

## A Second Chance, A New Future

By John Donohue, Esq., Volunteer Attorney

At the beginning of the year, while volunteering, with CLCP at Chosen 300, I was visited by a woman named Janice, who also happens to volunteer at Chosen 300. Janice was encouraged to meet with me by her brother, who coincidentally works in the building where my law firm is located.

During our consultation, Janice told me that 48 years ago she was arrested and charged with *resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace*. As often happens in cases like these, Janice pled guilty to one of the charges—disorderly conduct—so that the other charges would be dropped. Some time later, she then got a job with Philadelphia’s Board of Education as a cafeteria worker and worked there for 35 years. She retired, but soon got bored at home, and decided to go back to work part time at the Board of Education,

through a temporary services agency. She was allowed to begin



From left to right: Pastor Brian, John Donohue, and Janice

her new job, but when the 48 year old arrest record showed up, she was suspended without pay and told she could not come back until the matter was resolved.

So, I wrote up a summary of the case and recommended her for expungement and sealing under the Clean Slate Act. Because she had been suspended and immediately lost her pay, I also took the step of writing her employer and urged

them to reconsider the suspension because, if the arrest had occurred well before she began her original employment with the Board of Education, there was even less merit in it being an obstacle now. I then asked for a meeting with the Board. Within the same day of receiving the letter, Janice received a call from the Board of Education, letting her know that her prior conviction was not a problem, and she could return to work.

Janice immediately called me and told me that she had been reinstated. She said, “Good News, I’ve been cleared. Thank you, John, I feel great.” She returned to work in April 2019. Not everything has a happy ending, but this story certainly does. We continue to push for an expungement of the arrest and a sealing of the disorderly conduct conviction. Doing so will only help Janice in the future.

***CLCP’s mission is to do justice with the love of God by advocating for those in need in the Philadelphia area***

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# Fatherlessness and the Hope of Reconciliation

By Chuntae Smith, CLCP Volunteer

“Family Law can be one of the saddest areas of law because it is a fight between people that love or once loved one another.” This is the reality for many of the families that come through the doors at CLCP—life’s most critical and intimate unit, torn apart, often irreparably so. Children are especially vulnerable, and the aftershocks of a broken family have the potential to reverberate far into a child’s future. In fact, a broken home and missing parent (mother or father) has the potential to create complexities for young children.

One trend that CLCP regularly encounters is families and homes with absent fathers. The epidemic of fatherlessness in our communities can stunt the growth and development of children in myriad

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ways. This is not to underestimate the role a mother plays in the home, and the enormous vacuum that would be created should a home have an absent mother (An important perspective that is often

lost in the national conversation around fatherless homes is the immense fortitude and resilience that so many mothers show in compensating for a child’s missing father.) But the occurrence of fatherlessness in our communities is more prevalent, and thus CLCP’s reality is that many of our clients are a part of homes operating without a present father figure. We recently met Juan, who is deeply enmeshed in this very reality. Juan is a father who recently found his back against the wall in a custody trial. While at a group meeting at his home church, a fellow brother in Christ told Juan about Christian Legal Clinics of Philadelphia. Desperate to see his son more often, Juan called CLCP and set up an appointment. After his consultation, Juan left quite an impression on our volunteer attorneys. CLCP decided to stand behind this despairing father, and so Juan returned to court with Pete Hileman as his legal counsel. With Pete’s assistance, Juan secured a terrific order from the Judge, who stated that the “father is reasonable, has demonstrated good judgment, and now has established a proven track record as a parent.” Juan was granted a second chance.

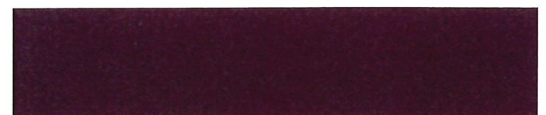
We want to continue our fight for families because we believe God is in the business of mending the torn and repairing the broken. We know that He can do exceedingly abundantly more than we can think or ask according to the power of God that works in us (Eph. 3:20-21). Therefore, we go forward in confidence that focusing on the family is an essential part of the CLCP mission. We stand on our enduring belief that God uses people just like us to serve our brothers and sisters in times of hurt and disappointment, and our heart

is to sow love and healing into broken communities and families by offering excellent legal services. It is through these services that we answer God’s yearning to see all his creation reconciled to each other,



and ultimately to Him.

Today, Juan is determined to be present for his son—to teach him how to be a father that lives to honor God. To this end, CLCP will continue to work with Juan. Nadege Tandoh will pick up his case from here and will work with him to obtain shared custody of his son. Our Heavenly Father is in the business of bringing his sons and daughters home, and we at CLCP believe He has invited us to partner with Him in this mission.





# Volunteer Spotlight: Captain Walls

By Xander Bernhardt, Development Coordinator

"I enjoy hearing people talk and asking 'Lord how can I help them? How can I lighten their load?' This is the quintessential Captain Walls question—the mantra that inspires her life-giving work. A long-time friend of CLCP, Captain Walls has been an integral part of our West Philly and North Philly Clinics for well over a decade. I first met her when she

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greeted me at the doors of our North Philly clinic. I'm confident that all who get to experience her wonderful welcome are as taken with her as I am. To be in the presence of Captain Walls is to rub shoulders with the animating spirit of Jesus that overflows with joy. Captain Walls began preparing for her role at the Salvation Army and

consequently, CLCP, long before she was even aware of God's purposes. As a young social worker, she committed to helping the hurting. Her work often saw her working with broken families—helping children leave abusive situations or bringing kids back home when the time was right. Decades later, God called her to serve at the Salvation Army. She was drawn to the mission of meeting human need indiscriminately, motivated by the gospel of Jesus. During her many years of service at the West Philly Salvation Army, Captain Walls met CLCP's Dennis Abrams. She remembers vividly hearing the CLCP attorneys' conversations about their clients, "Hearing how a faith-based organization can help someone—not just their legal issues but can also give them spiritual encouragement" immediately compelled her to get involved with CLCP. She faithfully assisted the CLCP team in West Philly for over 10 years, working with our volunteer attorneys to schedule, greet



Captain Walls (left), with two CLCP volunteers

and pray with clients. As God's omniscient plan would have it, Captain Walls' story with CLCP had another chapter in store. Last year, when CLCP needed a Salvation Army representative in our North Philly Clinic, Captain Walls answered the call. In God's perfect timing, Captain Walls transitioned into the new clinic seamlessly—ensuring that CLCP's clients continued to receive a warm embrace and bright smile when they walked in the door. We are immensely grateful to God for bringing Captain Walls into our family, and thank Him for his unfailing provision.

## Justice and Mercy

By Jaimee L. Hatcher Esq., LL.M., Executive Director

**W**hen I joined CLCP as the Interim Legal Director in April 2014, I said that I was "most excited about being a conduit of justice." Five years later, I am most excited about being a conduit of God's love, through providing godly justice and mercy. Our clients rarely have clean and easy stories. Their lives are complicated. They don't fit well in any category except for the one we all fall into "we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." They come to us with the brokenness of their lives and the complexities of their legal matters. My heart's desire is that each client is properly served with legal assistance and loved with the love of God at each of our clinics. In the

lobby of the building where our main office is located is a mural of



"The Harvest." This mural shows the harvest in an urban city at the intersection of two streets. These two streets are Justice and Mercy. That's where you will find CLCP. Seeking Justice and Loving Mercy.

That's what I love about who we are and what we do. Over the last five years I've seen the reach of this ministry grow to nearly 1000 clients annually. I've seen the number of volunteers increase to over 100. I've been blessed to pray with clients who have never experienced the loving touch of prayer before. I've also been blessed to advocate for clients who have never experienced God's love for justice before. As my time as Executive Director continues to take shape, I look forward to leading a team of staff and volunteers who desire to walk humbly with God while being conduits of His justice and mercy in the city of Philadelphia.