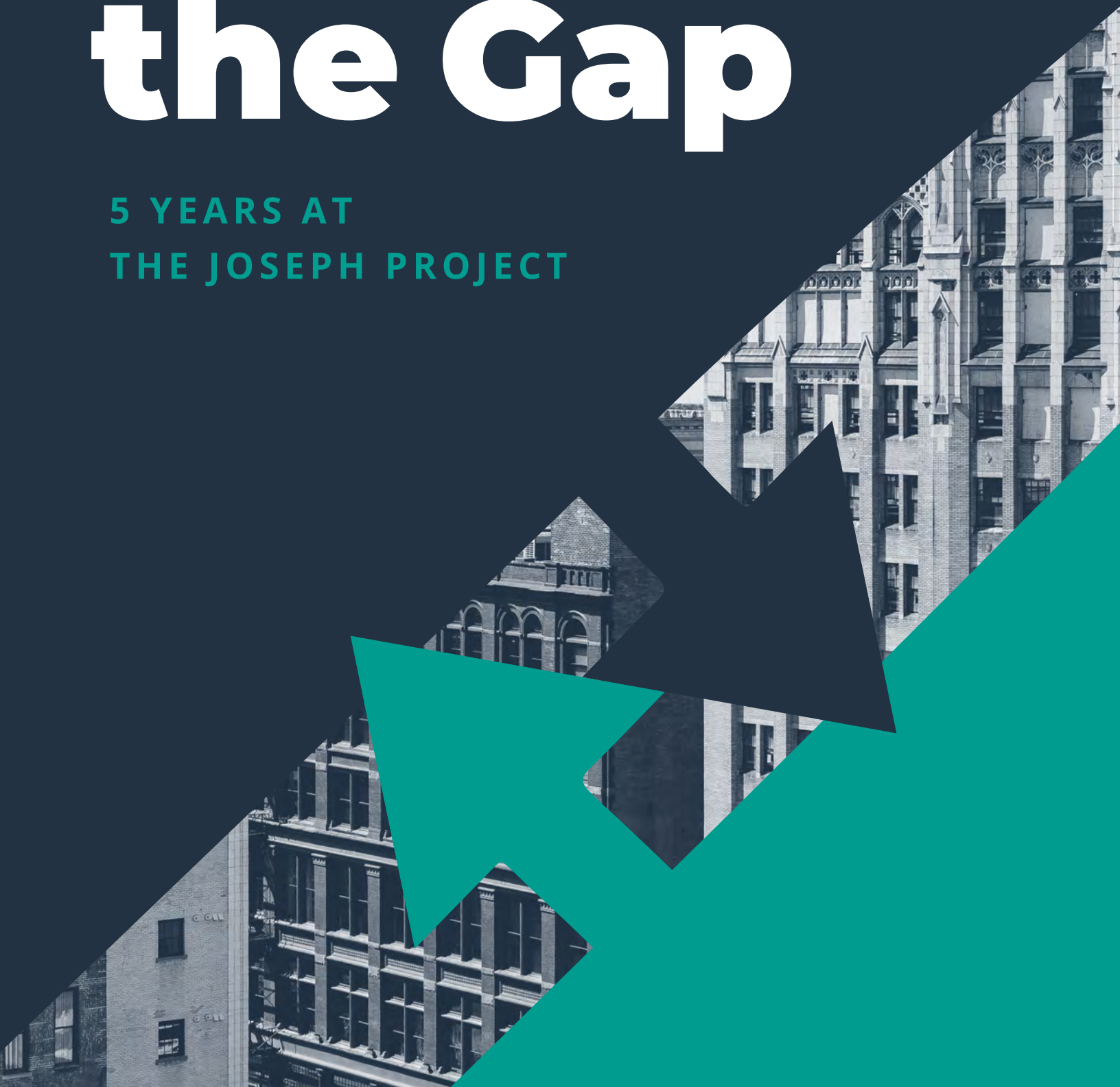




THE JOSEPH PROJECT

Close the Gap

5 YEARS AT
THE JOSEPH PROJECT



The Joseph Project is a nonprofit organization that connects human trafficking survivors with pro bono legal services. It is inspired by the Biblical account of history's earliest recorded survivor, who transitioned from exploitation to empowerment (Genesis 37-50).



Opening Statement



Nate Knapper
Founder + CEO



Dear Friends,

The year 2023 marks the 5th anniversary of The Joseph Project! For the last half-decade, our committed team has worked tirelessly to close the justice gap for human trafficking survivors, leveraging every resource at our disposal to deliver them skilled pro bono legal services.

The results of these efforts are remarkable. Legal First Responders have been recruited in more than 30 states. Over 400 survivors have received some form of legal assistance. A nationwide audience has been reached with our anti-trafficking message.

The evidence accumulated over the last 5 years points to one compelling conclusion:

The Joseph Project is a proven concept.

This booklet is designed to make that case. In the pages that follow, we intend to show that our organization is worthy of your support. As you **directly examine** our key initiatives; consider survivor stories that **exhibit** the exploitation-to-empowerment transition; weigh the **expert testimony** of attorney volunteers; and review the **supporting evidence** of available research, I am confident that you will reach the same verdict.

Like the survivor-clients we serve, The Joseph Project is ready to transition. With God's continued blessing and the selfless support of those who share our vision, we are poised to move from proven concept to powerful catalyst for the expansion of justice access among the exploited. Will you keep dreaming with us as we move into the next 5 years?


50:20,

Nate Knapper

Direct Examination

Legal Advocacy Initiative

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that occurs across the U.S. Those who survive this severe form of exploitation often face legal collateral damage. Criminal record impediments, family law obstacles, immigration challenges, debt burdens, credit issues, and other legal problems significantly impede their forward progress.

 *Survivors cannot resolve these issues on their own. The justice system is too complex and too costly. They need legal counsel.*

Since its founding in November, 2018, The Joseph Project has significantly expanded access to justice among the exploited. Our early effort to deliver free legal relief to a single survivor has matured into an expansive network of attorney volunteers who possess the expertise and compassion to meet the urgent legal needs of human trafficking survivors free of charge.

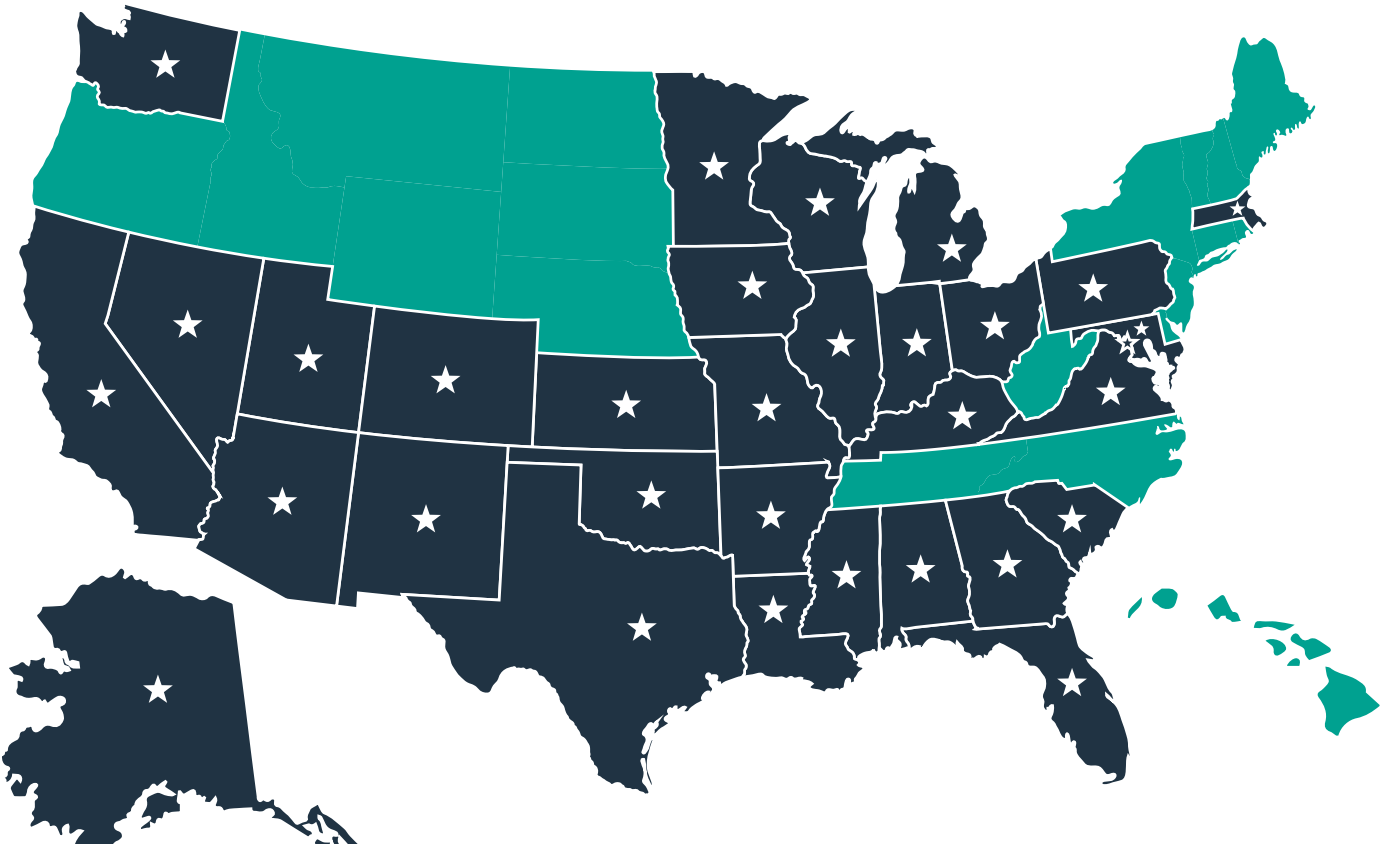
In coordination with The Joseph Project's internal staff, these **Legal First Responders** have won victories for survivor-clients across the country. Criminal records have been expunged, families have been reunited, debts have been erased, credit ratings have been repaired, and victim compensation has been secured.

Trafficked individuals are transitioning from an exploited past to an empowered future.

Significantly, no survivor-client has ever paid for legal assistance from The Joseph Project. The organization maintains an internal litigation fund to cover all associated court costs, fines, and fees. Through our Legal Advocacy Initiative, The Joseph Project has:

- 1 Developed a proven **Intake** process to reliably determine service eligibility
- 2 Delivered pro bono legal assistance to **400** survivors, often resolving multiple legal matters across jurisdictional boundaries for each client
- 3 Recruited **250** Legal First Responders, including solo practitioners and attorneys from law firms and legal aid clinics of all sizes
- 4 Expanded service delivery capacity to encompass jurisdictions within **31** states and Washington, D.C.
- 5 Provided an estimated value of **\$2.75 million** in free legal representation
- 6 Covered an estimated **\$30,000** in courts costs, fines, and fees

LFR Network



Direct Examination

Public Education Initiative

The Joseph Project's Legal Advocacy activities are complemented by a robust Public Education Initiative. Five years of outreach has produced a quality collection of online platforms, earned media products, trafficking-related presentations, and multimedia productions that have significantly advanced the organization's survivor identification and attorney recruitment efforts.

Online Platforms

An [official website](#) and a full complement of social media platforms - including [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#) - have been created to allow The Joseph Project's supporters to celebrate survivor victories and follow the latest organizational developments. Collectively, our social media platforms have generated an online audience of over **3,000** followers.

The Joseph Project's work has generated a notable number of earned media products. Both national and local outlets have featured the organization's survivor-clients, including [USA Today](#), [MSN.com](#), the [Detroit Free Press](#), and [WDIV Local 4 Detroit](#). Our efforts have also been featured on television programs and podcasts that routinely reach mass audiences, including TBN's [Huckabee](#) and [The Happy Hour with Jamie Ivey](#).

Earned Media Products

Trafficking - Related Presentations

In both in-person and virtual formats, The Joseph Project has presented its mission to some of America's largest anti-trafficking service providers, including the [National Trafficking Sheltered Alliance \(NTSA\)](#), the [National Center on Sexual Exploitation \(NCOSE\)](#), and [Shared Hope International](#).

The Joseph Project's outreach has also extended into numerous legal and public policy arenas. The organization has collaborated with the [State Bar of Michigan](#) to offer a statewide attorney training event, testified before members of the [Michigan House of Representatives](#), and educated judges through the [Michigan Judicial Institute \(MJII\)](#).

These opportunities represent only a small sampling of the venues at which The Joseph Project has presented its work.

Multimedia Productions

The Joseph Project has produced a **trauma-informed legal training** series to educate its Legal First Responder volunteers on issues of trafficking and trauma. The organization has also released a series of **Digital Citizenship** training sessions designed to help Internet users avoid online exploitation.

Exhibits:

Exploitation to Empowerment

Leslie: From Survivor to Nonprofit Founder

“I’m free to pursue any dream I have!”



Scan or click here to watch Leslie's Story



Leslie had an abusive upbringing. She was sexually assaulted multiple times before she became a teenager. Though Leslie was a top student in school, the abuse she endured prompted her to run away from home at the age of fifteen.

For the next two decades, Leslie's life was marked by addiction and criminal activity. Much of this time was spent under the control of violent traffickers who profited from her sexual exploitation.

Eventually, Leslie became weary of life on the streets and cried out to God for help. She entered a detox program, broke free from her addiction, and became the first resident in the program's history to become a staff member. She later founded Sacred Beginnings, an impactful ministry that helps other trafficked women. Leslie remains the organization's President today.

In the course of her trafficking, Leslie acquired a range of felony and misdemeanor convictions. Though ineligible for expungement under Michigan statute, Leslie agreed to work with The Joseph Project to pursue executive clemency.

Armed with exceptional counsel from Legal First Responders at Warner Norcross + Judd, Leslie became the first human trafficking survivor in Michigan history to receive a gubernatorial pardon. Reacting to her grant of clemency, Leslie passionately recalled, “All I could do was scream... I’m free to pursue any dream I have.”

Cleared of all past trafficking-related offenses, Leslie is now pursuing a licensed master of social work (LMSW) degree, which she hopes to use to help even more exploited women in West Michigan and beyond.

Expert Testimony:

Legal First Responders

Madelaine Lane, Warner Norcross + Judd



Legal First Responders must often demonstrate a measure of tenacity, and Madelaine Lane is not afraid of a fight. An accomplished white collar criminal defense attorney at Warner Norcross + Judd, Madelaine routinely leverages her legal expertise to fight for the livelihoods and reputations of her clients.

That’s why she was the perfect Legal First Responder for Leslie. Madelaine’s keen understanding of the adverse impact of a criminal record fueled a selfless two-year effort to help Leslie assemble a persuasive pardon application and prepare for her Parole Board hearing.

“Crimes committed while someone is being trafficked must be looked at differently by the criminal justice system,” Madelaine said. “These are not voluntary actions of someone who has made a poor choice. Those who are being trafficked are coerced, intimidated, and threatened with beatings or worse if they don’t comply.”

Madelaine’s passion for pro bono service was evident throughout her collaboration with The Joseph Project. She called Leslie’s pardon one of the proudest moments of her professional career, saying, “This is the reason I became a lawyer.”

“This is the reason I became a lawyer.”

Scan or click here to watch Madelaine's Story



Exhibits:

Exploitation to Empowerment

D'Lynn: From Survivor to Mother and Master's Student



"It was a relief... I felt new. I felt that I had opportunity."

For over a decade, D'Lynn was trafficked for sexual services. In the course of her exploitation, she acquired numerous criminal convictions in both Michigan and Washington state. D'Lynn's exploitation culminated in a monetary dispute in which her controller violently assaulted her, leaving her near death. She was later dropped outside the entrance of a local emergency room.

Though D'Lynn recovered, she accumulated thousands of dollars in treatment costs. The hospital referred these bills to a collection agency, which began coordinating with a law firm to sue D'Lynn for the medical expenses associated with her own assault. Her wages were garnished, and her criminal record remained marred by numerous convictions, limiting her employment prospects.

D'Lynn was The Joseph Project's original survivor-client. In 2018, she was first connected to Legal First Responder Matt Paletz at Paletz Law. Soon, D'Lynn was compensated through

a state fund for the payments she had made to the collection agency, her credit rating was repaired, and the hospital was fully reimbursed for services rendered.

Years later, legislation passed that also allowed D'Lynn's criminal record to be resolved. In 2023, she was connected to a committed team of Legal First Responders from Jones Day (MI) and Ellis, Li & McKinstry (WA), resulting in the resolution of all her outstanding convictions.

Reflecting on her legal journey, D'Lynn said, "It was a relief... I felt new. I felt that I had opportunity."

Today, D'Lynn is a happy mother of three children. She earned her bachelor's degree and enjoys full-time employment. She is currently enrolled in a master's program and looks forward to a bright future.

Expert Testimony:

Legal First Responders



Amanda Rice, Jones Day + Kenzie Legg & Jan Olson, ELM

Competency and compassion are two defining markers of a Legal First Responder. Amanda Rice, Jan Olson, and McKenzie (Kenzie) Legg possess both qualities in profound measure.

Amanda Rice is a partner at the Detroit office of Jones Day. An accomplished attorney who focuses her practice on appellate advocacy, critical motions, and difficult legal questions, she is a former U.S. Supreme Court Clerk and the current director of her office's pro bono efforts.

Jan Olson and Kenzie Legg serve at Ellis, Li & McKinstry (ELM) in Washington state. Jan is a seasoned criminal defense attorney and a member of the Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. Kenzie's past experience includes extensive service at a variety of nonprofit law clinics.

The common thread among these accomplished attorneys? They all care deeply for their clients. When approached with the prospect of assisting D'Lynn, none of them hesitated.

"For everyone, it was a huge relief. [D'Lynn can now] go on and enjoy the rest of her life without all this baggage."

Amanda, Jan, and Kenzie helped D'Lynn navigate the complexities of the criminal justice system in their respective jurisdictions. Each provided exemplary service, processing necessary paperwork and preparing D'Lynn for court appearances.

In the end, D'Lynn's legal team successfully resolved each of her outstanding criminal charges, freeing her to focus on her future. Amanda captured the team's collective excitement, stating, "For everyone, it was a huge relief. [D'Lynn can now] go on and enjoy the rest of her life without all this baggage."



Scan or click here to watch Jan & Kenzie's Story

Exhibits:

Exploitation to Empowerment

Maricela: From Survivor to Educator



Scan or click here to watch Maricela's Story



When Maricela was young, a boyfriend coerced her to make money for him by having sex with other men. At a bar one evening, she and several other women were arrested in a law enforcement “sting” operation and charged with prostitution.

Maricela’s conviction impeded her from finding a well-paying job to support her children. Many times, she would cry to herself, wishing she could clear her record so she could avoid working weekends and spend more time with her kids.

Years later, Maricela was referred to The Joseph Project by a potential employer. She was connected to a Legal First Responder at Morgan Lewis, and soon, her conviction was sealed.

Reacting to the court’s decision, Maricela was emotional, saying through tears, “I am so happy. I cannot stop crying. After 23 years, I no longer have to worry about my criminal record.”

Today, Maricela is a teacher - the fulfillment of a life-long dream. Happier than ever, she credits God for her fresh start. “I can’t believe it. I can’t believe God still loves me. God [sent]... The Saint Joseph Project to help me. I’m so grateful.”

“I am so happy. I cannot stop crying. After 23 years, I no longer have to worry about my criminal record.”

Expert Testimony:

Legal First Responders

“The Joseph Project... is allowing people to move on with their lives... [and] seek new opportunities that they never could before.”

Jennifer Williams, Morgan Lewis

Legal First Responders don’t believe in lost causes. It’s fitting, then, that Maricela’s 20+ year-old conviction was resolved by an attorney with over two decades of legal experience.

Jennifer Williams, a partner at the Houston office of Morgan Lewis, typically advises her clients on technology-related matters, including e-discovery processes and information governance. When the opportunity to assist Maricela presented itself, however, Jennifer jumped at the chance.

“From the beginning... I immediately thought that this [case] was a God thing,” Jennifer said. “He [gave] me the skills to [become] a lawyer, and with those skills, I needed to be able to help someone else.”



Driven by this deep sense of calling, Jennifer dug in. She patiently invested the time needed to understand Maricela’s story and expertly advocated for the sealing of her conviction. The positive result she achieved fundamentally altered Maricela’s future employment prospects.

For Jennifer, the impact of pro bono service is clear. “The Joseph Project... [serves] an important purpose for so many people out there,” she said. “It is allowing [them] to move on with their lives... [and] seek new opportunities that they never could before.”



Scan or click here to watch Jennifer's Story

Supporting Evidence:

The Justice Gap

The barriers to legal assistance among the survivor population often lead to unresolved issues, creating a justice gap that impedes them from moving toward a brighter future.

“A Crisis and a Legal Disaster”

First, the justice gap separates many survivors from the resolution of their criminal issues. According to Polaris, over 90% of survivors exit their exploitative circumstances with a criminal record. If left unresolved, these issues severely hinder their prospects for future success.

Survivors also face a range of civil legal problems, including family law obstacles. Sadly, the vast majority of trafficked individuals are low-income earners, and statistics concerning the lack of civil justice access among this

population subset are well-documented. According to the Legal Services Corporation, 92% of the civil legal problems reported by low-income Americans receive inadequate or no legal help. Many low-income Americans confronting civil legal issues will resort to representing themselves or fail to address their legal needs entirely.

Jennifer Grieco, the former President of the State Bar of Michigan (SBM), identified the justice gap as “a crisis and a legal disaster.”

90%

92%



The evidence is clear: Human trafficking survivors are in desperate need of pro bono legal services.

Supporting Evidence:

Legal Aid and Social ROI



Vulnerability Leads to Victimization

The Joseph Project’s survivor-clients often come from marginalized communities marked by a repetitive cycle of vulnerability, exploitation, and economic strain. In marginalized communities, poverty, drug addiction, and broken homes are vulnerabilities that commonly lead to victimization.



A Pathway to Possibility

Skilled legal advocacy can help break this cycle. When survivors’ legal issues are resolved, their educational opportunities, employment prospects, housing options, and benefits eligibility all drastically expand. Entire marginalized communities also benefit when the law is

leveraged in survivors’ favor because the significant social costs associated with human trafficking are alleviated, including incarceration, welfare, foster care, drug addiction, and homelessness costs. The delivery of free legal aid yields an exceptionally high

social return on investment (SROI). According to one Michigan-based legal aid report, for every \$1 invested in legal aid services, beneficiaries received an average of \$6.69 in immediate and long-term consequential financial benefits – a 669% return on investment!



The evidence is clear: When survivors are connected to Legal First Responders, legal victories are achieved, lives are enhanced, and social inequities are reduced.

Closing Argument

Each year, thousands of human trafficking survivors are identified across the U.S. The National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) maintains one of the country's most extensive data sets on the issue of human trafficking. Since its inception in 2007, the NHTH has identified over 82,000 cases of human trafficking. Within these cases, nearly 165,000 victims have been identified.*

At the same time, the American Bar Association (ABA) estimates that there are 1.3 million U.S. attorneys.

Given the highly disproportionate attorney-to-survivor ratio, a national justice delivery system can be created to offer skilled pro bono legal services to every identifiable human trafficking survivor in America.

The Joseph Project functions as this justice delivery system.

While other organizations raise and spend inordinate amounts of money to hire staff attorneys to assist survivors within a limited geographic area, The Joseph Project's model is both more effective and more economical.

Its pro bono, volunteer-based approach extends the protections of law to a vulnerable victim population whose legal needs often cross jurisdictional boundaries, thereby invoking unique procedural and licensure requirements.

In doing so, the organization leverages the inherent desire of many lawyers to use their expertise for good. One valuable life at a time, The Joseph Project is closing the justice gap for human trafficking survivors!



Nearly all these victims have unresolved legal needs.

"We have lawyers who are willing and able to do the work... and we have people in need of services. We just need to match the two for the benefit of the public and our Bar members."



– Jennifer Grieco, Past President, State Bar of Michigan

Scan or click here to watch Jennifer's Story

*This data constitutes information from only a single source – the NHTH. It does not represent the true prevalence of U.S.-based human trafficking. It simply represents the best data set that is currently available concerning the issue. The NHTH itself notes that its data does not define the totality of human trafficking. Lack of awareness and conflation with other criminal activities often lead to significant underreporting.

Verdict




An honest evaluation of the evidence accumulated over the last 5 years points to only one reasonable conclusion:

The Joseph Project is a proven concept.

Hundreds of survivors have received some form of skilled legal counsel. Some of America's largest law firms have offered their services. The nation's most established government, law enforcement, and social service agencies have requested victim assistance, including the FBI, the U.S. Department of State, and the Salvation Army.

Beyond a reasonable doubt, The Joseph Project is leveraging the law to empower the enslaved.

But, there's more work to be done! Like Leslie, D'Lynn, and Maricela, many more survivors are eager to step into an empowered future. With the requisite strategy and support, The Joseph Project can service them all!

-  **The need is real.**
National survivor service networks have expressed the need for legal representation among their affiliates.
-  **The mission is critical.**
Justice for the oppressed is a worthy endeavor that closely aligns with God's priorities.
-  **The dream is alive.**
The Joseph Project is seeking to transition from proven concept to powerful catalyst for the expansion of justice access among the exploited.

Dream with us!



Together, let's help more survivors make the transition from exploitation to empowerment

**“You meant evil.
God meant good.”**

Joseph

GENESIS 50:20



josephproject.com

