

# How to **Build Power** and **Challenge Systemic Injustice**

*Friday, September 8, 2023, at Harvard Law School, WCC 2012*

This lunch event will explore three core elements of systemic change: storytelling, organizing, and movement lawyering, in conversation with Blake Strode, Executive Director of Arch City Defenders, Oren Nimni, Litigation Director at Rights Behind Bars, and tentatively an organizer. These elements will be grounded in a recent case Strode and Nimni filed against City Justice Center, a St. Louis jail, for subjecting incarcerated people to excessive macing as one element in their larger abolitionist agenda.

## **Blake Strode**

Blake Strode is the Executive Director of ArchCity Defenders, a nonprofit civil rights law firm in St. Louis, Missouri providing holistic legal advocacy and combating the criminalization of poverty and state violence against poor people and people of color. In the past few years, Blake and his colleagues have filed more than 50 civil rights cases in state and federal court, impacting upwards of 40,000 people in the St. Louis region. Blake is a native of the St. Louis region and joined ArchCity as a Skadden Fellow and Staff Attorney following his graduation from Harvard Law School in 2015. Blake attended the University of Arkansas and majored in International Economics and Spanish.

## **Oren Nimni**

Oren Nimni is the Litigation Director at Rights Behind Bars (RBB). In this role, he manages RBB's docket and litigation strategy with a focus on utilizing a movement lawyering framework against prisons, jails, and immigration detention centers. Before joining Rights Behind Bars, Oren was a Supervising Attorney at Lawyers for Civil Rights where he managed and practiced in the organization's immigrants' rights and criminal justice dockets. Oren is a nationally recognized expert in carceral litigation. He is the recipient of the American Constitution Society's 2022 David Carliner Award which recognized him as a top civil rights attorney in the country for his innovative litigation tactics. Oren is a Visiting Lecturer on Law at Harvard Law School, where he will teach the doctrinal class Prison Law Spring 2024.

# Three Core Elements of Systemic Change: Storytelling, Organizing, & Lawyering



TO LEARN HOW TO PUT THESE  
ELEMENTS TOGETHER TO BUILD  
POWER, SIGN UP FOR OUR  
SYSTEMIC JUSTICE TEACH-INS  
THIS FALL!

# OPIA Resources



HARVARD LAW SCHOOL  
BERNARD KOTEEN OFFICE OF PUBLIC INTEREST ADVISING

## [Office of Public Interest Advising \(OPIA\)](#)

The Bernard Koteen Office of Public Interest Advising (OPIA), Harvard Law School's career services office specializing in public interest law, offers advising appointments for HLS students and alumni with our experienced attorney advisors, a wealth of resources for planning a public interest career and landing a job, and a welcoming public interest community.

## [Public Service Leaders Program](#)

OPIA organizes a program each fall to facilitate community amongst public interest-minded 1Ls called the Public Service Leaders Program (PSL). The PSL program fortifies connections across first-year class sections for students committed to public interest work. PSL'ers participate in leadership development programming and social events, and receive mentorship from both upper-class students and HLS alumni."

## [Law & Social Change Program of Study](#)

OPIA also champions the Law & Social Change Program, which helps to build a community of students and faculty committed to understanding and using law as a means of achieving social change. The Program holds regular events with faculty and students who can answer questions about course selection, summer plans, and career options. The Program also sponsors programming on substantive social change topics and social events to give students and professors affiliated with the Program the chance to get to know one another in more informal settings.

# Systemic Justice Project Resources



## [Systemic Justice Project \(SJP\)](#)

The Systemic Justice Project ([systemicjustice.org](http://systemicjustice.org)) helps prepare law students for the challenge of addressing systemic injustices, reimagining and redesigning the legal system, and building new coalitions and organizations to advance justice. SJP takes a problem-centric, not doctrine-centric, approach and works with organizations, lawyers, law students, organizers, activists, journalists, and artists around the U.S. Through its courses, initiatives, collaborations, and student-created documentaries, podcasts, and publications, SJP provides an alternative to the conventional means and ends of legal education.

## [Systemic Justice Teach-Ins](#)

SJP is helping to organize and host several Saturday teach-ins ([teach-in.org](http://teach-in.org)) during the fall of 2023. The teach-ins--open to students from area law schools and colleges--will focus on understanding and meeting the challenge of advancing justice in these increasingly fraught times. Each teach-in will focus on a particular social injustice and will involve lawyers, activists, organizers, and journalists who are working to fight injustice by building power by building narratives, power, and just policies. The first will take place on Saturday, 9/23, and will focus on the industrial disaster in East Palestine, Ohio; the second will look at the movement in opposition to Cop City in Atlanta. The topic of the third is still to be determined. One goal of the teach-ins is to build community and solidarity among justice-oriented students.

## [The \[F\]law](#)

*The [F]law* Magazine ([theflaw.org](http://theflaw.org)) is the product of the Systemic Justice Project and the Critical Corporate Theory Lab at Harvard Law. *The [F]law's* primary mission is to share stories that reveal how corporate law and power create social problems and systemic injustices. The magazine publishes mostly student-written content that identifies how corporate power has infiltrated and captured social, political, and legal institutions and proposes methods for dismantling corporate control & building collective power.