EQUAL JUSTICE EVENT

HONORING

Willie Trotman

President, NAACP, Spring Valley Chapter

(In Memoriam)

Paul Piperato

Rockland County Clerk

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29TH • 6:30PM

Legal Aid Society of Rockland County, Inc.

stronger together.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank you all for attending the Legal Aid Society's annual fundraiser. Every year, we hold what we routinely used to refer to as our Annual Gala. However, as I wrote to some of you, having a "gala" this year seemed inappropriate. What is there to celebrate? So, instead of a gala, you have joined the Legal Aid Society's "Equal Justice Event". I hope we can go back to having "galas" next year and beyond.

Even in this terrible year, the importance of fighting for equal justice has not been diminished. In fact, between persistent systemic racism, marginalization of people of color and economic inequality, the fight for equality is more important than ever. LASRC is committed to continue that fight.

Nor does the pandemic eliminate or detract from the need to honor those who dedicate their lives to fighting for equality and to serving the public good. Our two honorees tonight exemplify how one can live a life dedicated to those goals.

For as long as I can remember, Willie Trotman has always been there if racial injustice or other injustice needed to be fought. Sometimes, the very best advice I could give to somebody was and is: "Call Willie. He can help you". Considering the terrible acts of injustice currently occurring in Rockland County, such as what has happened in the East Ramapo School District, Mr. Trotman's work is of extraordinary relevance and significance at this very moment.

I did not know Paul Piperato as well as some of you. But I have spoken to many of you about him. Mr. Piperato loved helping people. He was always there to serve. One of his joys, in which he took great pride, was helping immigrants become U.S. citizens. This simple quote from Judge John Grant summarizes best what I heard: Paul... was a good man who was a real public servant and just trying to help people every day".

In so many ways, having any sort of an event this year does not feel right. Asking for money is more uncomfortable than usual. Yet, I feel as if we have no choice. Our governmental funding is being cut and we don't know for how long (if not forever). I have no doubt that once the pandemic restrictions are lifted, and they will be, we will be busier than ever. For example, I dread the moment when the evictions will resume. I was told by some of my colleagues that they are waiting to file as many as 50 new cases once new non-payment evictions will again be heard by the courts.

In view of the reductions in governmental funding, private funding is more important than ever. That's one of the reasons why we are holding this event. Please help us to continue to be able to help our clients!

Respectfully,

Alexander Bursztein
Executive Director
Legal Aid Society of Rockland County, Inc.

WHAT WE DO
Mission and Core Program Areas

Each year, Legal Aid Society of Rockland County, Inc. (LASRC) represents and assists over 4,500 residents of Rockland County with its staff of 20 attorneys and paralegals. Our mission is to provide equal access to justice in our community, which is exactly what we have been doing since 1966.

There are many people in Rockland County who are living below the poverty line, and retaining a private attorney is not within their reach, leaving many with no option but to go to court unrepresented, leading to devastating consequences on their most essential needs. Household incomes of 200% or below of the federal poverty guidelines will typically qualify for our service. For mortgage foreclosures, your income must fall below 300% of the federal poverty guidelines.

The LASRC is making great efforts to increase the number of people we serve by providing "Know Your Rights" outreach clinics that help residents understand their basic rights should they face a legal proceeding.

Children's Rights

We help protect the rights of children by representing them in Rockland County Family Court in cases involving abuse and neglect, PINS, juvenile delinquency, custody and visitation. Our attorneys appear in over 1,700 matters each year in Family Court.

Foreclosure Defense

Our attorneys provide free legal help to homeowners to stop foreclosure actions and to preserve the dream of homeownership for as many families and senior citizens as possible by filing defenses to foreclosure actions and requesting loan modifications from banks.

Housing

We offer representation to those facing eviction proceedings to ensure that their rights and, in all cases, their housing, is preserved. We also work hard to ensure that as many clients as possile retain their housing subsidy and play a leading role in preventing homelessness.

Public Benefits

Our attorneys work to ensure that as many people as possible preserve or obtain the benefits that they are entitled to, ranging from SSI, Disability, Unemployment and Medicaid.

Domestic Violence & Divorce

We focus on stopping family violence and assist income-eligible victims of domestic violence in obtaining divorces, and place emphasis on the enforcement of the law to protect the victims from future violence.

HIV / AIDS

At LASRC, our attorneys are specialized in representing people living with HIV/AIDS in a wide variety of matters affecting them, including housing, discrimination, permanency planning, and Social Security Disability.

Community Outreach

We also provide outreach to the community and other local agencies through a variety of ways including brochures, attending community events, providing free clinics at our office and making education presentations to ensure that our clients are assisted in the best way possible.

Disabilities Benefits

Many individuals who are entitled to Social Security Disability or Supplementary Security Disability are wrongfully denied of these important benefits, before the individual even sees a judge. Our attorneys represent individuals at these administrative hearings and fight for their benefits to be reinstated or maintained.

Our Impact On Individual Lives And Families: Stories About The People We Help

Civil Division
Foreclosure Settlement Mediation

JAMES ("Jimmy") COSTIN, 52, Garnerville, NY

Jimmy Costin, a union electrician, and his wife, a teacher's assistant, came to the Rockland County Foreclosure Settlement Mediation because their first mortgage was being foreclosed upon.

Jimmy suffered from Graves Disease, caused by a hyperactive thyroid, which took months for doctors to diagnose. He couldn't sleep or even climb a flight of stairs without vomiting—making it impossible for him to work and earn any income. Their family tried to get by on only his wife's wages as a teacher's assistant, but they fell behind on both of their mortgages. By the time he came to the foreclosure mediation, his condition had been diagnosed but he had been out of commission for so long that he was having trouble finding work.

The Legal Aid Society of Rockland County, Inc. first tried to help Jimmy and his wife get a loan modification, but the bank refused to modify the loan because of a second mortgage lien. The Legal Aid Society then helped Jimmy and his wife file a Chapter 13 bankruptcy, which would allow them to avoid the second mortgage lien and also a judgment lien for a credit card deficiency. Once those liens were avoided, and helped by the fact that Jimmy had, by that time, found employment, the Legal Aid Society was able to successfully submit an application for a loan modification.

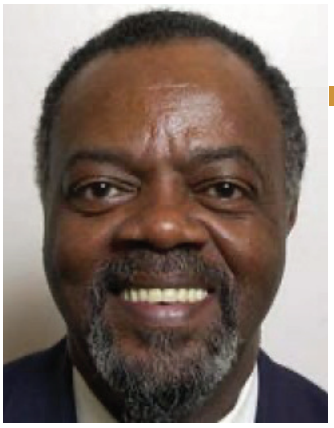
Now the couple is paying $400.00 less on their first mortgage than they had originally paid, they are making regular mortgage payments, and have been able to work out a payment plan through bankruptcy that will pay off their debt to the IRS.

Children's Rights Division
Attorneys for Children

Susan is the grandmother of two little girls. Their father murdered their mother in their presence, and then threatened to kill the girls if they told anyone. The girls did tell their grandmother what they witnessed and she contacted the authorities. She also brought the girls to the United States to protect them from their father and his gang. In order to gain legal guardianship of the girls, Susan had Legal Aid represent the children in court proceedings where she was awarded guardianship of them, and in which Orders of Protection against their father were entered.

The attorney for the girls then filed a Petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status on their behalf. The petition was granted, and the children became eligible for normalization of their immigration status.

Their father is now serving a lengthy sentence in a foreign prison.



WILLIE J. TROTMAN

Willie J. Trotman is a graduate of Dominican College, Bachelor of Arts, English and Long Island University, Master of Science degree in Community Mental Health Counseling.

Willie started at Rockland State Hospital in 1966 as an Attendant, where he provided care and treatment to children with mental and physical disabilities. In November of 1966 he joined the U.S. Army and served in Vietnam until 1968. In 1969, he returned to Rockland Psychiatric Center as an Attendant and later became a Mental Hygiene Therapy Aide at Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center where he worked with children, supervised and conducted therapeutic activities and training for children with mental and physical disabilities.

In 1981, he developed the Patient Advocacy Program at Rockland Psychiatric Center and worked as the Patient Advocate until 1993 when be assumed the position of Assistant Affirmative Action Administrator. In that role, he planned, developed and provided training to patients and staff on cultural awareness, cultural diversity, Americans With Disabilities Act, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, as well as other forms of discrimination. He assisted with coordination and implementation of Governor's Office of Employee Relations training programs. In 1997, he was appointed to the position of Director, Multicultural Affairs and Compliance/Affirmative Action Administrator. He retired from Rockland in November 2002, and became a National Coalition Building Institute Prejudice Reduction Trainer. He also received training from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation – Critical Stress Management. He was involved with debriefing people during the 9/11 World Trade Center bombing.

Willie served as President of the CSEA Unit at Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center for two years. In that role, he dealt with management to ensure that the rights of the employees were not violated and worked to implement workplace programs to enhance the civil rights of the staff. He was the co-founder of the Kids' Corner Day Care Center in Orangeburg in 1980 and remained active on the Board of Directors for several years and was an advocate for the children and their families.

From 1982 – 2000, he was active with the Rockland Employees Federal Credit Union, served on the Board of Directors and was President for four years. He was the co-founder of the Black Action Alliance in 1985 and the co-founder of the Association for Black Leadership and Empowerment in 1995.

He has been an active participant and member of the Spring Valley Branch of the NAACP, served as Vice President and has been the President for the past 16 years. He is a member of the United Negro Scholarship Fund for Rockland County and has served on the Rockland County Human Rights Committee for several years. He was instrumental in setting up the Diaspora Committee which later evolved into the African American Historical Society of Rockland County and currently holds the position of Vice President. In his position with the NAACP, he has been instrumental in the Branch receiving awards from the NYS and National Branch of the NAACP. He fosters activities for the NAACP Youth Council, NAACP Young Adult Committee, and is a mentor and role model for the youth and young adults in the civil rights movement. He works with community agencies and the local colleges to promote educational, health and cultural programs for the community.

PAUL PIPERATO

Paul Piperato was born on June 19, 1958 in Suffern, New York. He was raised in Rockland County, and graduated from North Rockland High School in 1976. Paul received his Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from St. Thomas Aquinas College in Sparkill.

Paul got his start in government in 1988 as a Budget Examiner in the Rockland County Finance Department. He served as Rockland's Deputy County Clerk for 16 years before being elected County Clerk in 2005. Paul was currently serving his third term as Rockland County Clerk.

During his tenure in the County Clerk's Office, Paul has been intricately involved with administration of the budget, as well as the development of a state-of-the-art computer imaging system. He was instrumental in the creation of a 24/7 website offering online access to records, downloadable forms, and user-friendly information on application procedures and requirements, and is also responsible for innovative County Clerk services such as the Mobile Passport Service and extended office hours. Paul has worked hard to keep Naturalization Ceremonies in Rockland County. Every other month, he hosted a ceremony and sweared in approximately 1,200 new citizens annually. Paul was proud to have active participation of Rockland's veterans in each of the ceremonies. More recently, Paul has led the Rockland County Clerk's Office to be one of the first counties in New York State to offer eFiling and eRecording. In 2008, Paul started the new and innovative Veteran Discount Program, RETURN THE F.A.V.OR. This program has since been replicated in 52 other New York State Counties.

In addition to his accomplishments in the County Clerk's Office, Paul has played an active role in the community throughout the years. He was elected Councilman in the Town of Haverstraw in November 1997 and served two 4-year terms. Paul also served as Town Police Commissioner and on a variety of town commissions and committees, including; Parks and Recreation, Diversity, and Youth. Other town responsibilities included Labor and Police Liaison and Deputy Supervisor.

Paul recently served as President of New York State Association of County Clerks. He was on both the A.R.C. Foundation and One-to-One Learning Board and is a graduate of the Leadership Rockland Program. In the past, he has served on the Boards of Jawonio, the Loeb House, the North Rockland Youth Recreation Program and P.A.C.T (Parents and Children Together), a group that advocates for children with special needs. He is a patron member of the Jewish War Veterans, a member of the North Rockland Rotary, Haverstraw Elks, Haverstraw Chamber of Commerce, Sons of Italy Vincent Linguanti Lodge #2212, and the NAACP. He has been a coach for the North Rockland Soccer League, the Haverstraw Softball League, and the Haverstraw Police Athletic League. Paul has also been dedicated to fundraising for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Paul loved his community as is seen by his involvement in so many local organizations, as well as his service in government. But of the highest importance to Paul was his family. Anyone who knew Paul soon realized that he was a devoted family man who possessed deep love for his family. He is survived by his wife Flora, their children Jaime, Nicole and Danielle and his brother John.

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Congratulations to LASRC 2020 Honorees

(In Memoriam)

Paul Piperato

and

Willie Trotman

Special thanks to the unsung heroes: Attorneys and Staff at The Legal Aid Society of Rockland County

Bridget M. Casey
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Aimee and Craig Pollak
are proud to support the
Legal Aid Society.

We congratulate
Willie Trotman,
President, NAACP, Spring Valley
on this well-deserved honor.

We also are proud to posthumously honor
Rockland County Clerk
Paul Piperato
for his amazing dedication as County Clerk.
May his memory forever be a blessing.

Klein & Klein, P.C.

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"Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

Martin Luther King, Jr

We thank the dedicated individuals of the Legal Aid Society of Rockland County who tirelessly fight every day for justice on behalf of the most vulnerable among us.

So too do we recognize the contributions of Willie Trotman, President, Spring Valley NAACP and Hon. Paul Piperato, Rockland County Clerk, in helping to improve the lives of so many in our Rockland County community.

Thank you!

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Thank you for assuring that those in need receive equal justice and enhancing the reputation of our profession.

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**The Legal Aid Society
of Rockland County**

We thank Willie Trotman
for all that he does
for our community.
We fondly remember Paul Piperato
and appreciate his
many contributions.

Montefiore
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CONGRATULATIONS

Legal Aid Society of Rockland County

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Willie Trotman
President, NAACP, Spring Valley Chapter

Paul Piperato
Rockland County Clerk
In Memoriam

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CONGRATULATIONS TO
WILL TROTMAN ON THIS WELL DESERVED HONOR
and in memoriam to
THE WONDERFUL PAUL PIPERATO –
WHO IS MISSED BY ALL OF US!

MANY THANKS TO THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF ROCKLAND COUNTY FOR ALL OF THE HARD WORK YOU ALL CONTINUE TO PERFORM EVERYDAY!

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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HONOREES AND
THANK YOU TO THE SOCIETY FOR ITS GOOD WORK

ALAN ROSENBLATT & DAVID WARREN

WBASNY

ROCKLAND COUNTY WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

A Chapter of the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York

RCWBA congratulates Willie Trotman for his commitment to good work and "good trouble" and mourns the passing of our friend and colleague, Paul Piperato, the embodiment of all that it means to be dedicated to true public service.

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