



# Time Well Spent

2023 PRO BONO REPORT

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



“  
**OUR FIRM DEVOTES  
 RESOURCES AS  
 WELL AS ATTORNEY  
 AND STAFF TIME TO  
 PRO BONO LEGAL  
 ASSISTANCE BECAUSE  
 WE VIEW IT AS  
 TIME WELL SPENT.**  
 ”

Hulu's 2022 award-winning drama *The Bear* follows Carmen Berzatto, a young James Beard Award-winning chef who takes over his family's sandwich shop after his brother Michael's sudden death. In the 2023 second season, Carmen transforms the failing shop into a fine dining restaurant, while the season also explores the personal growth of the shop's various employees.

In the episode "Forks," Richie Jerimovich, Michael's rudderless, acerbic best friend, is forced to "stage," or intern, at a prestigious Michelin three-star restaurant, polishing hundreds of forks until they gleam with no water spots or streaks. Day after day, as Richie is forced to reshine forks, his attitude transforms as he learns to appreciate the importance of each employee's role in creating an exquisite dining experience.

On the last day, Richie meets the executive chef while she personally is peeling several pounds of mushrooms, one by one. When Richie ponders why the chef would debase herself to such a simple task, she reasons she does it out of respect. Explaining that it shows diners someone spent time on them and their dish, she says, "It feels attached. I think time doing this is time well spent."

In much the same way, we view pro bono service as "time well spent." Sure, it is morally right to provide free legal services that help bridge the justice gap and grow our communities—not to mention the American Bar Association's ethical instruction that "every lawyer, regardless of professional prominence or professional workload, has a responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay": ABA Model Rule 6.1. Beyond this, our firm devotes resources as well as attorney and staff time to pro bono legal assistance because we view it as time well spent.

Time well spent modeling respect for our fellow neighbors by giving our time and talent to help them with their asylum application, protection from abuse case, nonprofit merger, trademark application, employee handbook, veteran discharge upgrade or the myriad of other matters we undertake.

Time well spent mentoring and training young associates through pro bono matters that afford on-the-ground, stand-up training opportunities without the mantle of the billable hour.

Time well spent advocating for systems reform and access to justice before our legislatures and courts through access to justice commissions, bar committees, boards of directors and other charities in our communities.

Pro bono service roots and grounds us in our communities; through it, we help create access to justice for those in our communities who could not otherwise access a lawyer. It is time well spent.

This report provides a snapshot into the firm's pro bono activities in 2023. We hope you enjoy your time learning about our pro bono service this year, and we hope you will consider joining us in giving back to our communities in 2024.

**MATTHEW A. TAYLOR**  
 Chairman and CEO

# ACCESS TO JUSTICE: PRO BONO BY THE NUMBERS

**403,000+**

PRO BONO HOURS  
DONATED since 2006

**32,000+**

HOURS DONATED TO  
PRO BONO SERVICE  
firmwide during the  
past year

**10,500+**

HOURS REPRESENTING  
OVER 400 NONPROFITS AND  
MICROENTREPRENEURS/  
INVENTORS in corporate  
governance, tax, intellectual  
property and other  
transactional matters

**6,000+**

HOURS REPRESENTING  
OVER 250 IMMIGRANTS  
AND FAMILIES seeking  
safety and lawful status in  
the United States

**5,800+**

HOURS REPRESENTING  
OVER 100 INDIVIDUALS  
with criminal convictions  
seeking to prove their  
innocence, petition for  
pardon, expungement of  
low-level criminal records  
or in other prisoner civil  
rights matters

**1,200+**

HOURS REPRESENTING  
VETERANS applying for  
service-related disability  
benefits, military discharge  
upgrades, end-of-life planning  
and other civil matters

# DUANE MORRIS PRO BONO ACCOLADES

## 2023 DUANE MORRIS PRO BONO LEADERSHIP AWARD

*The Duane Morris Pro Bono Leadership Award is given to an attorney who exemplifies the spirit of pro bono: a selfless, longstanding and unwavering commitment to pro bono service; a leader by example who accepts pro bono matters without fanfare; and a pro bono contributor who encourages and mentors other firm attorneys in pro bono service.*



**Sheila Raftery Wiggins** (Newark, New York, Trial) was honored for decades of leadership and personal pro bono efforts to help bridge the justice gap.

**The World Justice Project ranks the U.S. 115th out of 140 countries on accessibility and affordability of civil justice.**

Among the 43 wealthiest countries, the United States is ranked last. In 1970, only 2 percent of cases did not have a lawyer, yet as of 2022, 76 percent of cases only had one or zero lawyers. Annually, 1,000 cases are filed *pro se* before the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, yet only 10 percent are appointed counsel.

**Only 51% of requests for legal assistance are accepted due to limited resources, and of these requests, only 56% of legal problems get fully resolved.**

Against this backdrop, Sheila was celebrated for her efforts to bridge this gap, including averaging nearly 100 pro bono hours annually since 2006. Sheila is a stalwart leader on the firmwide Pro Bono Committee, and she is the key to the firm's successful pro bono efforts in the Newark office, which has achieved 100 percent attorney pro bono participation annually since 2016.

Substantively, in 2022, Sheila led Duane Morris' efforts in planning and staffing the East Orange Cannabis Expungement Clinic. Sheila worked with the mayor's office, local entrepreneurs and other pro bono attorneys to plan and lead the clinic. Duane Morris handled over a dozen of these cases, with Sheila acting as the supervising partner on many of them. Over the years, Sheila also has supervised numerous associates litigating Section 1983 prisoner civil rights claims under the United States Constitution. The cases, brought before the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, usually concern a local prison's failure to provide adequate, timely medical care to inmates who have suffered various, serious harms at the hands of prison officials.

## 2023 DUANE MORRIS PRO BONO AWARD

*The Duane Morris Pro Bono Award honors the outstanding service of any attorney or group that exemplifies Duane Morris' commitment to pro bono service and has made a significant impact on an individual or community. For the second time in the award's history, Duane Morris celebrated two winners in 2023.*

The United Nations Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction prevents a parent from wrongfully removing or retaining their child from the child's country of origin or habitual residence to avoid the other parent or a custody dispute. Usually, Hague Convention cases turn on jurisdictional elements as Article 16 of the convention mandates courts only should determine the jurisdictional elements of the case; the merits should be determined by an adjudicatory body in the home country absent exigent circumstances. Of note, there is no right to counsel in the United States for the parent in the left-behind country seeking to enforce their custody rights under the Hague Convention. So, lower-income and under-resourced parents often have difficulty maintaining a right of action in the United States absent pro bono counsel.



Duane Morris associates **Alexandra Jones** and **Daniel Wall** (San Francisco, Trial) were celebrated for their efforts representing Ricardo, a Peruvian father seeking the return of his daughter after her mother took her under the false pretense of a two-week vacation to the United States and then disappeared. Working with the United States Department of State, Alexandra and Daniel—under the supervision of **George Niespolo** (San Francisco, Trial) and **Karen Lehmann Alexander** (San Diego, Los Angeles, Trial)—sued the mother in federal district court seeking the return of the daughter pursuant to the Hague Convention.

Despite determinative jurisdictional questions, the judge also looked to the merits of the case and displayed bias favoring the mother who raised unfounded domestic violence allegations. Alexandra and Daniel prepared for a full custody trial in federal court several times along the way, including arguing several dispositive motions, but trial was allusive as the mother's own mental instability and erratic behavior further complicated the case.



*"Thank you for all the support and believing in me. Apart from how grateful I am for you, I couldn't imagine that I would be enjoying time with my daughter now. It was something I had lost hope about. My life is beautiful with her. I feel that many times you encouraged me to move forward especially when it seemed complicated. Every time I see my daughter confirms that Duane Morris' team is the best that could have taken my case. Thank you."*

– Ricardo Sanchez Mena

Five years later, the mother fled again, taking the daughter to Mexico after failing to appear at the final hearing. Alexandra and Daniel assisted the State Department in transferring the case to Mexican authorities, and thereafter, the mother returned their daughter to Ricardo for her 9th birthday.

### COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES 2023 EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE AWARD

Duane Morris' Philadelphia office was honored at Community Legal Services' Breakfast of Champions with a 2023 Equal Access to Justice Award in recognition of the firm's long-standing commitment to providing pro bono services to low-income Philadelphians.

### PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS PRESIDENT'S AND DIRECTOR'S COMMENDATION

**Rob Byer** (Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Trial), **Chris Casey** (Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Trial) and **Ryan Monahan** (Philadelphia, Trial) were honored with a president's and director's commendation for the team's work on a U.S. Supreme Court amicus brief in the case *Alexis Fernando Barradas-Jacome v. United States Attorney General*.

### THE VETERANS CONSORTIUM (TVC) COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

Duane Morris was honored with the Community Impact Award, recognizing the firm's support of TVC's legal assistance programs and demonstrated excellence and dedication in service of the unique and emerging legal needs of our nation's defenders and their families.



**Chris Tyson** (Washington, D.C., Intellectual Property) was personally honored with the Chairman's Award, which celebrates an individual who has significantly impacted TVC's mission through advocacy and selfless dedication to our military service members and their families.

### PENNSYLVANIA INNOCENCE PROJECT 2023 MAUREEN ROWLEY AWARD



**Leigh Skipper** (Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Trial) was honored by the Pennsylvania Innocence Project with the 2023 Maureen Rowley Award in celebration of his leadership as the chief federal defender for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania from 2009-2022 and in recognition of his devotion to fighting for all defendants, particularly those who do not have access to private counsel. Leigh also serves as chair of the Public Defenders Committee of the American College of Trial Lawyers.

# SECURING SAFE PASSAGE: IMMIGRATION

SONITA ALIZADEH



I scream to make up for a woman's lifetime silence  
 I scream on behalf of the deep wounds on my body  
 I scream for a body exhausted in its cage  
 A body that broke under the price tags you put on it  
 ...  
 I am perplexed by this tradition and these people  
 They sell girls for money  
 No right to choose  
*Daughters for Sale*

## ON THE "RHODES" TO OXFORD AND U.S. CITIZENSHIP

An internationally recognized rapper and human rights activist from Afghanistan, Sonita Alizadeh narrowly escaped child marriage after her family tried to sell her at 10 years old, and then again at 16 years old for \$9,000, so her brother could buy his own bride. In response, she wrote and produced a song, "Daughters for Sale," which now has more than 1.5 million views on YouTube.

Sonita's family eventually relented, and as a result of her viral music video, she received a scholarship to a U.S. high school. After high school, she began studying at Bard College in New York, and in 2023, Sonita was awarded a Rhodes scholarship to continue her studies at the University of Oxford in fall 2024. Sonita's receipt of a Rhodes scholarship is especially noteworthy as she is one of only two applicants to be awarded a global Rhodes scholarship, available to students from nations that are not members of established Rhodes constituencies.

She performed and spoke at the United Nations, was featured in *Rolling Stone* and profiled by the National Women's History Museum, performed at the 2016 Women in the World Summit Live in New York City, UN World Refugee Day and the Skoll World Forum, was awarded the Muhammad Ali Global Humanitarian Award, and was the subject of a Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winning documentary, *Sonita*, that was included in the 2016 Human Rights Watch Film Festival, among other recognitions.

Duane Morris was fortunate to meet Sonita while she was a student at Bard College in 2022. A team of New York Immigration attorneys represented Sonita pro bono in obtaining an Extraordinary Ability Immigrant Visa and lawful permanent residency in the United States. As we celebrate Sonita's success and future, we invite you to listen to her various works on her YouTube channel, @sonitaalizada217, including her video of "Daughters for Sale."

**Asylum seekers who have attorneys are  
3 times more likely to have their  
applications granted than those who do not.**

## DUANE MORRIS AND META HOST AFGHAN ASYLUM APPLICATION PREPARATION PRO BONO CLINICS

Stepping away from ordinary corporate hospitality events and continuing legal education courses, pro bono service offers a rewarding way to forge relationships with the firm's corporate clients, such as Meta, while also making a difference in our community. Observing a pressing need in the Bay Area—where Meta calls home and a significant number of Afghan parolees found themselves resettled in fall 2022—the firm kicked things off with a dynamic four-part clinic series where Duane Morris and Meta attorneys rolled up their sleeves and helped 14 Afghan parolees draft their asylum applications. Thereafter, attorney teams continued assisting parolees at each step in the process



## 1 in 5 asylum seekers whose cases are pending before Executive Office of Immigration Review (aka immigration court) do not have a lawyer.

to file their asylum applications via a special paralegal pro bono clinic, draft declarations and prepare for their asylum interviews.

### ESCAPING POVERTY AND PURSUING EDUCATION AND A BETTER LIFE

Our client fled Guatemala at 17 years old, embarking on a courageous odyssey fleeing the hardships there and

traversing Central America alone to seek refuge with his sister in Philadelphia. His life in Guatemala was marked by stark adversity: dwelling in a cramped, three-room home alongside 15 other people with no running water and economic insecurity. After the COVID-19 pandemic, he was unable to return to school because his family could not afford his school fees. From an early age, our client worked at various farms picking crops and performing other labor.

Answering the call, Duane Morris Intellectual Property and Trial attorneys teamed up with **Comcast** in-house attorneys as part of a special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS) clinic. The team helped our client's sister obtain custody of her younger brother as well as an order from the local family



“ THE CLINIC WAS A TRIUMPHANT TRIFECTA OF WINS! WE MADE A TANGIBLE DIFFERENCE FOR INDIVIDUALS IN OUR COMMUNITY, DEEPENED OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR META COLLEAGUES, AND REINFORCED RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATION ACROSS DUANE MORRIS. IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT PRO BONO WORK—IT'S ABOUT PRO BONO IMPACT AND THE ELECTRIFYING CONNECTIONS IT BRINGS. ”

– JOHN BENJAMIN  
Partner, Duane Morris



court affirming that it was not in the client's best interest to return to Guatemala. With this order, the pro bono team continues to seek SIJS before United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, which will permit our client to obtain lawful permanent residency and ultimately citizenship in the United States. Now in a stable and safe home, our client is finding his stride and excelling at his local high school.

Nearly 150,000 unaccompanied minors entered the United States in 2022. With no affirmative legal right to counsel for minors in immigration court proceedings—considered a civil action—minors are forced to face immigration court on their own, absent pro bono counsel or extended families that may afford to hire counsel.

#### FLEEING ANTI-LGBTQ+ HATE

Born into the challenging backdrop of Russian orphanages and foster homes, Evgeny's journey is one of unwavering resilience and the pursuit of love in the face of relentless adversity. From a tender

age, he grappled with the realization of his identity as a gay individual, a truth that set him on a path marked by hardship and discrimination.

At the age of 15, the other children in the orphanage learned of Evgeny's sexual orientation, turning him into a scapegoat and target of relentless bullying, beatings and soul-crushing humiliation. Despite the relentless torment he endured, Evgeny clung to his dreams and determination, eventually achieving a college degree.

**~1.6 million**  
**asylum-seekers in the United States are waiting**  
**for an asylum hearing. The average wait time**  
**for a case before an immigration court is**  
**4.3 years.**



Throughout his youth, Evgeny kept his homosexuality hidden, navigating the perilous waters of a Russia where LGBTQ+ individuals face harsh governmental bans. In 2015, fate intervened when he met his now-husband.

A night out at a gay club turned into a nightmare when they were assaulted by men hurling homophobic epithets. Evgeny tried to report the assault to the police only to be met with further threats by the police because of their LGBTQ+ identities.

In yet another harrowing incident, Evgeny was physically attacked and strangled by a co-worker due to his sexual orientation. Reporting the assault to his boss only resulted in a threat to terminate Evgeny's employment if he complained again.

## **1/3 of countries worldwide still criminalize LGBTQ+ individuals and actions, including 64 United Nation member states.**

The year 2019 marked a turning point—while walking down the street one day, Russian police officers wrongly arrested Evgeny based solely on his appearance and choice of clothing. What followed was a terrorizing ordeal of brutal beatings, unwarranted detention and threats of fabricated charges. Left in a cell without water or medical attention for two days, Evgeny emerged physically scarred and mentally traumatized—scars he still carries today.

Terrified for his life and well-being, Evgeny sought refuge in the United States, escaping a country where his very existence made him a target for persecution. For the past three years, a dedicated team of Duane Morris Trial associates, led by a seasoned Intellectual Property Litigation partner, fought tirelessly to secure Evgeny's asylum status, culminating in a merit hearing before the United States Department of Justice Executive Office of Immigration Review in fall 2023.

Today, Evgeny works as a ride-hailing service driver. In July 2023, he joyously married his spouse, Niko, a talented chef working in Lithuania. With asylum, Evgeny now has the chance to petition for Niko to join him in the United States, reuniting the couple and allowing them to live their lives authentically and without fear. Evgeny finally can look forward to a future filled with love, acceptance and the promise of a long and fulfilling life alongside his beloved husband.

### **BUILDING THE AMERICAN DREAM: A NEW HOME FOR A NEW CITIZEN**

Our client was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1994, when the civil war-torn country was still named Zaire. When she was 3, Joseph Kabila deposed Mobutu Sese Seko, a brutal dictator who had ruled the country since 1965. Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and his son took over the presidency. With the help of the United Nations and neighboring countries, the civil war was finally ended. Although the fighting stopped, the country was devastated. It is estimated that 3 million of our client's countrymen and women were killed during the war, and those like our client were left to struggle with homelessness, starvation and disease. This all occurred before our client had reached her 10th birthday. The family escaped but remained exiled in a refugee camp in Uganda for decades. They finally immigrated to the United States as refugees in 2014. Recently, our client, her sisters and mother bought a house together in Wenonah, New Jersey, finding the security and comfort they had been seeking. To top it all off, our client became a U.S. citizen in May, fulfilling her lifelong dream.



### STANDING UP FOR OUR ALLIES

Esmatullah Mosakhil was born and raised a Hazara in Afghanistan. As an adult, he worked for 10 years supplying auto parts to the U.S. armed forces. One of the largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan, Hazaras have been persecuted by the Taliban and other groups for decades. Hazaras practice Shi'a Islam, as opposed to Sunni Islam, which is practiced by the Taliban and the majority of Afghans. They also have different physical features and adhere to more progressive beliefs, such as valuing women's education and work outside the home. When Afghanistan fell to the Taliban in summer 2021, Esmatullah and his family faced immediate danger for their lives due to his employment and their Hazara identities.

Esmatullah and his family fled their home in northern Afghanistan, traveling for days to reach Kabul International Airport. Esmatullah was able to get his family inside the airport gates by showing his military ID, and they were evacuated by the U.S. to Qatar, Germany and ultimately Fort Dix, New Jersey. With the support of **HIAS Pennsylvania**, the family was resettled in Philadelphia.

A team of Trial attorneys volunteered to represent the Mosakhil family, securing asylum in the United States based on the family's well-founded fear of persecution on account of their Hazara ethnicity, Esmatullah's work for the U.S. armed forces and political opinions favoring democracy.



“ IT WAS A LONG JOURNEY. OUR CHILDREN COULD NOT GET ENOUGH SLEEP AND THEY SAW A LOT OF BAD STUFF IN KABUL. PEOPLE WERE SHOOTING THEIR GUNS. ONCE WE LANDED IN PHILADELPHIA, WE WERE SO HAPPY. WE FINALLY HAD PEACE OF MIND. WE LIKE EVERYTHING ABOUT PHILADELPHIA. WE LIKE EXPERIENCING THE SEASONS. I KNOW THAT MY CHILDREN ARE SAFE AND GOING TO SCHOOL. I WANT THEM TO BE GOOD CITIZENS IN THE COMMUNITY. ”

- ESMATULLAH MOSAKHIL



*"Until I volunteered to work on the Mosakhils' case, I had not realized how difficult it is to apply for asylum. Anyone doing it without English as their native language would have a really hard time. Cultural differences also can make the process difficult.*

*For instance, Afghans follow a different calendar than the United States and do not reference specific dates. Instead, they refer to a season or a relative amount of time when something in the past occurred.*

*"Helping with this case has been very rewarding. It is my first immigration case, but I have been working in a team with more experienced lawyers. I would encourage others to take on an asylum case to see into a system that is not what you would expect. Working with immigrants seeking asylum gives you more of an understanding about the reasons people leave their country. From my experience, I can say it is not easy to claim asylum. The process is not straightforward, but it is thorough."*

**- Eliese Herzl-Betz**  
Associate, Duane Morris

## RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN CRISES VIA RAPID-RESPONSE PRO BONO CLINICS

The firm kicked off 2023 recognizing Martin Luther King Day of Service by assisting Haitians fleeing violence and sociopolitical threats in applying for temporary protected status (TPS) in the United States. TPS allows individuals from designated countries to lawfully reside and work in the United States for a temporary period of time if conditions in their home country prevent them from returning safely. In Haiti, the United Nations estimate that criminal groups killed more than 2,000 people in the first half of 2023, kidnapped more than 1,000 people, and used sexual violence to terrorize the population. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services extended the TPS authorization period for Haiti until August 2024.



Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, over 270,000 Ukrainians have fled and been admitted to the United States. Led by paralegal and native Ukrainian **Nataliia Pedchenko** (Philadelphia, Employment, Labor, Benefits and Immigration), Duane Morris attorneys and alumni similarly volunteered to assist Ukrainian families applying for TPS after it was extended through April 2025.



Numerous attorneys, law clerks and paralegals also responded to the buses of immigrants from southern United States border cities to northern cities by volunteering for *pro se* asylum clinics in New York City and Philadelphia. Volunteers assisted migrants from Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East.

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## HELPING TEENS FACING CANCER

The **Teenage Cancer Trust**, a beacon of hope in the United Kingdom, is dedicated to nurturing and uplifting youth ages 13-24 who bravely confront cancer. The charity not only orchestrates vibrant events tailored for these remarkable youths, but also serves as an invaluable wellspring of knowledge about cancer, nurturing the growth of specialized facilities and dedicated care teams all championing the cause of these remarkable young warriors.

Across the U.K., Teenage Cancer Trust has etched its mark, and its annual spectacle at the illustrious Royal Albert Hall in London is nothing short of a musical extravaganza. With a stage graced by some of the globe's most dazzling musical luminaries—including The Who, Ed Sheeran, Coldplay, Florence and the Machine and The Cure—the Royal Albert Hall transforms into a symphony of dreams and hope. For this singular event, the Teenage Cancer Trust unfurls the ultimate VIP experience, whisking young warriors and their chosen companions off to London for an unforgettable journey, where the music of life blends seamlessly with the melodies that grace the Royal Albert Hall stage.

**Nic Hart**, managing partner of Duane Morris' London office and a musician and ardent music enthusiast, leads a team of volunteers in providing employment and corporate legal advice to the charity.

## A LIFELINE FOR MOTHERS EXPERIENCING POVERTY

In New York City, nearly one in four children under age 3 live in poverty. **The Bridge Project** combats child poverty by providing mothers experiencing poverty with up to \$1,000 in cash every month for three years, allowing them to spend it on their most pressing needs—from diapers and formula to rent. The goal:

Invest in the next generation and trust mothers to do just that.

Giving people cash is intuitive: Low-income families lack flexible cash, live paycheck to paycheck and are unable to save and generate wealth. Providing consistent, unconditional and immediate cash is sometimes all it takes to lift individuals out of poverty. Cash in mothers' hands may be spent on food and formula, rent or car repairs, education and child care or diapers. It may be spent the day it arrives, or saved for an emergency or longer-term investment down the line. Regardless, people know how to budget and spend smartly—studies show that less than 1 percent of money from guaranteed income pilot projects goes toward tobacco and alcohol. And, at the end of the day, the Bridge Project believes that how the money is spent is not up to them or anyone but the mother. No one tells *you* how to spend *your* money, so the Bridge Project gives their mothers the same flexibility.

Investing in mothers benefits women, children and communities, breaking the cycle of poverty's toxic stress. Studies suggest strong links between early childhood stress and long-term consequences, affecting cognitive and psychological development. Reducing stress in early childhood is critical, and helping moms meet their needs is a first step. The Bridge Project's guaranteed income model is pioneering and globally recognized as a poverty solution, as it trusts people experiencing poverty to determine and address their priorities, rather than assigning this task to people in positions of power.

Duane Morris proudly began working with the Bridge Project in 2023, assisting with various corporate and regulatory matters essential to the project's operation and growth. In addition, Duane Morris remains available to assist individual mothers pro bono with various legal needs.



“ IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO ME, HAVING RECEIVED SO MUCH FROM MY CAREER, THAT I TRY HARD TO PUT SOMETHING BACK TO SUPPORT THOSE FAR LESS FORTUNATE THAN ME. I HAVE TWO SONS WHO GREW UP AT THE BEACH WITH A PRIVILEGED, HAPPY AND CAREFREE LIFE. I HOPE THAT WORKING WITH THE INCREDIBLE CHARITY TEENAGE CANCER TRUST WILL GIVE SOME OF THOSE FAR LESS FORTUNATE YOUNG PEOPLE A BETTER CHANCE OF A HAPPY, PEACEFUL AND FULFILLING LIFE. ”

– NIC HART  
Partner, Duane Morris

**15 million**  
children—or 21%—in the  
**United States live in households**  
**below Federal Poverty**  
**Income Guidelines.**

The Bridge Project hopes to expand its presence to cover all of New York City and even other areas in New York state. Duane Morris looks forward to supporting the Bridge Project in expanding and growing its impact.

### CHANGING THE GAME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN LONDON

The price to play football (or soccer depending on where you live) is worsening social divisions in London. High demand for open spaces pushes up the price of play—and that is before factoring in equipment, new boots and kits, travel to and from trainings and matches, and more. The people's game is no longer bringing people together; it is pushing young people apart and the growing division is now being reflected on the pitch.

Tired of grassroots standards—flat footballs and waterlogged pitches—Bloomsbury Football Foundation seeks to ensure every young person has the opportunity to experience the life-changing power of the game. Working with over 5,000 young people per week, including 1,500 girls, Bloomsbury sponsors free football for children ages 7-16, and 60 percent of players receive 80 to 100 percent bursaries or educational stipends. Everyone is welcome to play, regardless of ability to pay or play.

Stepping up to do our part, Duane Morris' London attorneys represent Bloomsbury pro bono in complying with Sport England Tier 3 governance standards, which would make Bloomsbury Football eligible for the highest levels of grant funding. Duane Morris attorneys also assisted Bloomsbury with revising their corporate governance documents, drafting a corporate governance code and drafting more than eight key governing policies.

### NFL PLAYER'S CHARMING FACADE CONCEALS DARK REALITY: DUANE MORRIS ATTORNEYS SECURE 12-MONTH PROTECTION ORDER

At first sight, the man she met through a mutual friend appeared to be the embodiment of a dream—an experienced NFL player with nearly five seasons under his belt, exuding charm and financial stability. What began as a seemingly enchanted romance soon unraveled into a tumultuous relationship fraught with emotional and physical abuse for over five years. Ultimately, the relationship culminated in a harrowing episode where our client's boyfriend physically attacked her and attempted strangulation.

Our client, gripped by fear, courageously sought refuge, petitioning for a protection from abuse order and turning to Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation for legal aid. Duane Morris attorneys jumped in, preparing the client for her hearing mere days away. Following a hotly contested hearing complete with the abuser belittling and threatening our client through his testimony, the court granted our client a 12-month protection order and required the boyfriend to attend batterer intervention. The judge, moved by the shattered mirror in the client's bedroom—a haunting symbol of the boyfriend's attempt to instill fear and to silence her from disclosing the abuse—recognized the urgent need for protection.



*"As a young lawyer, the opportunity to serve on this case and assist our client was incredibly rewarding—not only because of our ability to help our client attain security, but the case also allowed me to craft a case theory and first chair the hearing. In less than one week's time, I not only had to assure the client's trust and confidence, but also collect and assess what evidence—photos, cryptic text messages, threats—would best persuade the judge, because a lot of the boyfriend's abusive acts were covert and stealthy. It forced me to consider how best to illustrate the psychological elements of an abusive relationship dynamic. Using the client's photo of her shattered bedroom mirror both as actual evidence and a metaphor for the various big and small acts of violence, I elicited testimony from my client showing how her boyfriend's physical violence was just the culmination of a series of intimidating acts to exercise control over her person. I felt justice was served when the judge ruled, reasoning that while she did not understand the parties' relationship, what she did understand from the evidence presented at the hearing was that our client was not safe with her abuser."*

– Nico Zulli, Associate, Duane Morris

# VINDICATING VETERANS

## TRIUMPH OVER TRAUMA: HONORABLE DISCHARGE FOR NAVY VETERAN, SURVIVOR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Now an economist at a Fortune 500 company, our client enlisted in the Navy immediately after graduating high school and initially excelled in basic training, Class A and Class C school. About two weeks after reporting to her duty assignment, our client attended an off-base party with her then-boyfriend and a friend. The next day, she woke up—with no friends around—to learn she was drugged and brutally sexually assaulted while she was unconscious. Fearing she would be disbelieved and discharged under the Navy's zero tolerance drug policy, our client was unable to secure necessary mental health treatment and support from the Navy. Ultimately, this led to a precipitous downward spiral in her mental health and performance, culminating in her attempting suicide. Rather than ensuring that our client obtained the clearly needed medical care, the Navy returned our client to her duty assignment a few days later. When she was bullied and taken off her job because of the medication and counseling she was prescribed, our client stopped taking her medication or seeking therapy. Unsurprisingly, her performance and health further deteriorated until she had a mental breakdown and was medically evacuated off her ship. She was granted a general discharge with the note that it was due to a "condition not a disability."

Typically, veterans are required to provide their military discharge records any time they apply for a job, school, loan and more. Here, our client was forced to provide her discharge records, necessitating that she explain the worst day and period of her life at each instance when people questioned the condition. Fast forward several years and the client obtaining mental health treatment, she is thriving. In addition to her work, she is completing her doctoral dissertation, having obtained a master's in finance from Harvard University. While at Harvard, she met attorneys from Duane Morris through the law school's Veterans Law & Disability Benefits Clinic. The firm readily agreed to help her petition to upgrade her discharge status pro bono.

A team of female attorneys assisted the client in arguing that her discharge should be upgraded in equity pursuant to recent Department of Defense guidance instructing Military Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records to provide liberal consideration to "veterans petitioning for relief when the application is based in whole or in part on matters relating to mental health conditions, including PTSD; sexual assault; or sexual harassment." The team successfully argued that our client's diminished performance was due to the military sexual trauma and attendant mental illness she endured; it was not



emblematic of her true capabilities, as evidenced by her initial success in the Navy and significant success post-discharge. By a vote of 3-0, the Board for Correction of Naval Records granted the client a fully honorable discharge with narrative reason of "secretarial authority." Beyond a restorative recognition by the Navy that her discharge was inequitable and was not emblematic of her as a person, our client no longer will have to disclose details about the most harrowing time in her life. As an added bonus, she now is eligible for GI benefits as she finishes her education.

#### FROM DENIAL TO JUSTICE: WINNING DISABILITY BENEFITS

While in the service, our client experienced military sexual trauma, which caused his life to unravel. Struggling with addiction and mental health, in October 1996, our client sought medical attention at a United States Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, but he was denied service-connected disability benefits. Unfortunately, our client continued to struggle with his mental health throughout the years and submitted claims for care that were repeatedly denied all the way up until May 2017.

In 2017, our client was connected with Duane Morris attorneys who helped appeal the VA's denial of his request for service-connected disability benefits. After six years, the VA granted our client a 70 percent disability rating for PTSD and awarded him back benefits dating to May 2017, totaling approximately \$120,000, in addition to ongoing monthly income for the rest of his life.

Undaunted, Duane Morris' pro bono attorneys continued their efforts by appealing the VA's decision again, seeking a determination that the client is entitled to receive benefits based on total disability individual unemployability *and* backdating his benefits all the way to October 1996, when he first sought care at the VA.

#### RESILIENCE REWARDED: ACHIEVING A DISCHARGE UPGRADE

Our client enlisted in the U.S. Army at 19 years old after graduating from high school. Along with embarking on a career with the Army as a carpentry and masonry specialist, our client also had a newborn son.

A little under a year into his enlistment, the mother of our client's son attempted to drown the child while experiencing a psychiatric emergency. Our client requested leave to care for his son in the aftermath of this life-threatening and traumatic incident, but was denied a leave of more than two weeks by the military. As a result, our client went absent without leave to continue to care for his son.

Ultimately, our client was arrested and returned to the Army. He accepted a discharge in lieu of trial by court-martial, expecting he would be able to reenlist in two years. He was denied reenlistment and faced difficulties associated with his service discharge characterization.

In 2021, Duane Morris took on the client's case, helping him prepare a discharge upgrade petition to general discharge under honorable conditions. On July 16, 2023, the Army board granted our client's petition, paving the way for our client to access VA benefits and services to support himself and his family.



“ FROM MY PREVIOUS WORK WITH THE HOMELESS ADVOCACY PROJECT, I WAS AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE-CONNECTED BENEFITS FOR HOMELESS AND NEARLY HOMELESS VETERANS AND THE CRITICAL ROLE THAT A VETERAN'S SERVICE DISCHARGE PLAYS IN ACCESSING THOSE BENEFITS. THERE ARE SEVERAL CHALLENGES WITH WORKING WITH A NEARLY HOMELESS VETERAN. IT WAS TOUGH TO MAINTAIN RELIABLE AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION, AND IT WAS DIFFICULT TO DISCOVER EVIDENCE TO OVERTURN A DECISION MADE MANY YEARS AGO. NONETHELESS, RECEIVING THE LETTER FROM THE ARMY BOARD NOTIFYING ME OF THE DISCHARGE UPGRADE WAS WELL WORTH THE EFFORT, AND IT WAS ONE OF THE MORE GRATIFYING MOMENTS OF MY LEGAL CAREER. ”

– SEAN MCCONNELL  
Partner, Duane Morris

# ENSURING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

## HELPING SURVIVORS REBUILD THEIR LIVES

Through Freedom Network USA's Survivor Reentry Project, Duane Morris assists survivors of sexual trafficking who were wrongly convicted of crimes as a result of their trafficking—rather than being recognized as victim-survivors—in vacating, expunging, pardoning or otherwise clearing their criminal records.

At age 21, Catherine McAdoo entered into a romantic relationship that became abusive over time. Her abuser separated her from her family, sexually assaulted her, supplied drugs and ultimately forced her to live in a warehouse storeroom the size of a closet with many other women he also was trafficking. Forced into sexual servitude for more than a decade, she was forced to engage in various criminal acts against her will through repeated violent acts and threats of violence. Tragically, she was convicted of drug possession and forgery after being forced to cash fake checks, rather than being offered assistance and services.

*“Duane Morris provides thoughtful, trauma-informed representation through its work with Freedom Network USA’s Survivor Reentry Project. This work empowers and assists survivors of human trafficking with post-conviction criminal record relief so that they may overcome the barriers and stigmatization that comes with a criminal history.”*

– Miranda A. Nehrig

Staff Attorney, Freedom Network USA’s Survivor Reentry Project

In 2012, Catherine fled. She has been sober for over 12 years and has dedicated her life to supporting other trafficking survivors. As a state-licensed recovery peer support specialist and licensed chemical dependency counselor, she works as a case manager for the Santa



Since 2012, Duane Morris has donated **over 9,000** pro bono hours assisting nearly trafficking **60** survivors to clear their criminal records.



“ LITIGATING A PRISONER CIVIL RIGHTS CASE IS FAR OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSE OF MY USUAL PRO BONO ACTIVITIES, BUT I FEEL GENUINELY PRIVILEGED TO HAVE PLAYED A ROLE IN ENSURING OUR CLIENT'S GRIEVANCES WERE HEARD. IT'S UNFORTUNATE THAT MANY PEOPLE ARE UNAWARE OF WHAT TRANSPIRES WITHIN OUR CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES AND HOW INMATES ARE TREATED, INCLUDING THE CONDITIONS THEY ENDURE. THIS CASE SERVED AS A STARK REMINDER OF THE DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS AND LACK OF CARE WITHIN OUR PRISON SYSTEM. COLLABORATING WITH OUR CLIENT TO HELP HIM SHARE HIS EXPERIENCE WAS NOT ONLY FULFILLING BUT ALSO CRUCIAL IN GIVING HIM A VOICE. THE SETTLEMENT WE REACHED WITH THE DEFENDANTS OFFERED OUR CLIENT A SENSE OF JUSTICE AND HAS ALLOWED HIM TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF MOVING FORWARD WITH HIS LIFE, PUTTING THIS HARROWING CHAPTER BEHIND HIM AND ULTIMATELY FINDING HEALING. ”

– ELIZABETH LACOMBE  
Associate, Duane Morris

Maria Hostel. Recently, Catherine completed her bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies at the University of Houston—Downtown with dual concentrations in social work and communications and graduated *magna cum laude* in the top 4 percent of her class.

A team of Duane Morris Trial attorneys assisted Catherine, submitting a nearly 300-page application for clemency before the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles. Catherine's application remains pending at this time. Duane Morris and Catherine hope that she will receive a full pardon so that she can achieve her goal of being an inspiration to other survivors.

#### HOLDING PRISON OFFICIALS ACCOUNTABLE

In 2019, our client was incarcerated at Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Center in Connecticut pending disposition of charges against him for nonviolent offenses. During a legal call relating to the custody of his children, our client was denied privacy and his request for mental healthcare was ignored by the counselor, who then began belittling our client about the placement of his children. The situation escalated when the counselor called for assistance and immediately began using excessive physical force, even though our client was not presenting in a threatening manner and was compliant with the counselor's instructions prior to his use of physical force.

In the process of physically assaulting our client, the counselor twisted his wrist and threw him to the ground. Then, several other corrections officers intervened, further beating and spraying our client in the face with mace. Following the altercation, and despite repeated requests, our client received no medical care. Adding further trauma, our client—

who suffers from Stage 2 kidney disease and a weak bladder—was placed in in-cell restraints for almost seven hours, during which time he was denied food or the ability to use the restroom.

Acting *pro se*, our client filed suit against approximately 24 employees of the correctional center in their official and individual capacities. In September 2021, Duane Morris entered the case as court-appointed counsel for our client. A preliminary review of the client's file and video footage provided by defendants was crystal clear—our client's claims rose well above the level of a disgruntled inmate. It was clear that several of the named defendants employed by the correctional center failed or refused to comply with the facility's own specified protocols. The pro bono team felt compelled to investigate and advocate for the client, who had been assaulted without provocation and denied even the most basic human rights, as well as appropriate mental healthcare. Our client just wanted a voice to speak out against a system and facility that deprived its inmates of even the most basic of human rights, respect and decency.

After filing two additional amended complaints, thoroughly investigating the case and engaging in extended settlement conferences spanning several weeks, Duane Morris' Trial team negotiated a settlement agreement providing compensation to our client and allowing him to pursue other legitimate claims against the state of Connecticut and its employees. Following a negotiated plea deal by his defense attorney related to his pending criminal charges, our client was placed in a facility that will afford him housing, treatment, medication management and skills training to help his transition back into society.

# ENRICHING OUR COMMUNITIES

## DUANE MORRIS ATTORNEYS CHAMPION THE ART OF THE MOVING IMAGE

The only museum in the United States dedicated to the art, history and technology of the moving image, the Museum of the Moving Image's collection includes over 130,000 artifacts exploring the history of filmmaking, including *The Jim Henson Exhibition*. Instilling a love of film and filmmaking, the museum hosts film screenings; conversations with artists, filmmakers, scholars and media educators; a film magazine, *Reverse Shot*; and science and film resource Sloan Science & Film and more. For the past year, Duane Morris attorneys have supported the museum, serving on its board of directors and providing pro bono assistance in employment advice and contract negotiations, copyright infringements and trademark applications, book agreements and more.

## LET THEM PLAY BALL - UNDER THE LIGHTS

Founded in the 1950s, Abington Little League supports more than 700 children in playing baseball through an all-volunteer operation. Since 1997, the league has owned the Ackerly Complex, which has four baseball fields. In 2012, the league sought to install lights on two fields so that it could play games during evening hours. The move led to a legal fight with nearby homeowners who opposed the lights, claiming fears that noise and glare from the lights might impact their lives and devalue their property.

In 2019, the town zoning board denied the league's request to install the lights citing traffic, safety and environmental concerns as well as the opposition from homeowners. The league appealed, leading to a 2021 Court of Common Pleas decision permitting the lights with limited use, and both homeowners and the league appealed.



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*"I don't know how we could have fought to this point without [Duane Morris] doing this for us... . Having to pay for a court case like this would have devastated us."*

- Greg Kane, President, Abington Little League

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Having spent more than \$50,000 in legal fees, the league sought pro bono assistance from Duane Morris. A team of appellate lawyers briefed and argued the case to the Commonwealth Court, securing an order not only affirming the trial court's decision, but also removing the court's restrictions and conditions concerning when the lights could be used, thus ensuring more children may participate in the league with the ability to play more games each season.

And yet, there was another inning. Area homeowners, discontented with the Commonwealth Court's decision, asked the state Supreme Court to grant a writ of certiorari and hear further appeal, which the court denied marking a complete home run for the Little League.

#### ACCESS TO JUSTICE MIGHT JUST BE BIGGER IN TEXAS

At 21.8 percent, Texas has one of the highest poverty rates in the nation, and 5.2 million Texans qualify for civil legal aid. Currently, there is *one legal aid lawyer* for every 7,000 Texans who qualify for legal assistance and 90 percent of low-income Texans' legal needs are going unmet. Texas ranks 46th among states for ensuring access to justice for all people.





Clearly, there must be a better way to ensure access to justice for millions of Texans. Enter the Texas Access to Justice Commission. Created and appointed by the Supreme Court of Texas, the commission is charged with developing and implementing initiatives designed to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in civil legal matters for low-income Texans. **Katie Fillmore** (Austin, Trial) serves as a commissioner, analyzing possible ways to increase access to justice including rule changes that would allow legal paraprofessionals to represent pro bono clients and permit nonattorneys to have ownership interests in legal services organizations, thus creating organizations that offer a continuum of legal and nonlegal services to qualifying Texans.

#### SUPPORTING HISTORIC GERMANTOWN, FREEDOM'S BACKYARD

Historic Germantown is a partnership of 18 extraordinary historic homes, destinations and museums in Northwest Philadelphia that works to protect, preserve and share some of Philadelphia's prized historical assets, including one of Philadelphia's Revolutionary War battles, the first-ever American protest against slavery and one of the few remaining houses on the Underground Railroad. Earlier this year, when the nonprofit faced a potentially fraught separation of an employee, Duane Morris Employment attorneys jumped in to help peacefully sever the employee's relationship with the organization.

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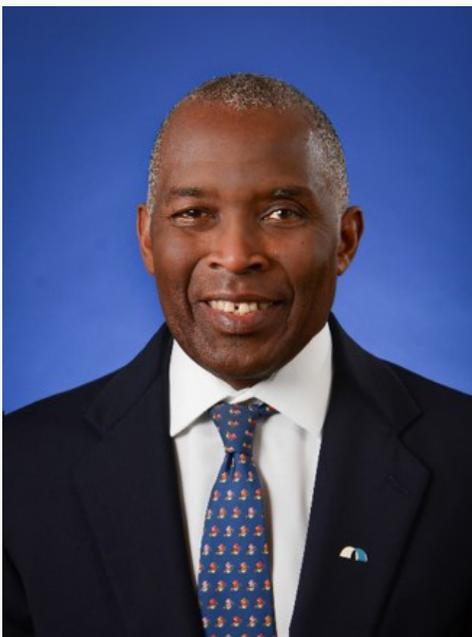
*"Moments like this are never easy. They have to be hard for the employee, and in this instance, Historic Germantown finds itself extremely disappointed that [the employee's] hiring—something that we were so excited about at the beginning—simply did not produce the results we so hoped for... . Again, thank you so much for your care and expertise in the last couple of weeks. We are grateful."*

– Loretta Witt, President, Historic Germantown

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# COLLABORATING CORPORATE PARTNERS



“ THE ISSUE OF HEIRS' PROPERTY IS NATIONWIDE IN SCOPE AND DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES. OUR INNOVATIVE CONSORTIUM CONSISTING OF BANKUNITED, DUANE MORRIS, LEGAL AID LAW FIRMS, MULTIPLE UNIVERSITIES, A TITLE COMPANY AND A COMMUNITY-BASED MORTGAGE LENDER LEVERAGES OUR MEMBERS' DIFFERING SKILL SETS TO ADDRESS THE COMPLETE BREADTH OF THE PROBLEM. DUANE MORRIS HAS BEEN EXTREMELY GENEROUS WITH THEIR TIME, FIRST IN PROVIDING KNOWLEDGE AND COUNSEL TO SET UP THE PROGRAM AND THEN TAKING ON ACTUAL CASES. OUR COLLABORATION WITH DUANE MORRIS ON THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN VERY REWARDING FOR BANKUNITED. ”

- ERIC HIBBERT  
Executive Vice President, MSCO/Residential; Consumer Risk Director, BankUnited; and Chair, iCARE Council

# COLLABORATING LEGAL AIDS

American Immigration Council	Human Rights First	Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity
American Immigration Lawyers Association	Immigration Equality	Philadelphia Legal Assistance
Amicus – ALJ	Immigration Justice Campaign	Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts/PA Patent
Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation	Innocence Network	Philadelphia Volunteers for the Indigent Program
Boston Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts	Innocence Project Delaware	Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta
Casa Cornelia Law Center	Innocence Project of Southern California	Public Interest Law Center
Center for Reproductive Rights	International Refugee Assistance Project	San Diego County Bar Association
Center for Wrongful Convictions	Juvenile Law Center	San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program
Chesapeake Legal Alliance	Kids in Need of Defense	Sanctuary for Families
City Bar Justice Center of the New York City Bar Association	Lawyers Alliance for New York	SeniorLAW Center
Community Legal Services	Lawyers for the Creative Arts	Start Small Think Big
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto	Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law	Support Center for Child Advocates
Consumer Bankruptcy Assistance Project	Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of the San Francisco Bay Area	Swords to Plowshares
CORA Services (Counseling or Referral Assistance)	Law Firm Antiracism Alliance	Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund
Dade Legal Aid – Put Something Back	Legal Aid Chicago	Texas Accountants and Lawyers for the Arts
D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center	Legal Aid of Marin	Texas Community Building with Attorney Resources
Delaware Innocence Project	Legal Aid Society of San Diego	Texas Fair Defense
Delaware Volunteer Legal Services	Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County	The Law Society of Singapore
Federal Circuit Bar Association	Legal Services of Greater Miami	The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program
Freedom Network USA	Legal Services for Children	TrustLaw
Georgia Lawyers for the Arts	Legal Services NYC	Veteran Advocacy Project
Georgia PATENTS	Maryland Legal Aid	Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
Greater Boston Legal Services	Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service	Volunteer Lawyers for Justice
Green Pro Bono	MassChallenge	Women's Law Project
Harvard Veterans Law and Disability Benefits Clinic	Mount Sinai Medical Legal Partnership	
HIAS Pennsylvania	Northern California Innocence Project	
Homeless Advocacy Project	Pennsylvania Innocence Project	
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