the leadership of the families and communities directly impacted by historical racial violence, CRRJ's Research Associate, Lydia Beal, and former CRRJ Clinic student Elena Kuran '25, travelled to Memphis, Georgia to participate in a citywide memorial honoring Black lives taken by the Memphis Police Department.

Beal and Kuran helped install 22 temporary monuments, each honoring a victim of police violence, at the Arts Center in Memphis. These included CRRJ cases like Phillip Hatley, a 43-year-old mill worker and WWI veteran, who was shot and killed by Memphis police officers in his own home in Shelby County, Tennessee, in 1939. Each monument was accompanied by archival materials curated by CRRJ, including protest letters and documentation from the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive.

Elena Kuran '25, a student from the 2024 spring clinic, conducted the comprehensive investigation into Hatley's

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killing, uncovering crucial details about the case that had remained obscured for decades.

Memorial attendees explored archival exhibits, and listened to several speakers, including descendants and family members of Tyre Nichols, Edward Garner, Brandon Webber, and Phillip Hatley. Their testimonies were interwoven with artistic performances, including poetry and spoken word. Throughout the event, CRRJ's contributions underscored the importance of pairing archival truth-telling with descendant-led public memory work.

"Our presence in Memphis reflected the power of pairing archival research with descendant engagement and community memory work," said Beal. "These collaborations surface radical truths about the legacy of Jim Crow policing. We remain committed to maintaining these relationships and grounding our work in lived experience and community needs."



Above: Descendants of Phillip Hatley, with CRRJ research associate Lydia Beal (second right) visit Hatley's grave.

Officers Elmer F. Broens and Roy G. McElroy ended their shift and were off duty when, after drinking together, they decided to go to Hatley's home to question him about a burglary. Hatley was cooking breakfast when they arrived, and the officers proceeded to drag Hatley outside, beat

him and put him inside their squad car. Hatley broke away and fled back into his house when Officer Broens followed and shot Hatley twice in the back, killing him instantly.

The two officers were promptly relieved from duty, arrested, and indicted on first degree murder charges. At the trial, numerous witnesses described how both men brutally beat Hatley. All witnesses testified that both officers were drunk.

Following this testimony, the judge directed a verdict of acquittal for McElroy, who had been across the street when Hatley was shot and could not have been directly involved. Officer Broens denied beating Hatley, denied being drunk, and claimed he shot Hatley in self-defense when Hatley made a motion as if to reach for a knife. Broens was acquitted.

The Strickland Family

On October 17, 1932, Denna Strickland and her daughter Estella were killed by law enforcement in their home in Coweta County, GA. County Bailiff Sam Thompson arrived at their residence without a warrant, forced his way inside, and opened fire on the family, killing Denna and Estella and gravely wounding Denna Strickland's son. The Atlanta Daily World recognized this violence as racial terror killings and community members from all over Central Georgia sought NAACP intervention. The national office pressed for prosecution but, given the culture of impunity, no charges were brought.

This year, after sustained research and close partnership with the Strickland family and Dakotah Kennedy -- a Northeastern University Media Advocacy graduate who participated in the Project in 2021 -- CRRJ secured approval from the Georgia Historical Society for a permanent historical marker commemorating the two women. Led by their descendants, the project interrupts decades of

public silence and affirms the family's long effort to secure public recognition of the violence they endured. It marks a rare acknowledgment of the gendered and domestic dimensions of Jim Crow racial terror and reflects the crucial support of the African American Alliance and Mount Calvary Baptist Church, whose involvement strengthened local engagement.

With a dedication planned for June 13, 2026, the marker will stand as a permanent site of remembrance in the metro Atlanta area and render persistent claims of ignorance to this violent history incontrovertible.

Hosea Carter

This summer, CRRJ released *Honoring Hosea*, a documentary film chronicling the life, murder, and legacy of Hosea "Shant" Carter, a Black World War II veteran lynched in 1948 in Marion County, Mississippi, for the perceived impropriety of speaking to a white woman.

Through intimate recollections by his son Jimmie Carter, the film incorporates historical and legal insights, while reconstructing Carter's life as a devoted father, skilled carpenter, and principled community member.

Weaving archival testimony, verité footage, and historical context, *Honoring Hosea* exposes the racism that fueled Carter's killing, the failure of local authorities to pursue justice, and the lasting trauma borne by his family.

Honoring Hosea was written and directed by documentary maker, Eric Gulliver. It was produced by CRRJ's Associate Researcher, Lydia Beal. It was premiered during CRRJ's summer conference, *Gathering the Red Record* (see page 12). Culminating an eleven-year collaboration with CRRJ, Jimmie Carter was present, and CRRJ was honored to have fulfilled his request that the story of his father be told and not remain obscured by history.

Reparations Research and Policy

City of Boston Reparations Task Force Report

On January 24, 2024, it was announced that a Northeastern University School of Law research team, led by CRRJ Director Margaret Burnham, would join the City of Boston's Task Force on Reparations in assessing the multi-generational impact of slavery on Black Bostonians.

The team's report will play a central role in guiding the city's reparations efforts.

"Our goal will be to highlight how power was exercised in the City of Boston to allocate resources, benefiting certain groups and burdening others," said Burnham who is co-leading the team with Dr. Deborah A. Jackson, managing director of the Center for Law, Equity and Race.

The research team conducted archival research into the legacies of slavery in the city as they affected public education, public services, housing, and economic development from 1940 to the present.

The team drew on the expertise and knowledge of Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Urban Affairs Ted Landsmark; Director of the John D. O'Bryant African American Institute Richard O'Bryant; community leader Donna Bivens; Professor Kabria Baumgarten, Dean's Associate Professor of History and Africana Studies at Northeastern; Allisa Lincoln, Professor of Public Health and Health Sciences at Northeastern's Bouvé College; Peter Enrich, Northeastern University Professor of Law Emeritus; and Zebulon Miletsky, a Boston native and Associate Professor of Africana Studies at Stony Brook University.

The Task Force, chaired by Joseph Feaster Jr. '75, was mandated by the City Council through a city ordinance at the end of 2022. The Task Force expects to make recommendations for reparative justice solutions in Boston in 2026.

Federal Reparations for Historical Homicidal Racial Violence Project

The Federal Reparations for Historical Homicidal Racial Violence Project seeks redress for the federal government's failure to act and fulfill its law enforcement responsibilities during the years 1885 – 1965, which resulted in homicidal racial violence.

The Project aims to craft and present to the federal government a program of individual or institutional reparations, paid in cash or in-kind, to address these harms.

While the federal government has apologized to lynching victims and ensured the release of historical records detailing incidents of racial violence, these acknowledgments fall short of fully repairing the harm to victims and their ancestors and, moreover, the victims of lynching represent but one category of cases. Reparations would

transform these official apologies from rhetoric into meaningful redress. The federal government has an established precedent of reparatory compensation for various harms to diverse segments of the population throughout U.S. history. As such, a federal reparations program addressing a particular harm to a certain class of victims would continue this precedent and institutional norm.

CRRJ launched this project in partnership with The Legacy Coalition, a descendant-led organization -- founded by a descendant of a lynching victim -- that advocates for reparative justice for families whose ancestors were victims of Jim Crow-era racial violence. The Project aims to engage descendants, advocacy organizations, and community members to build broad-based support for federal reparations, demonstrating that these victims and their descendants deserve governmental acknowledgment of harm, a formal apology, and a substantive reparations program.

Wrongful Executions Project

CRRJ continues to engage with external partners, including firms affiliated with the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance (LFAA) to seek redress for the wrongful executions of Black people denied their right to a fair trial, particularly during the Jim Crow era. CRRJ is designing a model for posthumous clemency to address these historical wrongs. This work will inform the current public reckoning with the grim history of racialized capital punishment.

In addition to working with LFAA firms, CRRJ has collaborated closely with The Innocence Project to pursue

posthumous exoneration for one Tommy Lee Walker, a nineteen-year-old Black youth who was charged by the state of Texas in 1956 for a crime he did not commit and ultimately, despite massive community protest, executed. Walker was prosecuted by the notorious Dallas prosecutor Henry Wade, of *Roe v. Wade* infamy, amid a rash of anti-Black furor in 1950s Dallas. On behalf of Walker's son, CRRJ is seeking relief from the current Dallas County District Attorney's Office.

The Dignity for Disappeared Ancestors (DDA) Project

Kris Manjapra, Stearns Trustee Professor of History and Global Studies, and Margaret Burnham direct the Dignity for Disappeared Ancestors Project. The DDA investigates a troubling phenomenon of the Jim Crow Era – the widespread practice of non-consensually disposing of the remains of executed persons by sending their bodies to scientific or medical institutions for experimentation, denying last rights and burial. This systemic practice directly affected the executed victims but also created a web of secondary victims – the next-of-kin and descendants deprived of what anthropologists identify as one of

the most basic human needs, the need to “walk ancestors home,” to lay them to rest with dignity.

Our project utilizes the methods of reparative historical and legal praxes to redress the harm done by the post-mortem disappearances of executed people into the state's “carceral-medical complex” during the Jim Crow century. We are creating a database and applying community-based reparative practices. Lydia Beal and Kehinde Illegbusi, PhD student, World History, are the lead researchers on the DDA.

Education

Courses and Clinics

Northeastern University School of Law CRRJ Clinic

The CRRJ Clinic, now in its fourteenth year, continues to work closely with communities in the U.S. that are engaging with historical injustices. Each spring, select Northeastern Law students track down records from government repositories; conduct interviews; and, where feasible, visit the region where the events took place. Applying tools and

insights from the fields of restorative justice and transitional justice, law students work closely with families and local communities to memorialize these past events.

In the 2025 spring term, the Civil Rights & Restorative Justice Clinic enrolled 12 students from the School of Law. The students investigated incidents of racially-motivated homicides that occurred domestically during World War

II and were initially investigated, at least to some degree, by the United States War Department. While the War Department was concerned primarily with the risk of any

protests or activism in response to the killings, CRRJ students took a deeper and broader view, adding valuable and insightful research to the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive.

Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Courses

In addition to the Clinic, CRRJ offers a variety of seminars and directed study opportunities to Northeastern students in law, journalism, criminology and Africana Studies.

These provide opportunities to study racialized violence and the application of the law, not just in its historical context, but in its present manifestations. Much of what students learn in CRRJ classrooms can be applied not only in legal settings but in public policy and advocacy work.

Race, Police Violence, and Law

This advanced seminar on race, policing, and the criminal justice system, for law students, upper-level undergrads, and graduate students, explores the phenomenon of police violence directed at racially marginalized communities in the US. It considers historical and contemporary opposition to racialized policing; and examines police violence as an instrument of state power. It examines community efforts to interrupt police violence and legal strategies to

reduce harms caused by racialized policing. In addition to race, students explore how gender, sexual orientation, and class impact policing practices. The Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive grounds the course work on the history of racialized policing and provides a foundation upon which to examine current police operations, practices and policies.

Civil Rights Law: In the Courtroom and the Community

This small-group directed study introduces students to the fundamentals of federal civil rights litigation as a remedy for police and jail misconduct. Students examine the dockets of litigated cases to sharpen practical skills in fact development and substantive legal knowledge in civil rights law. With the collaboration of instructors and non-lawyer community members, students develop a “know-your-rights” training module in Section 1983 police misconduct law and deliver the training to a local community group in the Boston area.

Co-ops, Interns and Volunteers

As in previous years, CRRJ welcomed several undergraduate, graduate, and law students for experiential learning opportunities, to support projects and expand our research. These dedicated students used their time to build critical legal skills through specialized projects and initiatives and received hands-on supervision and feedback while conducting high-quality legal and scholarly work.

This summer, Northeastern Law students Talia Lanckton '26, Sindhu Iyengar '27, and Maya Quirk '26 joined CRRJ, along with Molly Delahunty, a third year Philosophy and Women's Studies student at Vassar College. They spent several weeks developing individual case investigations, examining cases of racially motivated homicides during the Jim Crow period, and produced a collaborative group project. At the end of the summer, they presented their findings to CRRJ staff, students and associates. They discussed research topics that included: the continuing impact of Emmett Till's murder in 1955; rape

executions of Black men and early feminist anti-lynching activism; and the possibility of posthumous exoneration in the cases of John Goss – executed in 1932 – and Clyde Brown – executed in 1952 – both Black men convicted of sexually assaulting white women in North Carolina.

The Goss case was further investigated by Nyah Tewani '26 this fall. The third year Northeastern Law student presented her research into Goss' wrongful execution this fall, following the latest discovery of more than 600 newly discovered documents on the case. This crucial evidence, generously shared by The Mitchell County Historical Society, includes telegrams between North Carolina Governor Cameron Morrison and state officials, court records, photographs, and extensive newspaper coverage. The materials provide extraordinary documentation of how state and local officials orchestrated the conviction and execution of a Black man in the aftermath of extreme racial violence.



(Left to right): Molly Delahunty, Sindhu Iyengar, Maya Quirk, Talia Lanckton.

Visitors

Attorneys Flint Taylor and Brad Thomson, People's Law Office

On February 11, CRRJ hosted Attorneys Flint Taylor and Brad Thomson from the Chicago-based People's Law Office. They addressed students in both the CRRJ Clinic and CRRJ's Race, Police Violence, and Law class on civil rights litigation, particularly cases involving police violence, and shared their extensive experiences advocating for people who have been brutalized by police, including the victims of Commander Jon Burge who ran a torture operation from the 1970s-1990s.

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley Kickstarts H.R. 40 Campaign

On March 19, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley met with CRRJ staff and faculty, as her office picked up the mantle for federal reparations projects, including H.R. 40, the bill that would establish a Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, and reparations initiatives more broadly. Her visit to CRRJ was the first stop as she spent the following weeks meeting with community members, advocacy groups, and entities like CRRJ engaged in reparations advocacy.

Lauren Hawkes Returns to Deliver Master's Thesis

On October 7, Lauren Hawkes, CRRJ's former Program Manager, returned to Boston to meet with her former colleagues and present her master's thesis. After leaving CRRJ, Hawkes studied at the University of Amsterdam in the Genocide Studies program. Titled *The Afterlives of Lethal Racial Violence: African American Women who Stood on the Frontlines of the U.S. Jim Crow South*, Hawkes' project was in part based on cases of lethal racial violence documented in the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive.

(Left to right) Professor Rose Zoltek-Jick, associate director, CRRJ; Vickie Rothbaum, CRRJ editor; Charlotte Mathews-Nelson, former CRRJ program coordinator; Nyah Tewani '26; Lauren Hawkes; Professor Margaret Burnham, director, CRRJ; Alex Stein, staff attorney, CRRJ; Raymond Wilkes, senior attorney, CRRJ; Professor Melvin Kelley, north-eastern law; Meg Gould, Elizabeth Zitrin justice fellow, CRRJ.



(Left to right) Jennifer True, program manager, CRRJ; Dr. Deborah Jackson, managing director, CRRJ; Chris Thomas, student researcher; Alex Stein, staff attorney, CRRJ; Professor Rose Zoltek-Jick, associate director, CRRJ; Evan Lewis, founder, the legacy coalition; congresswoman Ayanna Pressley; Professor Margaret Burnham, director, CRRJ; and Taylor McDowell, student researcher. Photo courtesy of Avery Manousos

Read more:



Educational Partnerships

Caroline K-12 Archive in Action Essay Contest

The Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive in Action: North Carolina Initiative, was launched in 2024 by Education consultant Sara Merlo, in partnership with Caroling K-12, a program which extends UNC Chapel Hill's resources to North Carolina's K-12 educators. In 2025, CRRJ launched its first essay contest and invited all 9-12th graders in North Carolina to apply. The students' original writing had

to be historically defensible and establish a line of reasoning supported by at least four cited primary sources. Prizes amounted to \$1,500.

There were dozens of applicants, and first prize went to an 11th grader at Grimsley High School, in Guilford County. Second prize was awarded to an 11th grader at Roanoke Rapids High School in Halifax County, and honorable mentions were given to two 12th and 10th grade students.

Educational Partnerships

Gathering the Red Record

In July 2025, the Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project launched Version 2.0 of the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive, and welcomed archivists, historians and legal scholars from across the country for a two-day conference titled Gathering the Red Record: Linking Racial Violence Archives. The gathering addressed the need for a comprehensive national database of historical racial violence and announced the public release of the latest Archive updates. Patricia Williams, University Distinguished

Professor of Law and Humanities, gave the keynote address, titled Giving Voice to Silence: The Archiving of Memory. "The BNDA represents both years of committed research by CRRJ and the efforts of Northeastern Library staff to take this research and make it readily accessible to the public," said Joy Zanghi, CRRJ's Project Archivist, during the unveiling of Version 2.0 before about 150 attendees. Zanghi has overseen updates over the last two years and served as the liaison between CRRJ investigators and staff from Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections, Digital Production Services, and the Digital Scholarship Group.

BNDA v2.0 Fact Sheet



275

Number of new incidents



435

Number of new perpetrators



14

New states and major cities added



5,000

Number of new documents

- Maryland
- Washington DC
- Delaware
- Indiana
- Kentucky
- Missouri
- West Virginia
- Oklahoma
- Cities include:
 - Baltimore
 - Washington D.C
 - Wilmington
 - Delaware
 - St. Louis
 - Kansas City
 - Missouri
- 8,440 news articles catalogued
 - Featuring a new display title format to ease research
- 2,320 Advocacy Group resources catalogued
 - Files from NAACP, CRC, ASWPL
- 853 Federal Agency Records catalogued
 - Includes DOJ and FBI reports that have not been made publicly available before now

(Above) Snapshot of the latest updates to the BNDA.



(Above) Invitees traveled from across the county to attend the relaunch and discuss interoperability between the BNDA and their own respective archival projects.



(Left to right) Raymond Wilkes, Linda Mann, John Giggie, Ada Goodly-Lampkin. Photo credit: Catherine McGloin

(Right) Isabella Garrison (center) Nikki Brown (center right) John Giggie. Photo credit: Michael Mann.





(Left to right) Meg Gould, Raymond Wilkes, Ada Goodly-Lampkin. Photo credit: Catherine McGloin.



(Left to right): Rhonda Jones, Rose Zoltek-Jick. Photo credit: Michael Mann.

CRRJ Federal Reparations Project Launched at NU Mills Conference

A pivotal event in the national dialogue on reparative justice took place at Mills College at Northeastern University, February 27-28, 2025. Towards Justice: Addressing Racial Violence, Advancing Legal Clarity, and Restoring Community, was a two-day convening that brought national leaders in the reparations movement to provide attendees with the tools and insights necessary to drive real, lasting change in their communities.

Initiated by CRRJ's Reparations Lab, and thereafter implemented by CRRJ and Northeastern's Center for Law, Equity and Race, the federal reparations project aims to explore how the federal government can address harms associated with racial violence that are, in part, attributable to its failure to fulfill its law enforcement responsibilities in the years from 1885 to 1965.

"The lingering, multidimensional traces of historical racial violence have impeded our Nation's efforts to overcome past

Read more:



racial subordination and conflict," said Professor Burnham, CRRJ Director. "This initiative provides us with a meaningful opportunity to re-examine and redress these atrocities."

Speakers included Burnham, University of San Diego Professor Roy Brooks, the author *Atonement and Forgiveness: A New Model for Black Reparations* and many other books on the topic, and Stanford University Professor Lerone Martin, director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University.

Descendants of victims of racial violence, whose cases are chronicled in the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive, also spoke at the event, sharing their family histories and shedding light on the enduring legacy of historical racial violence.

Left to right, front: Erika Weissinger, Adjoa Aiyetoro, Nkechi Taifa, Margaret Burnham and Deborah Jackson. Back: Jay Driskell, Daryle Hatley, Delbert Jackson, Alex Stein, Jennifer True, Lerone Martin, Cynthia Mitchell, Lydia Beal, Evan Lewis, Shivangi Basu, and Ashley Adams. Photo credit: Louie Reyna.





Left to right: Lerone Martin, Margaret Burnham, Roy Brooks. Photo credit: Louie Reyna.

Read the program:



Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive Presented at Digital Commonwealth's Annual Conference

On April 29, 2025, Lydia Beal, CRRJ's Research Associate, and Joy Zanghi, CRRJ's Project Archivist, presented the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive (BND) at Digital Commonwealth's 19th Annual Conference.

Their presentation spoke to the title of this year's conference, *Ethics and Access: Treating Users and Collections with Care*. Beal and Zanghi identified how Northeastern University archivists intentionally developed policies during the creation of the BND that upheld the humanity of the victims within the Archive and were informed by key tenets of restorative justice. They discussed the implementation of the Archive's unique hierarchy for sourcing project metadata; a system designed to center victims' stories and help present cases as more than data points. Zanghi explained how BND archivists are trained to prioritize family member accounts, drawing details from these, before examining posthumously created sources, such as the death certificates and newspaper articles.

CRRJ Visit Black Caucus in Washington D.C.

On September 26, Dr. Deborah Jackson, Margaret Burnham, and Raymond Wilkes met with Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley and her team at the legislative conference of the Congressional Black Caucus in Washington DC. At the event, Burnham and colleagues presented CRRJ's Federal Reparations Project.



(Left to right): Raymond Wilkes, Deborah Jackson, rep. Ayanna Pressley, Margaret Burnham.

CRRJ Director Gives Keynote at Inaugural Legacies of Lynching Gathering

March 1, 2025, Professor Burnham gave the keynote address at Legacies of Lynching: An Inaugural Gathering. The day-long convening was organized by the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Center for the Study of the American South and Southern Futures in conjunction with the North Carolina Community Remembrance Coalitions.

Also present at the event were relatives of Henry Andrews, including nephew James Andrews, James' daughter LaTonya Andrews-Hunter and son-in-law Demetrius Hunter. A farmer and WWII veteran, Henry Andrews was killed in 1947 by North Carolina's Warren County Police Chief. The chief alleged that while transporting a handcuffed Andrews to jail he attacked him, leading the chief to fatally shoot Andrews. CRRJ has worked alongside the Andrews family since 2022, when CRRJ attorney Katie Sandson and clinic student Julian Montijo '22 traveled to Warren County, NC to investigate the case and confer with the relatives.

Sara Merlo, CRRJ's former Education Consultant, and North Carolina-resident, also participated in the convening

at UNC. She shared information on the high school curriculum she designed to teach students about nine racially motivated, Jim Crow era killings in North Carolina, using primary sources and information housed in the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive.



(Left to right): Sara Merlo, Demetrius Hunter, Latonya Andrews, and James Andrews, and Margaret Burnham.

Civil Rights Law: In the Courtroom and the Community

In December 2025, eight students in the "Civil Rights Law: In the Courtroom and the Community" directed study, facilitated by CRRJ Staff Attorney Alex Stein and CRRJ Zitrin Fellow Meg Gould developed and presented a Know-Your-Rights training on civil rights lawsuits in the wake of police

misconduct to PowerCorps, a Boston-based workforce development program. The students had previously spent time with PowerCorps members and tailored the training to the audience's specific needs, based on material from the directed study.



(Above): Members of powercorps with CRRJ students and teachers Meg Gould (bottom, right) and Alex Stein (top, fourth from right).

CRRJ Supports Series Lawyering in a Time of Authoritarian Threat

This fall, CRRJ supported a four-part series of critical conversations examining how legal advocates have historically responded to threats against democratic institutions and the rule of law, and what lawyers are doing today to defend vulnerable communities and legal norms. Professor Rachel Rosenbloom spearheaded the series.

Launched on September 29 with Resisting the Intersecting Attacks on Immigrants and on Pro-Palestine Speech, featuring attorney Mahsa Khanbabai in conversation with



(Left to right): Margaret Burnham in conversation with Rahsaan Hall

Professor Rosenbloom, each open classroom session featured a prominent practitioner.

On October 20, the conversation turned to Resisting the Attack on Civil Rights and Racial Justice, with CRRJ Director Margaret Burnham in conversation with Rahsaan Hall '98 and CEO of the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts. They discussed, among other topics, how to protect civil rights gains and advance racial equity amid coordinated opposition.

Burnham also led a seminar session in this series, alongside the historian Nan Woodruff of Penn State University, on Jim Crow-era lawyering strategies, discussing how the legal community fought authoritarianism during the Jim Crow era.

Reaching the Public

Newsletter Growth

This year, CRRJ's newsletter has continued to grow, reaching more than 2,200 subscribers from across the globe. The quarterly newsletter features news and case updates, staff announcements, as well as information on past and upcoming events.

Stay informed on CRRJ's latest projects by subscribing here:



In the Media

New Season of Civil Wrongs Podcast Centers on Tennessee Killing Investigated by CRRJ

NPR's Civil Wrongs podcast released its sixth season on Monday, October 13, diving deep into the 1939 case of Phillip Hatley, a World War I veteran killed by Memphis police officers in his own home. The case was first investigated by student researchers at CRRJ in the 2024 Spring Clinic. Elena Kuran '25 conducted a comprehensive investigation into Hatley's killing, uncovering crucial details about the case that had remained obscured for decades and which were featured in the podcast.

A project of the Institute for Public Service Reporting in collaboration with WKNO-FM, Civil Wrongs examines the

present-day effects of historical cases of racial terror in Memphis and the Mid-South, bringing long-buried stories of injustice to light and exploring their lasting impact on communities today.

Other Highlights:

August 23, 2025: BBC Mention Margaret Burnham on Release of Emmett Till Records

November 1, 2025: Tennessee Tribune Cite CRRJ Clinic Student in 1939 Case of Phillip Hatley

November 6, 2025: USA Today Cite CRRJ Research Into Killing of Elbert Williams, Tennessee, 1940

People at CRRJ

Comings and Goings

Raymond Wilkes, CRRJ Senior Staff Attorney

In June, Raymond Wilkes joined CRRJ. A former Clinic student at Southern University Law Center, Wilkes joins the team as senior staff attorney and leader of CRRJ's Racial Redress and Reparations Lab. He spearheads the Federal Reparations Project and teaches. Wilkes served as a CRRJ Fellow in January 2020, a role in which he brought order and organization to CRRJ's investigative procedures and practices, introducing the processes that would form the building block for the Burnham-Nobles Digital Archive. Having obtained an LLM from NYU Law in May 2023, he took a position as research fellow at the Harvard Slavery Remembrance Project, before returning to CRRJ this summer.



Meg Gould, Elizabeth Zitrin Justice Fellow

Meg Gould, a Columbia Law graduate from Memphis, Tennessee, joined CRRJ this summer as an Elizabeth Zitrin Justice Fellow. During her two-year tenure, Gould will teach and lead CRRJ's Wrongful Executions Project. Gould's career has focused largely on police misconduct as well as abolition of capital punishment domestically and internationally. It was through her work with The Death Penalty Project that Gould heard of Elizabeth Zitrin '79 -- former president of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, vice chair of Witness to Innocence, and Director of the Zitrin Foundation of San Francisco, which supports this fellowship.



Awards and Commendations

CRRJ Director Honored by The C.T. Vivian Foundation

In April, Margaret Burnham was honored by The C.T. Vivian Foundation, during its 4th annual Kaleidoscope Awards for Literary Excellence, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Burnham's book, *By Hands Now Known: Jim Crow's Legal Executioners* (Norton, 2022) was recognized at the ceremony as having "made exceptional contributions to the African American experience." Other honorees included Dr. Jelani Cobb, author and Dean of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism; and Patrick Phillips, poet and Professor of English at Stanford University.



(Left to right): Jelani Cobb, Margaret Burnham, Bernard Lafayette, Patrick Phillips

Former Students Featured

In 2025, CRRJ interviewed several former students, speaking with them about their time working with the Project and the impact it had on them personally and professionally. From ten to two years out, the common consensus was that CRRJ's clinic not only taught them critical legal and research skills, but lessons that stayed with them, changing their perspective on U.S. history.

Read more about the work of former students here:



"I was so lucky and privileged to have this experience at the beginning of my legal career before my legal career even started. I couldn't have ever gotten the practical experience and true understanding of what it really means to be a dedicated civil rights attorney without it."

TAYO BELLE '10

The Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project Network, 2025

CRRJ: Margaret Burnham, Director. Rose Zoltek-Jick, Associate Director. Joy Zanghi, Project Archivist. Jay Driskell, Lead Historian. Alex Stein, Program Director and Staff Attorney. Raymond Wilkes, Senior Staff Attorney. Meg Gould, Elizabeth Zitrin Justice Fellow (2025-26). Jennifer True, Program Manager. Lydia Beal, Research Associate. Catherine McGloin, Communications Specialist. Vickie Rothbaum and Ann Baum, Editors. Michael Meltsner, Hon. Geraldine Hines (ret.) Senior Advisors.

Center for Law, Equity and Race: Margaret Burnham, Faculty Director. Deborah Ramirez, Faculty Director.

Affiliates: Michael Beaudet, Patricia Davis, Northeastern University College of Arts, Media, and Design. Kris Manjapra, Northeastern University College of Social Sciences & Humanities. Drew Facklam, Julia Flanders, Candace Hazlett, Giordana Mecagni, Gina Nortonsmith, Joy Zanghi, Joel Lee, Sarah Sweeney, Northeastern

University Snell Library. John Pierre, Ada Goodly Lampkin, Southern University Law Center. D'lorah Hughes, Austin Zinkle, Rosenberg College of Law, University of Kentucky.

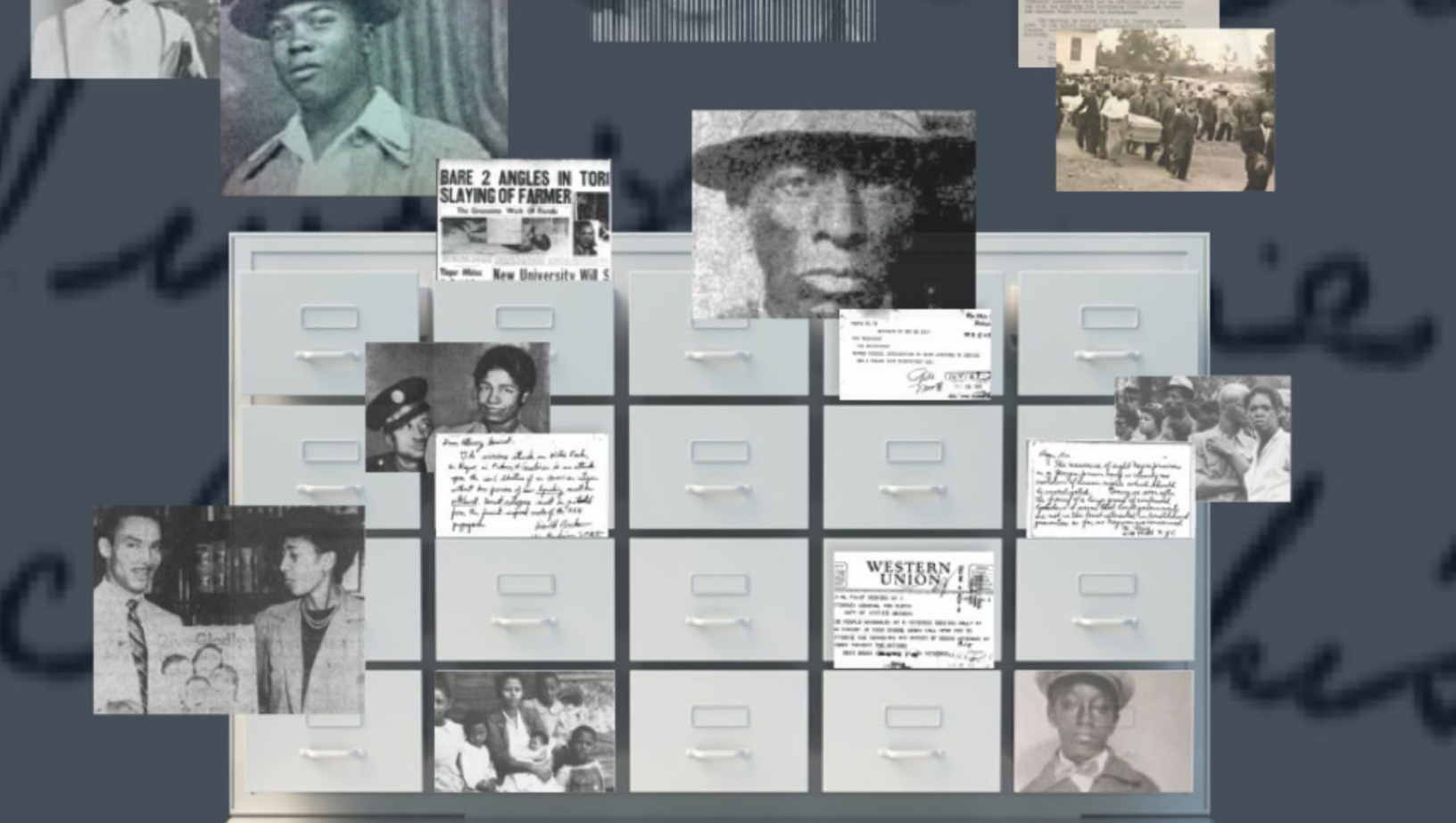
Advisors: Ifetayo Belle, Janeen Blake, Tasmin Din, Tara Dunn, Bayliss Fiddiman, Melvin Kelley, Mary Nguyen, Melissa Nobles, Rashida Richardson, Kaylie Simon.

Student Researchers (2025): Sindhu Ayengar, Molly Delahunty, Avery Emison, Nicholas Hill, Anna Kennedy, Talia Lanckton, Savannah Lavigne, Elena Leeds, Taylor McDowell, Kaelin Mealey, Maya Quirk, Nyah Tewani and Chris Thomas.

Support CRRJ

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We are grateful for the support of many alumni of the Law School and the Program, and many other individual donors.



The burnham-nobles digital archive <https://CRRJarchive.Org>

We rely on donors like you to continue our work. Donations are used for field research and reparative projects. With your help, we can continue training tomorrow's civil rights lawyers, filling in the gaps in US history, and informing our national dialogue on racial redress and criminal justice.

Visit <https://give.northeastern.edu/boston/GF1981-26.html> or scan this QR code to donate to the Civil Rights & Restorative Justice Project:



Or send us a check made out to Northeastern University, with CRRJ in the memo, at the address below:

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