

What is a Legal Collective?

A legal collective is a non-hierarchical organization that provides legal services to a community or communities in need. Such work ranges from traditional criminal defense, to advocacy on behalf of immigrants, to legal support at large and small protests, to “Know Your Rights” and other law-related workshops.

Since the 1999 Seattle WTO protests, there has been a small movement of activist law collectives. These groups are usually non-lawyer centered and work as part of the movement for social justice. Law collectives are made up mostly or entirely of non-lawyers. (See the back panel for websites for other legal collectives.)

Law collectives usually work to empower people to provide their own legal support. They give “trainer trainings” so people can give “Know Your Rights” and other workshops to their communities; teach people to provide legal support for their affinity groups or for specific protests; and demystify the law in general and law collective work in particular.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS! TRAININGS

What a Know Your Rights Training Does NOT Do:

- *Prevent you from getting arrested.*

We wish it did, but the fact is that there are things that happen on the street that won’t come up during a KYR training and not every officer will go “by the book.” Knowing what your rights are will help to equip you with the knowledge necessary to handle these types of street situations to keep you as safe as possible. In the end, we always recommend trusting your instincts. Knowing what your rights are will help you to do that.

- *Give legal advice or strategy for your case.*

If you have a case pending, your specific questions should be discussed with a lawyer. Details of your case are privileged information to be discussed between you and your lawyer. The purpose of KYR is to provide a better foundation for you to work with. The legal system is not easy, but it isn’t impossible, either.

- *Provide you with a lawyer.*

Neither justUs, nor a training can ensure you with a lawyer in the future. We can, however, point you to resources that can.

Topics

- Know Your Rights on the Street
- Know Your Rights during protests
- Immigrant Rights on the Street
- Immigrant Rights during protests
- Searches and Seizures of your home/person
- Video Taping On the Street
- Navigating the System: Arrest to Arraignment

Materials

All of materials made by justUs are available on our website: www.justusnyc.org. You may download, print, and distribute the materials at your convenience. As additional materials become available, they will be posted to our website.

Purpose

Once you receive a KYR training, we encourage you to come back, learn how to do the trainings and share your information with others. The purpose of this collective is legal sustainability. That means you learn the skills and teach someone else--hopefully, many other people.

OTHER TRAININGS

Unfortunately, the legal system does not stop with an arrest. And knowing what your rights are don’t help you when you are in jail or being arraigned. That’s when your friends, family, and community need to know what actions they can take to help you. There are a few trainings that covers some of that process.

Jail Support

Jail Support consists of concerned citizens who may or may not be related to the individual in custody in a precinct. Some of the things that we talk about are:

- *What you may or may not be able to do to let your loved ones know that you support them while they are being held.*

Knowing that while you are incarcerated, you have the right to remain silent is not always as easy as it sounds. Knowing that there is a support system outside of the precinct helps to make that easier and can protect you from harm.

- *What the impact of immediate community support can mean for the accused.*

Jail support can emotionally help individuals inside of the precinct, but there is also a possibility that it can also help the case.

Court Support

Part of what happens during the legal process is that it can wear you down--especially if you are maintaining an innocence plea. Court support can help the accused in sustaining their innocence and exonerating themselves from a potentially unjust system.

Setting Up Your Own Legal Collective

Many hands make work light. We can help you to set-up a legal collective in your city, borough, or community. A part of the justUs mission is to create sustainable legal resources. We can be a resource for you as you are to others. If your group is interested in setting up a legal collective, please contact us at info@justus.org

OTHER LEGAL COLLECTIVES

(listed in order of proximity to NYC; not a complete list)

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - Up Against the Law, Motherfuckers!

(no website available)

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - R2K Legal

(www.r2klegal.org)

"Over 400 people were arrested while protesting at the 2000 Republican National Convention (RNC) in Philadelphia, PA. This website provides information on their legal situation and the issues they are protesting."

Washington, DC - Justice and Solidarity

www.justiceandsolidarity.org

"We combine our resources with those of the existing progressive legal community to: act as a clearinghouse of information, provide or arrange for relevant and/or requested trainings, and support the empowerment of activists planning actions in D.C., arrested individuals, and community members, and whatever else moves us."

Fort Benning, Georgia - School of the Americas Watch (SOA) Legal Collective

www.soaw.org

"The Legal Collective is a group of activists, lawyers, law students and paralegals who offer legal trainings and support during the November vigils and subsequent trials."

New Orleans, Louisiana - Common Ground Legal Collective

www.commongroundrelief.org

"The legal team of Common Ground seeks to provide free legal assistance to residents as they begin rebuilding their lives after the recent hurricanes. We provide a free legal clinic every Saturday with volunteer lawyers from Louisiana Legal Aid, Loyola Law Clinic and volunteer Common Ground lawyers. We also help document police misconduct and unsafe prison conditions."

Austin, Texas - Austin People's Law Collective

<http://piano.geo.utexas.edu/fing/aplc/>

"The Austin People's Legal Collective (APLC) is a group of activists committed to providing legal trainings (know your rights, jail/court solidarity, etc.), doing legal observing and supporting the Austin community throughout the entire legal process, from arrest to trial, when necessary."

San Francisco, California - Midnight Special

www.midnightspecial.net

"The Midnight Special Law Collective is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to providing legal trainings and accessible, relevant, democratic and accountable legal support to a wide range of activists participating in the struggle for social change."

NYC RESOURCES

JustUs Legal Collective: justusnyc.org

National Lawyers Guild: nlg.org

National Lawyers Guild NYC: nlgnyc.org

New York Civil Liberties Union: nyclu.org

The Legal Aid Society: legal-aid.org

Bronx Defenders: bronxdefenders.org

Brooklyn Defenders Service: bds.org

Queens Law Associates: queenslegalservices.org

New York Lawyers for Public Interest: nylpi.org

National Immigration Project:
nationalimmigrationproject.org

New York Immigration Coalition: thenyic.org

Sylvia Rivera Law Project: srlp.org

Re-Entry Services NY: reentry.net/ny

Jailhouse Lawyers Handbook: jailhouselaw.org

JustUs Legal Collective provides legal information and support for at-risk communities to address inequalities in the legal system and promote self-sustainable community development in the greater New York area.

justUs Legal Collective NYC

This pamphlet is intended to give you a basic idea of what justUs does in the NYC area. This is not a substitute for a licensed attorney and does not constitute legal advice. JustUs Legal Collective does not provide legal representation and cannot provide legal advice. If you have specific questions about a personal matter, we urge you to seek legal help. For more information on our work or how to get in touch with someone who can assist you, please visit us online at www.justusnyc.org or email us at info@justusnyc.org.

