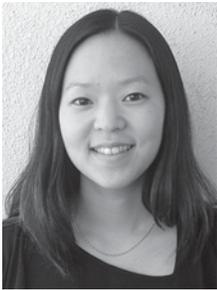




Unequal by Design: How the Pandemic Response Exacerbated America's Two-Tiered System of Justice

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Access to the courts is a fundamental, sacred right in our justice system. It is also too often denied to those most in need of the guarantee. As legal aid attorneys,



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we seek to ensure and strengthen access to justice for historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities — those who

are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), the indigent, those who do not use English as their dominant language, and self-represented litigants — who have had a harder path pressing for their rights. We thereby work to restore our clients' faith in the ability of courts to administer justice. This is hard work in the best of times. As we near the one-year anniversary of the worst public health crisis in a century, the task has become significantly more difficult. During this period, the divergence in court access between resourced and less-resourced litigants has yawned into a chasm. As a result, our client communities are left behind to bear risks and losses to their health, safety, and fundamental rights.

For too many communities in America, the absence of clear and comprehensible communications has been the defining characteristic of their court system's pandemic-era operations. These historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities depend on the court for information about the status of court operations, hearings, and other significant updates relating to scheduling, cases, and the expansion of

remote options. But unlike attorneys and well-resourced litigants, they are not connected to bar organizations or lawyer colleagues. Nor do they have the time and training to make sense of the court's general orders and notices to attorneys, which created confusion even among lawyers. For the two million Los Angeles County residents and 25 million nationally who do not use English as their dominant language,² the absence and incomprehensibility of court communications was even more stark. In Los Angeles, these failures came despite the obligations to follow numerous local, state, and federal civil rights mandates.³

For self-represented litigants, particularly those from BIPOC and linguistically marginalized communities, the courts' responses to the pandemic exacerbated preexisting shortfalls in court access. Issues of language access, systemic bias, scarce resources, power imbalances, and the constant stress of interminable struggles to assert their rights were already pervasive. Now since the pandemic, the absence of an appropriate and necessary court response has introduced additional uncertainty, risk, and misinformation. Due to the absence of other accessible alternatives, self-represented litigants defaulted to traveling to the courthouse desperate for information. Early in the pandemic, many of the clients we saw believed that the courts, along with most other government offices, were closed. This included domestic violence victims who waited to file for critical protections because the court had not informed them that domestic violence restraining order filings were among the "essential functions" for which it remained open. The legal services community was often left to fill these communication and information gaps, where it could.

Despite court systems' continuing failures, the problem is not unsolvable. It will, however, require meaningful action on multiple fronts: lack of communication,

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unequal access to information, the digital divide, access to remote platforms, language barriers, untimely hearings, and the need for access at all points. We now turn to these problems and how they may be addressed.

Information Withheld

For many courts, their pandemic-era communications have further entrenched the two-tiered system of justice. Information and the access that it brings are available to those who can hire a lawyer, but neither to most self-represented litigants nor to members of low-income and linguistically marginalized communities, which are all disproportionately BIPOC. The information available to the public on the court's website is limited, and it is maladapted to the considerable digital divide that separates represented and more-resourced litigants from less-resourced ones. It is for the most part only in English, and for many courts the main source of translation is a Google Translate bar, which is known to be an inaccurate and unreliable form of translation without appropriate human review. As a result, those on the wrong side of these linguistic and digital divides have little way to learn of updated remote filing options, of the specific and often strictly enforced instructions for those filings, of what court services remain or have recently again become available, and of the detailed requirements for making use of those services. For example, in some courts, it is possible to file by email via a courthouse-specific "resource account," but doing so requires a specific facsimile cover sheet, has associated fees, and has implications for such matters as fee waiver requests, processing times, and need for printer access. Our clients are unlikely to know about resource accounts, unlikely to know which ones to use, unlikely to realize that they are in fact email addresses, unlikely to realize that a fax cover sheet is needed for an email filing, and unlikely to understand the implications of choosing this form of filing in lieu of another.

The basic problem is a lack of commitment to communicating with non-attorneys. Communications that attorneys struggle to understand do not provide meaningful information and access to the public. The problem is more acute for those who do not use English as their dominant language. Our local courts make only some information available in Spanish, with a smaller number of items in a few additional languages. Everything else, including much of the

recent information and notices regarding the public health crisis and court operations, have been left to Google Translate, an inherently unreliable and inaccurate tool. Yet the American Community Survey reports that Los Angeles County contains 25 different language groups with more than 1,000 limited English proficient members, and 12 language groups with more than 10,000 such individuals.⁴ Further, many courts have not planned appropriately for consistent and meaningful communication with linguistically marginalized communities. Courts must have staff trained to have access to and properly utilize real-time telephonic interpreting services. This is especially important as many court services outside the courtroom go remote, such as mediation, self-help, and other court-ordered programs. Many individuals have reported an inability to learn basic information because courts are not providing language services over the phone. And with limited written translations available, alternatives do not exist for critical information regarding court operations.

One way that the court sustains the two-tiered system of justice is through limits on its information and communication. Litigants with resources have access. For litigants without resources, it is as if the information is being actively hidden. Too often, litigants are not receiving adequate notice in a language that they understand of their hearings being postponed and rescheduled. They are not provided with written explanations of their appearance options or instructions on how they can appear remotely. The court has indicated that individuals can call the court, and everything — including all options, availability of services, and instructions on appearing remotely — will be explained through a telephonic interpreter. But most individuals will never know this is even an option. Those who manage to get through receive uneven and inconsistent information. Calls to reach a department at one of our local courthouses are routed to a central phone bank that is itself difficult to reach and often ends with long holds and abrupt disconnections. When calls are answered, transfers to a department judicial assistant often occur only when the court deems them to be absolutely necessary. More concerning is that clerks do not provide consistent communications about court policies and rules. This lack of equal access to information has left behind many of the most vulnerable in our communities, leaving them with no choice but to endure health risks to seek information from the courts in-person.

Remote Access... for Some

There is no doubt that technological advancements have, by necessity, developed at an accelerated rate during the public health crisis. Launching and expanding such options have eased the burden and stress for some litigants and promoted public health. Often the product of commendable effort, dedication, and investment, these developments also exclude low-income, self-represented and linguistically marginalized litigants. The court's general response has been to say that we should not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. But that is not much help to our client communities when what the court defines as "good" are systems that only benefit people who have the resources to bridge the gap that remains.

Unfortunately, many local courts' technological advances and remote systems have reinforced a two-tiered access to justice. Having different platforms in different counties within a single state also creates inconsistency and confusion. Many litigants simply do not know that remote platforms exist. Others confront a scheduling and appearance process that is daunting, onerous, and often insurmountable. Many court websites have a great deal of information, but are not friendly to our community members. Take for example our local court remote platform guide, which is almost 100 pages long. While helpful for attorneys, it is not in a format that lends itself to easy navigation and understanding for those in the communities we serve — especially those whose only computer is a smart phone. But without reading through the lengthy guide, one would not know that common remote platform options such as screen sharing and breakout rooms are generally not an option on the remote platform. Our community members are also unlikely to realize that they must take many actions up to a week or more in advance of the hearing — even if they did find the guide by that time. Obstacles such as these drive litigants to the only option that remains — appearing in court in-person.

Litigants who learn how their courts' remote platform work face further hurdles. They must have a smartphone or computer with a camera and microphone and reliable internet access to use the remote platform. Some are skeptical of an unfamiliar system that has not been explained to them in a language or manner they can comprehend. This distrust, combined with other factors such as inadequate technology, leads many to still bear the risk of appearing in-person. For domestic violence survivors, they must have a safe and private location to make a remote appearance that

does not reveal their location. Concerns about bias regarding their housing situation or lack of childcare assistance means they must find a neutral background in their homes for their video appearance and arrange for their children to be quiet and out-of-sight. To waive the remote appearance fees, litigants must file and have approved a fee waiver request many days in advance of the hearing. To show images or other evidence as part of the hearing, the survivor must file and share those with the court and the other party several days in advance to account for extended processing times.

While resourced litigants can use remote options and make appearances comfortably from the safety of their own homes, less-resourced litigants can experience a Kafkaesque waste of time that ultimately results in their risking their health and going to court. A response we had in Los Angeles to this problem was to start a pilot for domestic violence survivors to appear via a remote studio for their restraining order hearings from a family justice center. A remote hearing studio made the court's remote options more accessible and provided survivors with a more trauma-informed experience. The survivor has a private space where children are welcome and safe, especially if they do not have alternative childcare options, with a separate space for them during the hearing. The survivor does not have to face the abusive party in person. An advocate is available to provide basic technical support and to serve as a support person if needed. There are printers, transportation vouchers, and resources for other domestic violence supportive services available. This has just been established here, and we are hopeful that these safe remote studios will be expanded and maintained even after the pandemic. This is very helpful for the survivors assisted, but it is just a drop in the bucket. It is a good proof of concept but a more sweeping effort from the court is necessary to make a real dent. And we know that such court-initiated efforts are happening. The District of Columbia, along with a few other jurisdictions, have created public kiosks where litigants without wifi or computers can appear for an online hearing.

Language (In)justice

For cases involving interpreters, even more layers of complexity are present. Pre-pandemic, the concept of video remote interpreting (VRI) was emerging in many jurisdictions. Some states, such as California, had VRI guidelines⁵ before the pandemic that now require updating. These guidelines have included specific technological prerequisites regarding the type

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of video screen, video camera, audio mixer, document camera/scanner, and bandwidth required. Its intended use was for shorter, non-complex, and non-evidentiary proceedings with the interpreter appearing on a video screen. Other considerations included the contested nature of the hearing, the need for additional interpreters, and the physical presence of all the parties. These guidelines and protocols must be modified now that the landscape includes different combinations of in-person and remote appearances and the holding of remote evidentiary hearings and trials.

In many courts, old protocols are not being enforced, and new ones have yet to be firmly established or followed. For hearings, our local courts have indicated that all interpreters in court proceedings will appear in-person and interpret consecutively for parties appearing remotely. But this has not always been the case. In one case, we assisted a Nepali speaking client file for a domestic violence restraining order just prior to the pandemic's restrictions on court operations taking hold. The court's inability to secure an interpreter led to several continuances. When one became available eight months later, access was through the clerk's speakerphone. Due to social distancing, masks, courtroom acoustics, and the audio limitations of a speakerphone, everyone in the courtroom had to scream towards the phone for the interpreter to hear and interpret. This and the extended time required for consecutive, rather than simultaneous, interpreting was taxing for all involved and eventually resulted in another continuance. After this, we made a specific request that the court provide an in-person interpreter, which was provided at the next hearing.

This was not an isolated incident. In another case, a litigant was only given a remote interpreter through a separate phone line and not the remote platform. Consequently, the litigant was unable to understand and meaningfully participate in the hearing. We have been told that safety protocols are in place and that interpreters have the proper equipment, including transponders with multi-party headset capacity for social distancing. Nonetheless, we still observe interpreters physically close to litigants without equipment, sometimes interpreting for two individuals at one time, which is not the best practice. In another example, a judicial officer denied a remote appearance for a COVID-vulnerable litigant because the litigant required an interpreter. The litigant's attorney was

forced to brief the issue. Imagine similarly situated self-represented litigants who must accept great risk to their lives and struggle without adequate information because they are unaware they can demand more to enforce their language rights.⁶

In providing remote platforms, remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) is an important feature for litigants who require interpreters. Although only available on certain platforms, RSI is currently considered the best practice for remote court hearings. RSI allows the interpreter to speak through a different channel heard by the litigant, while the litigant can also see on a video and hear in the background what is going on. Some courts are creating hybrid systems where there is a separate phone line for the interpreting to simulate RSI. This means that both the interpreter and litigant have to use two different devices with sound coming from both to fully participate in the proceeding. This is extremely cumbersome and difficult to navigate both for the litigants and interpreters.

In the absence of RSI, all interpreting must be consecutive. Litigants and attorneys have had to affirmatively request this as most interpreters and court staff are accustomed to simultaneous interpreting. This has occurred specifically in cases where the interpreter and one party appear in-person and the other party appears remotely. If both parties require interpreting, the interpreting must be consecutive, unless the interpreter is on a separate headset and channel set up for RSI. Due to all these variables, it is especially important to make sure the interpreter can see and hear all parties and vice versa. In one example during a remote hearing, a litigant utilizing an interpreter by phone could not hear the interpreter but was unable to speak up because she did not know what was going on. Further, litigants using interpreters have reported being afraid of angering judicial officers by appearing remotely when it is clear that the interpreting would have to be consecutive rather than simultaneous, costing more of the court's time. This adds to litigants' fears that they will have less time for their hearings.

Capacity for remote platforms to allow for private rooms is another important consideration if the court instructs parties to meet and confer. The role of an interpreter for such meetings has been an important function of many hearings, especially in the eviction context. Prior to the public health crisis, in eviction hearings, the court provided a general overview of the process at the beginning, before it ordered parties to share evidence and attempt settlement. If parties are placed in private rooms or told to engage in other

settlement related proceedings, an interpreter must be provided for self-represented litigants. Many other variables and complex layers exist as well, such as the remote presentation of evidence for non-dominant language users and the need for sight translation of court orders and other documents presented at trial.

The entire legal system operates in the language of the advantaged. For many in the communities we serve, everything the court says is literally unintelligible. Legal aid organizations have had to step in and reach out to local courts to ask how meaningful language services are being provided to linguistically marginalized communities. In Los Angeles, we organized a meeting between legal services providers and the court's language access administrator, providing a series of questions and requested a system of reporting concerns. This has worked for individual cases, but again, is only a successful outcome for those who have the ability and resources to reach a legal aid advocate, who is then able to intervene. The broader systemic issues remain. In response, legal aid attorneys have strategized together and trained each other, as well as government entities, on the importance of language rights and creating equitable multilingual spaces. This type of coordination and advocacy has been critical in getting courts and other government entities to pay attention, address, and ameliorate linguistic and digital divides. Already overstretched nonprofits, however, cannot stand in completely for the failings of the courts and other government agencies. Language access cannot be an afterthought. It must be an integral part of all aspects of court operations, including planning, budgeting, data collection, hiring, training, outreach, technology, and oversight. The courts must embrace a culture shift that values the humanity and dignity of all individuals, reframing language access as a civil rights imperative.

Conclusion

These extraordinary times have required courts, attorneys, and litigants to adopt and adapt to new technologies and rapid changes across brief windows. While the global pandemic has forced society into virtual spaces, the commitment to make those spaces equitable and accessible to the communities we serve has been lacking. Of course, the fault does not lie with the courts alone. And there are those in the courts who have diligently and proactively addressed access concerns. The access issues, however, fall beyond individuals and require the commitment of the greater court administration and leadership. Now more

than ever, people look to systems like the court to deliver justice with dignity, respect, and fairness, and to provide equity and due process in the eye of the receiver.

Attendant to new technologies and remote options is the resultant bias that flows against the interests of self-represented and marginalized litigants. Understandably, frustrations and stress run high on all sides, particularly because we are adapting to new technologies against a background of a deadly pandemic. However, our disproportionately BIPOC client communities face the bias that results from court frustrations over poor technology and glitchy connections, from children in the courtroom, delays associated with requesting interpreters, prolonged hearings due to consecutive interpreting, video backgrounds that reveal their poverty, and from the predictable confusion and chaos that result when they try to adjust their court filings and participation with policies and rules that did not include them or help inform their involvement in the court process.

Achieving equity in the justice system is one of those problems whose sheer enormity leaves it constantly in the shadows. To acknowledge the gaping chasm would be to take on an obligation that officials may understandably see as insurmountable. But that is where the courts and others can take a lesson from our clients — we must demonstrate a commitment to daunting challenges and draw from the courage of those whose experiences are far more overwhelming and intimidating than the task we face. The lack of language access leads people to be so completely shut out that their travails almost always go unseen by the justice system. The cause of their suffering is also the cause of its invisibility. Even within the confines of limited court resources, there are concrete and ameliorative steps courts can take and affirmative outreach they can do through the nonprofits in their community to set a productive and committed path for equal access.

Courts must put forth necessary measures to ensure true and meaningful access for all during these unprecedented times. Appropriate and consistently followed guidelines and safeguards must be put in place regarding the use of technology, language access, timely hearings, communications, and equal access at all points. With the ongoing public health crisis and heightened struggle for racial equity, we must call upon the courts to be a beacon of hope in creating just and equitable access for the historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities we serve.

Pandemic Response Recommendations for Courts

- **Plain Language Materials and Outreach.** Courts should create clear plain language and multilingual materials that are regularly updated regarding court operations and user-friendly instructions on how to access their remote technology. Courts should regularly provide local community groups and legal aid organizations with these materials, which should also be available at public places, such as libraries and schools.
- **Use Website and Media to Provide Information.** Court websites should prominently display plain language and multilingual information for easy access. Courts should use social media to provide multilingual videos and other creative tools to disseminate information.
- **Fee Waivers.** Courts should not impose a fee to use its remote services. If they do, the fee waiver process should be simple and user-friendly to all.
- **Equal Access and Timely Hearings.** In calendaring cases, courts must ensure that cases with fee waivers and/or interpreters are not treated differently or experience undue delays.
- **Use of Technology — Access to Remote Platforms.** Courts should create clear plain language and multilingual materials to instruct litigants on when and how to use remote platforms. Courts should partner with local organizations and entities to provide alternate accessible remote spaces for those who do not feel safe or are otherwise unable to go to court.
- **Use of Technology — Interpreting in Remote Hearings.** Courts must implement updated guidelines and safeguards around telephonic and video remote interpreting. Courts must consider the myriad appearance scenarios and ways in which modes of interpreting (simultaneous or consecutive), number of interpreters, equipment, and safety protocols should adapt to those scenarios. Courts must also ensure that all parties can meaningfully participate through these mediums in accordance with appropriate standards and civil rights mandates.
- **Presenting Evidence.** Courts must have a simple and user-friendly way to allow self-represented litigants to present evidence.
- **Written Translations.** Courts should translate information about changes, closures, cases being calendared and continued, the use of telephonic or other video remote hearings, and other court functions, into the top languages used by local communities. This information should be mailed to litigants with ongoing matters, prominently displayed on the court website, posted at all points of contact with the public inside and outside of the court building itself, and disseminated through partners and community groups.
- **Access at All Points.** All court programs and activities must be accessible to all. This includes court proceedings, settlement and status conferences, self-help services, mediation, evaluations, workshops, and other court-ordered and court-based programs and activities. Courts must also ensure sufficient coverage by court staff to respond to telephone inquiries and that public-facing court staff are trained to provide up-to-date information on court operations, programs, and activities. Court programs and staff should have access to interpreting services and be trained to use them in real-time. If any telephone number provides audio recordings only, then that recorded information should be provided in multiple languages.

To act otherwise will further deepen the devastating and disparate impact on BIPOC communities, as we continue to confront barriers to achieving racial justice. As a legal aid community, we must do and demand more to ensure that all our diverse communities seeking to utilize the courts have access to justice.

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Remote Technology Resources

- Remote Hearings and Access to Justice During COVID-19 and Beyond, CA Commission on Access to Justice, May 18, 2020, <https://calatj.egnyte.com/dl/NgkEJzeDG7/>
- National Center for State Courts, Guiding Principles for Post-Pandemic Court Technology, July 2020: https://www.ncsc.org/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/42332/Guiding-Principles-for-Court-Technology.pdf
- National Center for State Courts, Video Remote Interpretation Solutions and Resources for Courts, A Pandemic Resource from NCSC, Language Access Services Section, June 2020: https://www.ncsc.org/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/41387/VRI-Solutions.pdf
- National Center for State Courts, Recommendation for In-Person Court Interpretation, A Pandemic Resource from NCSC, Language Access Services Section, June 2020: https://www.ncsc.org/__data/assets/pdf_file/0030/38478/Recommendations-In-Person-Court-Interpretation.pdf
- National Center for State Courts, “Tiny Chat” #10 (video overview of language access concerns for courts, including remote interpreting, translation, and interpreter safety): <https://www.ncsc.org/newsroom/public-health-emergency/tiny-chats>; https://www.ncsc.org/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/38933/Tiny-Chat-Companion-Language-Access.pdf
- *From Oregon*: COVID Interpreting Toolkit https://www.ncsc.org/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/20859/oregon-covid-interpreting-toolkit.pdf
- *From Washington State*: Remote Interpreting Best Practices during the COVID-19 Emergency, https://www.courts.wa.gov/programs_orgs/pos_interpret/content/pdf/Remote%20Interpreting%20Best%20Practices.pdf
- *From Minnesota*: COVID-19 Update for Court Interpreters. <http://mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Court-Interpreter-Program/MJBCourtInterpreterCommList/InterpreterCommDetail.aspx?id=15>
- Translated documents from various states:
 - » https://www.ncsc.org/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/20847
 - » *Colorado*: <https://www.courts.state.co.us/announcements/COVID-19.cfm>
 - » *North Carolina*: https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/inline-files/FAQs_SPANISH_05292020.pdf?G52Go51UCs0et5J9Ai4DFsoJdO4StVoR
 - » *Maryland*: <https://www.courts.state.md.us/coronavirusupdate>
 - » *DC*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iA2x_BTpt4Q
- ABA: Language Justice During COVID: https://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/projects/disaster-legalservices/language-justice-during-covid-19/
- Official federal government website on limited English proficiency: www.lep.gov
- Sample plain language materials on remote interpreting and other translation resources: <https://transcend.net/>

litigation based on state and federal civil rights requirements to obtain meaningful language services for clients. Joann was appointed to the California Judicial Council Language Access Plan Implementation Task Force and has also served on the boards of the Korean American Bar Association, Korean Resource Center, and the Center for the Pacific Asian Family. Joann may be reached at jlee@lafla.org.

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- Washington, DC. Julianna may be reached at jolee@lafila.org.
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over, United States and Los Angeles County.
 - 3 See Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts, Judicial Council of California, 2015 (https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/CLASP_report_060514.pdf); Superior Court of California, Los Angeles County, Limited English Proficiency Plan, 2019 LEP Plan Revisions (<http://www.lacourt.org/generalinfo/publicnotice/pdf/lep.pdf>); Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations (42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.; 28 C.F.R. Part 42, Subpart C); California Constitution; California Evidence Code 756; California Government Code 68092.1; California Government Code 7290 et seq; California Government Code 11135.
 - 4 U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over, Los Angeles County.
 - 5 California Courts, Judicial Branch of California, Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) (<https://www.courts.ca.gov/VRI.htm>).
 - 6 Studies show that 86% of low-income individuals' civil legal aid issues are not adequately addressed due to a lack of resources. See Legal Services Corporation, The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-income Americans, 2017 (<https://www.lsc.gov/media-center/publications/2017-justice-gap-report#bfrtoc-justice-gap-report>).

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- https://justleadwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/REJI-Organizational-Toolkit_Tool-G.pdf
- *Dismantling Racism:*
<https://resourcegeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2016-dRworks-workbook.pdf>
 - *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment, Hiring and Retention:*
https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/usdn-equity-in-recruitment_hiring_retention.pdf
 - *Justlead Washington: Organizational Race Equity Toolkit:*
<https://justleadwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/REJI-Toolkit-2nd-Edition-2020-Final.pdf>
- 1 Trisa Kern is the Director of Operations at Columbia Legal Services, an independent HR Consultant, and an investigator with MFR Law Group. She has focused her career on human resources and nonprofit management since 2004. She is a SHRM Certified Professional, has a Master of Nonprofit Management from DePaul University, and a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Missouri. She loves legal services and helping to shift the changing HR landscape through a lens of race equity and inclusion. Trisa may be reached at trisa@mfrlawgroup.com.

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offers a different way of thinking. It comes from a place of genuine compassion.

- 1 As executive director of Columbia Legal Services (CLS), Merf is leading organization-wide efforts to prioritize advocacy that supports community-led social justice movements that transform racialized systems and eradicate racism. Merf may be reached at merf.ehman@columbialegal.org.

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resource generation through social justice movements. Her successes and tenure at Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, now the largest immigrant rights org in the nation, fostered a critical lens towards fundraising and a deep love of community solidarity. Michelle is the founder of Freedom Conspiracy, Co-Chair of the founding Seattle chapter for Community-Centric Fundraising and host of The Ethical Rainmaker podcast. Michelle may be reached at michelle@michellemuri.com.