



# EQUAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Annual Report | 2017

**eji**

The Equal Justice Initiative works to end mass incarceration and excessive punishment, challenge violent and inhumane prison conditions, and confront the history of racial inequality and injustice in America. For nearly three decades, we have represented the poor, the condemned, the disfavored, children prosecuted as adults, people with mental illness, and others who are marginalized by our criminal justice system.

In the past year, we have won relief for dozens of people who were condemned to death by execution and who were sentenced to die in prison when they were children, and we continue to represent scores of other condemned juveniles. We won a hard-fought victory to reform abusive prison conditions

and we continue to challenge extreme sentences for people who are not a threat to public safety. In the last year, we continued to win the release of many clients who were unfairly sentenced or wrongly convicted and we remain steadfast in our commitment to advance criminal justice reform.

We have become a national leader in confronting our nation's history of racial injustice and reached millions this year with our innovative reports, exhibits, online presence, and multimedia projects. Next year, on April 26, 2018, we will open the first national memorial to victims of lynching in America and a new museum that explores the legacy of slavery in the United States with innovative technology, original research, and fine art.

**Your support makes this work possible.**



**EJI Director Bryan Stevenson**

*Casey Bayer*

## CHILDREN IN PRISON

In 2006, EJI began a litigation effort to end the practice of condemning children to die in prison with sentences of life imprisonment without parole. Our effort succeeded when the United States Supreme Court banned life-without-parole sentences for children convicted of nonhomicide offenses in 2010. The Court then struck down mandatory life-without-parole sentences for all children in 2012.



**Ian Manuel performs his poetry at EJI's annual benefit in New York** NYU Photo Bureau: Hollenshead

Following these Supreme Court victories, EJI continued to represent hundreds of people condemned to die in prison when they were children. We have now won reduced sentences for dozens of people and won release for people who spent decades in horrific confinement, including some since they were 13 or 14 years old.

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Ian Manuel was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole for a nonhomicide offense at the age of 13. Ian became one of the youngest children condemned to die in prison in the United States.

Because he was a very small boy, prison officials put Ian in solitary confinement, where he remained for 20 years.

This year, after multiple hearings and appeals, EJI won Ian's release from prison after 26 years of imprisonment. Ian is a talented poet whose work was featured in Bryan Stevenson's bestseller, *Just Mercy*. He is now pursuing a career in writing.

EJI supported Ian's transition home through our PREP (Post-Release Education and Preparation) program, which was developed specifically for people like Ian who entered prison when they were children.



**Kuntrell Jackson at EJI**

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Kuntrell Jackson received a mandatory life-without-parole sentence for a crime committed at age 14. EJI took his case to the United States Supreme Court and won a landmark ruling.

In 2017, EJI won Kuntrell's release from prison and he is now in EJI's re-entry program and a first-year college student.

EJI continues to challenge the adult prosecution of children, and we are working to end the practice of housing children in adult jails and prisons.

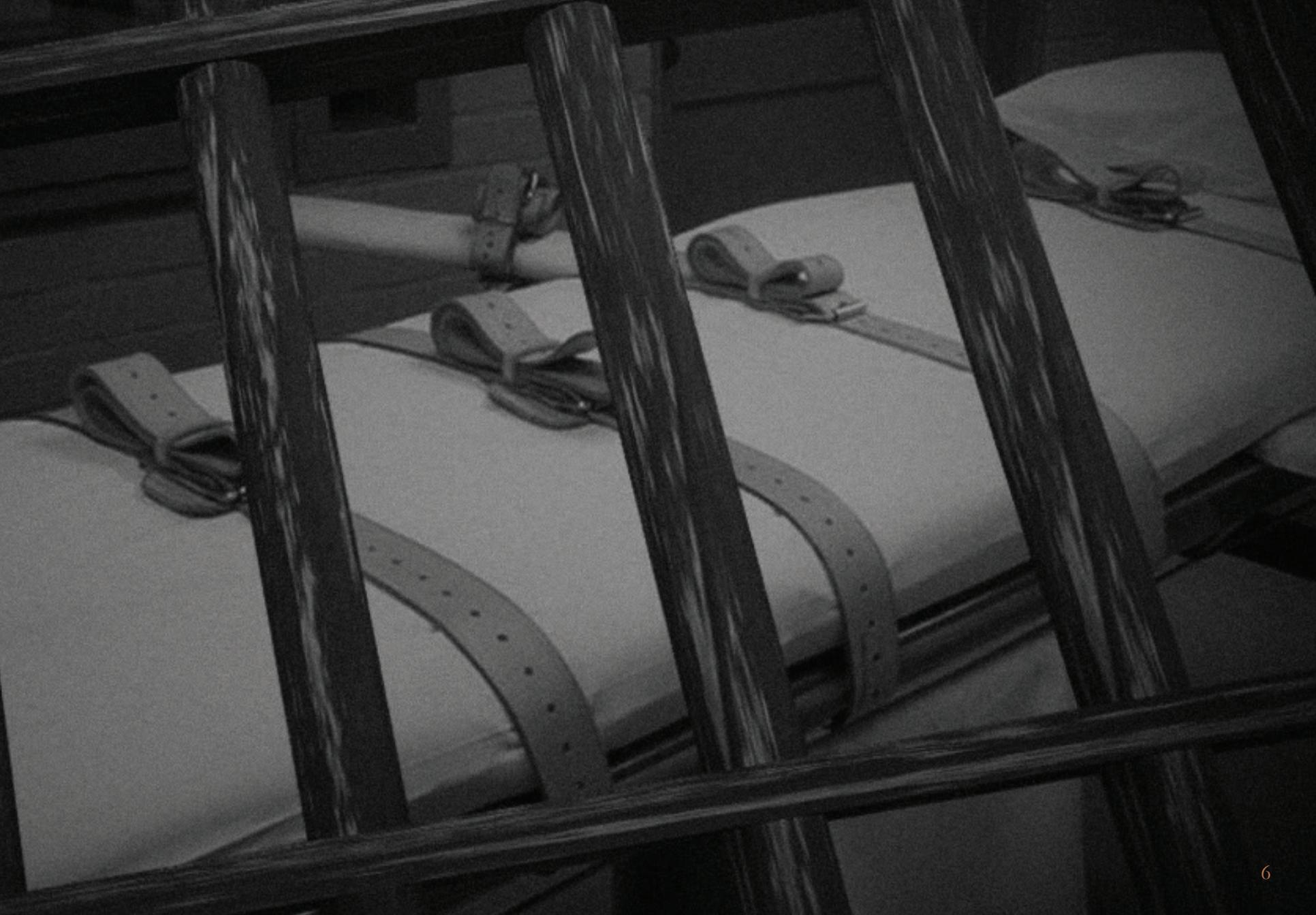
## DEATH PENALTY

**EJI remains a national leader in challenging capital punishment in America.**

We provide direct legal assistance to scores of death row prisoners and in the last year, we won relief for nearly a dozen condemned prisoners in Alabama.

In 2017, Alabama remained the only state in the country that allowed elected trial judges to override jury verdicts of life and impose death sentences without explanation. Relying on EJI's research, the Alabama Legislature finally abolished the practice this year, ending a system that has condemned more than 100 people to death and resulted in 11 executions.





## RE-ENTRY

More than half a million people are released from prison every year in the United States, with virtually no support for the inherent challenges of re-entering society, including stringent parole conditions, exploitative fees charged by private supervision companies, obstacles to employment and business opportunities, and the denial of voting rights.

Ten years ago, EJI started a re-entry program that provides support and services for clients when they are released from prison, including help getting driver's licenses, finding places to live, and applying for jobs. We assist clients in obtaining transportation that allows them to maintain employment, dealing with changes in technology during their incarceration, and managing finances. We also provide therapy and counseling for clients to help them cope with the trauma of incarceration and to ease the transition from prison.

EJI's Post-Release Education and Preparation (PREP) program is a long-term supervised release program concentrating on the unique needs of people who entered prison before they were 16

years old. PREP provides employment, daily supervision, counseling from licensed mental health professionals, and educational programming for clients who entered prison as children.



**EJI attorney Ben Schaefer with client Ian Manuel in a PREP computer training session.**

*Juan Mejia*

EJI client Lydia Diane Jones was pardoned by the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles this fall, 11 years after she became the first woman in Alabama, sentenced to life imprisonment without parole, to be released from Tutwiler Prison for Women. Since her release she has lived with her children and her mother in Birmingham, Alabama. While working full-time and raising her family, Ms. Jones earned a bachelor's degree in administrative office management. She was initially sentenced to life imprisonment without parole for a crime she did not commit.



**Diane Jones (here with her cousin, mother, and EJI Senior Attorney Charlotte Morrison) was awarded a full pardon.**



**Former clients Ian Manuel, Anthony Ray Hinton, Kuntrell Jackson, and Jacob Warner all now work with EJI.**

*DiAnna Paulk*





## PRISON CONDITIONS

EJI continues to challenge the exceptionally violent and inhumane conditions in Alabama prisons, and we are pleased to report that our work achieved significant reforms this year.

In 2014, EJI filed a lawsuit in federal court against the Alabama Department of Corrections challenging conditions at St. Clair Correctional Facility, which has one of the highest homicide rates of incarcerated people in the nation.

This fall, after several years of intensive litigation, EJI won a settlement with the corrections department that obligates the state to make substantial changes, repairs, and reforms that we believe will dramatically reduce the level of violence at St. Clair.

### **St. Clair Correctional Facility in Springville, Alabama**

*William Widmer*

# LYNCHING IN AMERICA

EJI's multiyear investigation has documented more than 4400 racial terror lynchings of African Americans between 1877 and 1950 in Southern states and states outside the South.

Through transformative partnerships with Google, Andra Day, and the Brooklyn Museum, EJI's groundbreaking report, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, reached millions of people

across the country and around the world in 2017.

This summer, EJI launched *Lynching in America*, an interactive digital experience created in partnership with Google. With interactive maps showing the locations of racial terror lynchings and in-depth profiles of people whose lives were forever altered by these acts of violence, the site demonstrates the enduring legacy of lynching and racial terror in America.



**EJI's interactive website has reached millions of visitors since it launched this summer.**



**Our collaboration with Google led to an innovative and deeply compelling exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in New York.**

The exhibit presented EJI's groundbreaking research and connected it to fine art and archival material from the Brooklyn Museum's collections. The exhibition showcased documentary films and oral histories of the descendants of lynching victims, coupled with work from artists including Jacob Lawrence, Kara Walker, Mark Bradford, Clarissa Sligh, Glenn Ligon, Elizabeth Catlett, Sanford Biggers, Titus Kaphar, and Dread Scott, and was experienced by more than 30,000 visitors.



We also used music to express the painful and difficult truth about our nation's history of racial inequality. Grammy Award-nominated artist Andra Day joined EJI to raise awareness for our work with the release of her recording of the iconic protest song, *Strange Fruit*. Three million people have seen her powerful music video, and her performances on the Daily Show and at the Global Citizen Festival have reached a global audience.

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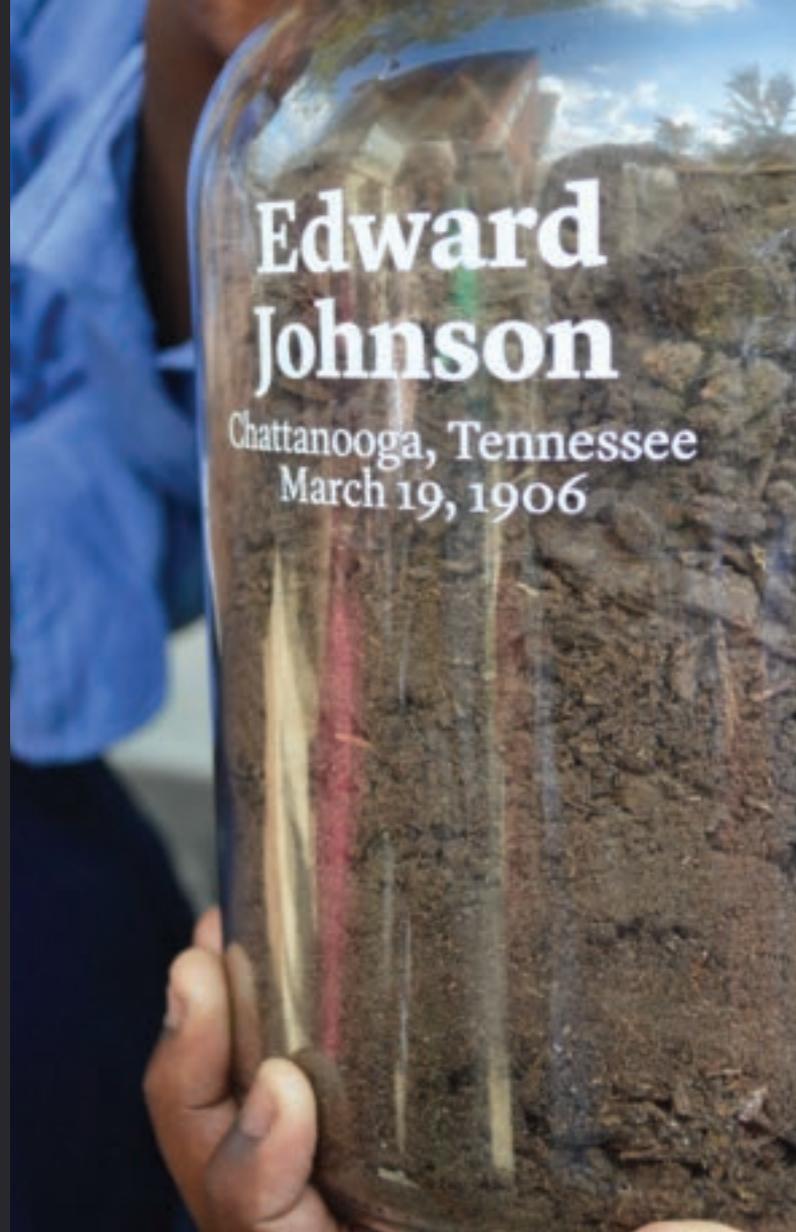
## COMMUNITY REMEMBRANCE PROJECT

EJI has worked with thousands of volunteers to collect soil from over 300 lynching sites as part of our Community Remembrance Project.

The jars of soil will be exhibited in EJI's Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration. Each jar bears the name of a man, woman, or child lynched in America, as well as the date and location of the lynching.

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In January 1906, a white woman in Hamilton County, Tennessee, reported she had been raped by a black man, and three days later, a young black man named Edward Johnson was arrested. He insisted he was innocent, but an all-white jury convicted him and sentenced him to death. On March 19, 1906, the United States Supreme Court agreed to hear his appeal, and Justice John Marshall Harlan asked the sheriff to safeguard Mr. Johnson in the meantime. That night, a white mob broke into the county jail, seized Mr. Johnson, and dragged him to the Walnut Street Bridge in Chattanooga, where they shot him to death. They left a note on his corpse: "To Justice Harlan. Come get your ni---r now."



Anna Steere



Anna Steere

(Above) EJI staff address community members at the Community Remembrance Event in Chattanooga, Tennessee

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Amber Green

Almost 25 percent of documented lynchings were sparked by charges of sexual assault, at a time when the mere accusation of sexual impropriety regularly aroused violent mobs and ended in lynching. A mob of more than 1000 white people lynched 17-year-old William Andrews near the Somerset County Courthouse on Maryland's Eastern Shore after a white woman accused him of

assaulting her. The teen insisted he was innocent and pleaded for mercy as the mob beat him in the head with clubs, stabbed him with knives and razors, and trampled him on the courthouse lawn. The mob hanged him from an oak tree and shot at him until they ran out of bullets, then left his body hanging as a message to the entire black community.

## THE LEGACY MUSEUM: FROM ENSLAVEMENT TO MASS INCARCERATION

Located on the site of a former warehouse where black people were enslaved in Montgomery, Alabama, this narrative museum uses interactive media, sculpture, videography, and exhibits to immerse visitors in the sights and sounds of the domestic slave trade, racial terrorism, the Jim Crow South, and the world's largest prison system. Compelling visuals and data-rich exhibits provide a one-of-a-kind opportunity to investigate America's history of racial injustice and its legacy — to draw dynamic connections across generations of Americans impacted by the tragic history of racial inequality.

The new, interactive museum employs unique technology to dramatize the enslavement of

African Americans and the evolution of racial terror lynchings, legalized racial segregation, and racial hierarchy in America. Relying on previously undisclosed first-person accounts of the domestic slave trade, EJI's critically acclaimed reports, films, online experience, exhibit on lynching, and recently composed content on segregation, this museum will explore the history of racial inequality and its relationship to a range of contemporary issues from mass incarceration to police violence.

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**The Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice will open on April 26, 2018.**







## NATIONAL MEMORIAL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

**More than 4400 African American men, women, and children were hanged, burned alive, shot, drowned, and beaten to death by white mobs between 1877 and 1950.**

Millions more fled the South as refugees from racial terrorism, profoundly impacting the entire nation. Until now, there has been no national memorial acknowledging the victims of racial terror lynchings. On a hill-top overlooking Montgomery, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice is a sacred space for truth-telling and reflection about racial terror in America and its legacy.

The memorial features six-foot steel monuments that acknowledge the thousands of racial terror lynching victims in the United States and detail the counties and states where this terrorism took place. In the six-acre park surrounding the memorial is a field of identical monuments, waiting to be claimed and installed in the counties they represent. Over time, the memorial will document which communities have confronted the truth of this terror, and which ones have not.

The memorial site will contextualize racial terror lynchings through sculptures dramatizing the legacy of slavery, codified racial segregation, and contemporary issues of racial violence.

# LYNCHING MARKERS

EJI is installing markers at lynching sites across the South and engaging community members in activities designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of our nation's history of racial injustice.



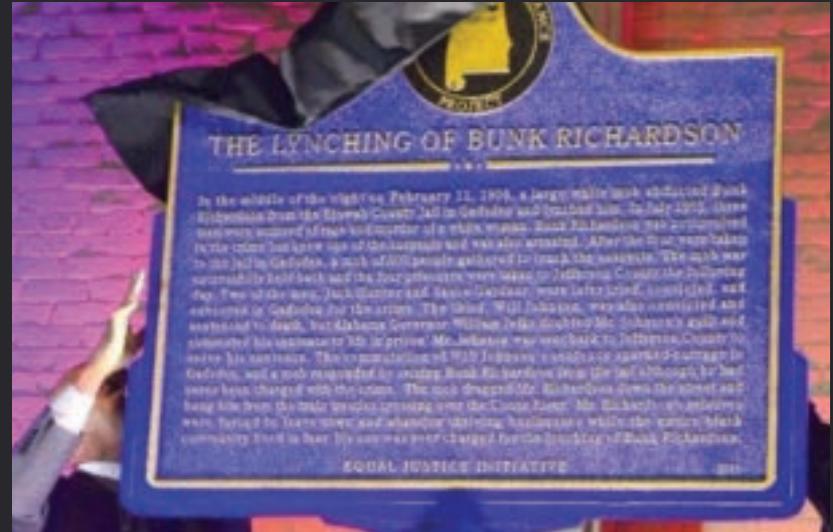
In March, local residents joined EJI in unveiling a historical marker memorializing eight African American men lynched in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, between 1884 and 1933.



EJI director Bryan Stevenson offered reflections at the dedication program at the First African Baptist Church.



Over one hundred community members, including relatives of lynching victims Austin Callaway and Henry Gilbert, attended the dedication ceremony in LaGrange, Georgia.



In partnership with the City of Gadsden and Gadsden Reads, EJI dedicated a historical marker to commemorate the 1906 lynching of Bunk Richardson. A crowd of 200 people gathered to hear reflections, music, and poetry before the marker was unveiled.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

EJI's public education work continued to expand this year, reaching more people than ever before. Our staff hosted thousands of students of all ages, faith groups, community organizations, policymakers, human rights advocates, and international visitors for programs at our Montgomery office, and addressed conferences, congregations, and colleges from California to Kenya. We continue to create dynamic original content for our websites, which have had over two million visitors this year alone, and we launched a new website focusing on the Legacy

Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice this fall.

This year, EJI collaborated with director Julie Zammarchi and acclaimed television, film, and stage actor Chris Chalk to create an animated short film about the lynching of Private Neely, which mirrors the violent killings of countless other African American veterans. The piece is based on EJI's original research, which is detailed in our recent report, *Lynching in America: Targeting Black Veterans*.



Scenes from *The Lynching of Private James Neely*



**Brooklyn Museum  
exhibit opening**

Google Brand Studio

## EJI STAFF



**Deputy Program Manager Kiara Boone and Program Assistant Jonathan Kubakundimana**

*NYU Photo Bureau: Hollenshead*



*(Clockwise from left) Deputy Director Randy Susskind, Operations Director Eva Ansley, Senior Attorney Angie Setzer, Deputy Director of Development Nancy Hendrix, Attorney Evan Milligan, Senior Attorney Aaryn Urell, and Director Bryan Stevenson*

*DiAnna Paulk*



EJI Attorney Evan Milligan at soil collection in Chattanooga, Tennessee

Anna Steere



EJI Justice Fellow Sade Stevens and Program Assistant Jonathan Kubakundimana join community activists for Community Remembrance event in Maryland

Nia Avery



Staff Attorney John Dalton

NYU Photo

Bureau: Hollenshead



EJI has won freedom for scores of people wrongly convicted or unfairly sentenced to death, life imprisonment without parole, and other extreme punishments. At EJI's benefit this year, several clients were honored, including Talmedge Hayes, Anthony Ray Hinton, Ronald Elston, Ian Manuel, Kim Powell, Monica Washington, Marsha Colbey, Willie Leason, and David Garlock. *NYU Photo Bureau: Hollenshead*



**EJI Staff 2017**

*DiAnna Paulk*



**Equal Justice Initiative**

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**[www.eji.org](http://www.eji.org)**

EJI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.