



Dear Friends,

Throughout this year, we've been walking through our history and milestones, starting with our founding in 1974 and landing in the 21st century. This month, we're exploring **Bet Tzedek's accomplishments in the early aughts** in this news digest and on social media. You can find our social media accounts at the bottom of this page and join the conversation! #50YearsOfJusticeForAll

Here are some of Bet Tzedek's key milestones in the early 2000s:

- **2000:** Bet Tzedek establishes the Kinship Care Project to assist relative caregivers who are custodians, legal guardians, or adoptive parents to minor children.
- **2001:** Bet Tzedek opens the Employment Rights Project in recognition of the growing number of "working poor" in L.A. who remain low-income despite working full-time as garment workers, day laborers, domestics, carwash employees, and gardeners.
- **2002:** Bet Tzedek settles a major lawsuit against the City of Los Angeles' most convicted slumlord after unraveling a complex web of sham corporations and other fraudulent practices. The settlement wins \$1 million for the City.
- **2004:** Bet Tzedek settles a case on behalf of garment workers employed by a contractor to a national retailer. Because of a new state law, the award is the first time ever that a retailer agrees to pay workers for a manufacturer's labor violations.
- **2007:** In partnership with the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Bet Tzedek launches the Self-Help Conservatorship Clinic and assists more than 400 self-represented litigants file for a conservatorship for a loved one.
- **2008:** Bet Tzedek creates and implements its innovative Pro Bono Clinic Model which serves as the foundation for its national Holocaust Survivors Justice Network. In the first six months, the model increased the number of clients served by more than 500%. By the end of the year, nearly 4,000 volunteers provided \$8 million in pro bono support.

We continue our important work today, with expanded services to help the unhoused, undocumented immigrant children, the LGBTQ+ community, workers, tenants, the elderly, Holocaust survivors, small business owners, and more.

[View Our Services](#)

Celebrating our 'Summer for Justice' Interns



Staff and SFJ Interns at the Bet Tzedek Company BBQ 2024

We are grateful to have 43 distinguished law students and undergraduates from across the U.S. actively partaking in our **Summer for Justice Program**, soon coming to a close. Among our diverse interns are both international and first-generation American students. With experiences ranging from being an AmeriCorps Fellow to volunteering at an immigration clinic to advocating for climate revolution, these exceptional students come to us from schools like Yale, Duke, University of Michigan, UCLA, Georgetown, University of Chicago, UC Berkeley, Southwestern College, and University of Southern California.

These interns are now part of the hardworking network of individuals who make our fight for justice possible. They, along with our legal experts and advocates, staff, [volunteers](#), and generous [donors](#) have enabled Bet Tzedek to help 1 million underserved people since its inception 50 years ago. **To everyone who has been involved with our work and mission, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Let's continue fighting for justice — together, as always.**

Our Summer Interns go to Court!



Two of our Summer for Justice interns on the Immigration Team, **Yaneli Guajardo** (far right) and **Jesus Ocampo** (second from left) attended a hearing for a Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) findings/Guardianship petition last month with their supervising attorney, **Lesly M. Mendoza** (second from right). Yaneli is a rising 3L student at Loyola Law School and Jesus Ocampo is a rising 3L at Gonzaga University School of Law, who is originally from Guadalajara, Mexico. They share their experiences:

Yaneli: “It was my first time observing a hearing about these specific matters and it felt like I was getting an in-depth understanding with Lesly guiding us through the whole process. Lesly also let us know that the judge — the Honorable Gus T. May, a former attorney at Bet Tzedek — would be hearing our client’s case. We were able to talk with him in chambers and take a picture together. I am so grateful to Lesly for giving us this opportunity to attend a hearing and for setting a great tone for the rest of my summer clerkship.”

Jesus: “Lesly walked us through the entire process and was more than willing to answer any questions. Not only did I witness the passion and high level of advocacy demonstrated by Lesly, but I also witnessed the kindness and vast knowledge of Judge Gus T. May. This entire experience re-emphasized the reason why I decided to go to law school — to help immigrants. I hope to get more opportunities like this to become a better advocate and future attorney.”

Welcoming a New Directing Attorney for Our 'Access to Justice' Program

Bet Tzedek is thrilled to have **Michael Waldren** join us as our new Directing Attorney for Access to Justice (Self-Help) Programs leading Bet Tzedek's Self-Help Conservatorship Clinic, Decedents' Estates Clinic, and Elder Abuse Restraining Order teams. Michael comes to us from Community Legal Aid SoCal, with years of experience in helping DV clients in both direct services and self-help settings. We are looking forward to Michael's expert contributions in our fight for justice for all!

Michael Waldren

Directing Attorney,
Access to Justice (Self-Help) Programs

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I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to join the amazing staff at Bet Tzedek. I look forward to providing trauma-informed care to the vulnerable communities my services are intended to impact. Bet Tzedek has a long tradition of guiding the community in its efforts to uplift our neighbors, and I intend on continuing to keep that my focus as Bet Tzedek endeavors to expand its services by improving systems that can help drive justice forward for those in need of them most.

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Homelessness Declines in L.A., but Much Work Remains

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority released the [results of the 2024 Homeless Point-in-Time count](#). The results give Los Angeles hope. Homelessness is down: more people are off the streets and indoors. However, homelessness is still a huge problem in L.A., especially among marginalized communities.

Additionally, the Supreme Court overturned lower court rulings late last month in *Grants Pass v. Johnson*, thus allowing for the criminalization of people sleeping outside when they have no other safe place to go. Mayor Karen Bass criticized the ruling in the following statement:

“[This] decision is not surprising given the make-up of the Court but disappointing nonetheless. This ruling must not be used as an excuse for cities across the country to attempt to arrest their way out of this problem or hide the homelessness crisis in neighboring cities or in jail... The only way to address this crisis is to bring people indoors with housing and supportive services.”

At Bet Tzedek, we work tirelessly to help those who are unhoused and to protect tenants and homeowners. **The [Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles](#) is working with Bet Tzedek and three other legal aid organizations (Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Inner City Law Center, and Neighborhood Legal Services) to connect pro bono lawyers with individuals at risk of eviction.**

Help a Senior, Disabled Mom Pursue an Anti-Harrassment Case Against Her Abusive Former Landlord

Case Description: Ms. A moved into the back portion of a home in November 2022 with her two adult sons. She eventually learned that her landlord, R, had illegally subdivided the structure (originally a Single Family Dwelling) by erecting an interior wall, which split the structure into two parts, making it seem as though Ms. A's portion was a legal, separate unit. In May 2023, R began shutting off the water for months at a time. Ms. A was forced to shower in the yard. Ms. A endured uninhabitable and dangerous conditions and was subjected to multiple instances of harassment and invasion of privacy with the installation of security cameras pointed at her unit. R insisted on keeping an illegally constructed gate open, giving individuals from an adjacent homeless encampment known for illegal activity easy access to Ms. A's unit. At one point, R repeatedly cut off locks that Ms. A purchased for the gate. In July 2023, the Health Department inspected the unit, declaring it uninhabitable.

In February 2024, R illegally locked Ms. A out and disposed of most of her belongings. He had her son's car impounded and allegedly moved new tenants in. Ms. A suffered a lasting injury trying to salvage some of her property. R changed all locks, chained the doors and gates, and tore down the wall illegally separating the unit. R subsequently served Ms. A with a series of Unlawful Detainers (UDs). He lost the first two, with the third case set for July 2024. R has also attempted to cause Ms. A to lose her valuable Section 8 Voucher, with false claims to the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles. Ms. A moved to a new unit in January 2024 but remains extremely traumatized from this years' long ordeal.

Next Steps: Pursue a Tenant Anti-Harassment case on behalf of Ms. A, and remain in communication with Ms. A's public interest eviction defense attorney. Possibly join with the client's UD defense case.

Staffing Recommendations: Experienced litigation attorney and paralegal. Bet Tzedek is available to co-counsel this matter, if preferred.

If interested, contact Director of Pro Bono Programs, Sara Levine, at slevine@bettzedek.org.

Volunteer Spotlight: Prospective Law Student Jason Guo



“Volunteering at Bet Tzedek (aiding with archival research and writing) has been one of my most rewarding experiences in the L.A. area. I have always aspired to assist my community in a meaningful and effective manner. Upon discovering Bet Tzedek, I realized I had found the perfect organization. Bet Tzedek consistently offers roles that align with one's skills, and the staff are exceptionally kind and supportive, making the experience both enjoyable and fulfilling. This positive environment continually motivates me to contribute more.”

Thank you, Jason, for helping us in our fight for justice for all!

Join the Bet Tzedek Team!

Have a passion for helping underserved residents in the community? Want to work alongside dedicated staff and volunteers who help up to 100,000 people per year?

Here are some critical positions we need to fill, plus more (see button below):

[DIRECTING ATTORNEY: GENERALIST SERVICES FOR SPECIALTY POPULATIONS](#)

[VICE PRESIDENT: LEGAL PROGRAMS](#)

[STAFF ATTORNEY: TENANT DEFENSE & HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION](#)

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