EXPOSE INJUSTICE.
TEACH CHANGE.
RIGHT WRONG.
JOIN US.

2017
ROBERT F. KENNEDY HUMAN RIGHTS
ANNUAL REPORT
OUR WORK

Whether in the United States or abroad, our programs focus on the pursuit of justice.

TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS
Our human rights education program, Speak Truth to Power, strives to create a global citizenry through classroom education. We develop student lesson plans in collaboration with educators that bring the stories of human rights defenders to life. Students gain an understanding of pressing human rights issues, and build hands-on activism experience through activities that encourage direct engagement with decision-makers in their localities.

ENGAGING THE INVESTMENT COMMUNITY
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights holds annual conferences to help decision makers at public and corporate pension funds, endowments, foundations, sovereign wealth funds, and family offices fulfill their fiduciary duties and meet the challenges of investing. Our Robert F. Kennedy Compass Conference series gathers over 150 institutional investors and asset managers who oversee more than $7 trillion in collective assets to discuss the role of long-term asset ownership and ways to deliver superior risk-adjusted returns while considering human and labor rights, corporate governance, and the environment.

ADVOCACY AND LITIGATION
Robert F. Kennedy pledged that “those with the courage to enter moral conflict will find themselves with companions in every corner of the globe.” Our team of lawyers and issue experts collaborate with partners around the world to create lasting legal change. Through legal advocacy, we have freed political prisoners, defended the rule of law in autocratic regimes and amplified the voices of human rights defenders in the United States and abroad.

INSPIRING YOUNG LEADERS
Robert F. Kennedy called young people “the world’s hope.” We foster that optimism by convening young leaders engaged in making their world a more just and fair place. These innovative, influential and philanthropic young adults host events and share ideas that result in new approaches to human rights advocacy.

THE ROBERT F. KENNEDY LEGACY
Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. called him “the most creative man in American public life.” Ronald Reagan said, “He aroused the comfortable. He exposed the corrupt, remembered the forgotten, inspired his countrymen, and renewed and enriched the American conscience.” We honor Robert F. Kennedy’s legacy by continuing his efforts towards a more just and peaceful world, and by introducing his life and inspiring new generations to make a difference.

“This is our vision for the world – a diversity of states bound together by a respect for the rights of others, by a loyalty to the world community and by the faith in the dignity and responsibility of man.”

—ROBERT F. KENNEDY
2017 YEAR IN REVIEW
INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY AND LITIGATION

Fought arbitrary detention in Egypt:
• In April, we welcomed home our clients Aya Hijazi and Mohamed Hassanein, co-founders of the Belady (“My Country”) Foundation, after three years of being unlawfully detained in Egypt.

Fought to protect freedom of expression in Colombia, Egypt, and Uganda:
• We presented oral arguments before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in representation of the family of Nelson Carvajal, a journalist murdered in Colombia.
• We filed a petition before the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of Mahmoud Hussein, a prominent Al Jazeera journalist unlawfully detained without charge and subjected to severe mistreatment by the government.
• Received a landmark decision from the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in the case of Ugandan human rights defender, Stella Nyanzi, for the first time addressing a government’s abuse of cyber crimes laws to silence dissent.

Sought accountability for crimes against humanity in North Korea:
• Staging a session on crimes against humanity in political hearings in North Korea

Supporting 2014 RFK Human Rights Laureate, Adilur Rahman Khan, against the government’s
• Attempts to silence him through baseless criminal charges in Bangladesh

Conducted High-Level Advocacy Mission to Mexico:
• In October, a delegation from RFKHR traveled to Mexico on an advocacy mission to raise awareness on human rights violations in the country, including violence against women, extrajudicial killings, and forced disappearances.

Fought against discrimination and violence against LGBT people in Honduras:
• We filed a precedent-setting merits brief in a case involving the State’s failure to address violence against transgender women in Honduras

Furthered continent-wide standards to protect civic space in Africa
• Leading UN expert Maina Kiai joined as amicus curiae in our case to protect the independence of civil society organizations in Rwanda and rights to engage peaceful protests in Zimbabwe, detailing standards that have the potential to raise continent-wide civic space protections.

Created exchange opportunities among human rights defenders from Latin America and Africa to protect civic space:
• Human rights experts identified challenges and responses to the closing of civic space in both regions

Denounced denationalization of Dominicans of Haitian Descent:
• Launch of a report that analyzed the Dominican Republic’s history of denationalization policies against Dominicans of Haitian descent

2017 RFK Human Rights Award:
• We awarded our 2017 Human Rights Award to prominent human rights activist Alfredo Romero for his work against arbitrary detention and State repression in Venezuela.
U.S. ADVOCACY & LITIGATION

Launched program focused on criminal justice reform & reducing pretrial incarceration:

- With the generous support of the Fund II Foundation, we launched our criminal justice reform program in 2017. The program targets pretrial detention as the front door to mass incarceration in the United States through legal intervention, social mobilization, and industry disruption.

Reforming New York’s criminal legal system

- In partnership with community-based organizations like 2016 Human Rights Award Laureate JustLeadershipUSA, we advocated for crucial legislative reform in Albany and rallied for the #CLOSERikers campaign.
- With the Katal Center for Health for Health, Equity, and Justice we convened an expert working group and organized 100 organizations from across the state of New York to sign on to a progressive framework for bail reform in Albany. The coming together of these organizations was unprecedented and came a critical time where the momentum in Albany was trending toward possible backwards developments under the guise of “reform.”

Our Youth belong in #ClassroomsNotCages

- In August 2017, Robert F. Kennedy Young Leaders supported Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, Fund II Foundation, Youth Represent, the Bronx Freedom Fund and the Brooklyn Community Bail Fund in #ClassroomsNotCages, a digital fundraising and social media campaign aiming to reduce New York’s population of incarcerated high-schoolers by paying their bails. #ClassroomsNotCages constitutes Robert F. Kennedy Young Leaders’ first foray into digital fundraising and social media-driven campaigning, and it exceeded all expectations. In just two weeks, #ClassroomsNotCages raised $103,252.45, including contributions from over 200 first-time donors. To date, that money has already been used to bail out over 50 high-school-aged New Yorkers.

Harnessing technology to disrupt the broken justice system

- Millions of people are jailed every year because they miss court. A failure to appear results in incarceration that can be avoided 99% of the time. Uprust sends text message reminders to people about court dates and other obligations. This simple SMS technology serves to modernize the criminal legal system, and substantially reduce the number of people unnecessarily incarcerated. Over the past six months, RFKHR has been working with Uprust and the Baltimore Public Defender’s Office in Maryland to introduce the use of Uprust for all of their clients. The technology is now in place, and will be rolled out in January 2018. The system will reach over 2,000 clients per month, and will reduce the number of people held in pretrial detention in Baltimore.

Tactical Bail Outs to Create Advocacy Moments and Raise Public Awareness

- Posted $100,000 bail for Pedro Hernandez, an innocent 17 year old unjustly detained pre-trial in Rikers Island for over a year, and leveraged the widespread media and public attention to create a powerful advocacy moment for bail reform across New York.

Launched a Campaign to Bail Out High School Aged New Yorkers

- Launched the #ClassroomsNotCages Campaign, raising over $100,000 and posting bail for almost 70 high schoolers who were being detained pre-trial in Rikers Island.

Advocated for Statewide Legislative Reform in Albany:

- Worked with partners across New York State to meaningfully advance gold-standard legislation to end money bail and reform the criminal legal system in the NY State Assembly and Senate.
2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS

Our human rights education curriculum launched in:
• Greece

Within the United States we held trainings in:
• New York, NY
• Elkhart, Indiana

Week-long theatre camp was held in:
• New York, NY

We launched lesson plans on:
• Joshua Wong
• Ruby Bridges
• Andrea James
• Islamophobia

We received funding from:
• The Marguerite Casey Foundation to continue to work with adjudicated youth in Baltimore
• Schultz Family Foundation to continue to work with adjudicated and opportunity youth in Baltimore

We partnered with:
• Global Citizen to increase reach of the STTP Video Contest
• Discovery Communications to scale STTP
• Archdiocese of NYC to incorporate STTP into their catechetical programming

Regional Summits:
• STTP hosted the final Human Rights Education Summit in Brussels as part of a two-year $400,000 grant from Humanity United

6th annual Speak Truth To Power Video Contest Winner:
• “LGBT Rights: A Documentary” by high school students Veronica Ryan, Catherine Cramer and Bridget Neumann from Skaneateles, NY

Speak Up, Sing Out Music Contest Winner:
• “Teenage Refugee” by high school student Madisyn Elise from Atlanta, Georgia

Internationally:
• Staged the STTP play at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France and in Seoul, South Korea
• Established a partnership with YWCA/YMCA in Norway
• STTP was recognized as an accredited professional development course in Spain
• Completed a year-long England pilot in 12 schools with plans to further expand throughout the UK
• The Speak Truth To Power exhibit at the Canadian Human Rights Museum awarded top honors by International Museum Association
• Kerry was a featured speaker at Canada’s We Day and received a medal for Social Activism at the Nobel Peace Summit in Bogota, Colombia
ENGAGING THE INVESTMENT COMMUNITY

RFKennedy Compass Hyannis Port, M.A. Conference
- 8th Annual Hyannis Port Conference
- Over 200 attendees
- 27 sponsors
- Keynote Speakers included: Matthew Bishop - Senior Editor, The Economist Group; Thurston Clarke - Historian and Author, “The Last Campaign” and “JFK’s Last Hundred Days”; Timothy Geithner - Former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, President of Warburg Pincus; Manny Medina - CEO, Cyxtera Technologies; Jonathan M. Nelson - CEO, Providence Equity; Jeffrey Sachs - Director, Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Director, Center for Sustainable Development, Columbia University

RFKennedy Compass East Coast Conference
- 6th Annual East Coast Conference
- Over 100 attendees
- 22 sponsors
- Keynote Speakers included: John Goldstein - Managing Director, Goldman Sachs Asset Management; Scott Stringer - Comptroller, New York City; Ashbel Williams - CIO, Florida State Board of Administration

QUOTES FROM OUR 2017 RFKENNEDY COMPASS ATTENDEE SURVEY

“What I enjoyed most was learning how others are pushing boundaries to achieve compelling double bottom line results. I found speakers such as Thurston Clarke and Andrea James to be very informative and inspirational.”

“The tone of the conference was aspirational and high-level. I like that the conference included, very specifically, time to network – which is an invaluable part of conferences that are typically ignored.”

“The conference is a useful motivator in bringing ESG integration to the front of the agenda – we want to do more in our office.”
Robert F. Kennedy Young Leaders Speaker Series

The recurring Robert F. Kennedy Young Leaders Speakers Series features top young activists who are leading the fight for human rights and creating change in innovative, impactful ways. To date, our Speakers Series has educated and mobilized over 1,000 young New Yorkers on today’s most pressing issues.

In 2017, that series included an appearance by Insha Rahman of the Vera Institute, who is collecting data to help drive criminal justice reform across New York state. Rahman spoke on the poverty-criminalizing nature of money bail, the relationship between average bail amounts in America and average household income, and her background as a Public Defender.

Dollar Bail Brigade

In 2017, Robert F. Kennedy Young Leaders partnered with the Bronx Freedom Fund to launch Dollar Bail Brigade, a service wherein volunteers pay their fellow New Yorker’s $1 bails, in person at local jails. Since our kick-off event in June, Dollar Bail Brigade’s membership has grown to over 600, with monthly volunteer schedules full of new and veteran Brigaders. To date, the Dollar Bail Brigade has freed over 80 New Yorkers being detained on a one dollar bail.

“ONLY THOSE WHO DARE TO FAIL GREATLY CAN EVER ACHIEVE GREATLY”

—ROBERT F. KENNEDY
ROBERT F. KENNEDY LEGACY

ROBERT F. KENNEDY BOOK AND JOURNALISM AWARDS:

Book Award Winner:  
*Evicted: Poverty and Profit In The American Society*, by Matthew Desmond

Journalism Award Winners:  
- HIGH SCHOOL BROADCAST: “A Whole New World,” Josh Horned, Chloe Durham, and Rachel Pfeifer, North Star – Francis Howell North High School, Missouri  
- HIGH SCHOOL PRINT: “A Ball, A Team, A War and a Dream,” Anthony Kristensen, North Star, Francis Howell North High School, Missouri  
- COLLEGE JOURNALISM: “Wounds of White Clay: Nebraska’s Shameful Legacy,” Depth Reporting Class, University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
- DOMESTIC PRINT: “Bias on the bench,” Josh Salman, Emily Le Coz, and Elizabeth Johnson, Sarasota Herald Tribune  
- INTERNATIONAL PRINT: “The Assad Files by Ben Taub,” Ben Taub, The New Yorker  
- DOMESTIC PHOTOGRAPHY: “Toxic Stress: A cycle of poverty and gun violence,” Laurie Skrivan, St. Louis Post-Dispatch  
- INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: “Signs of Your Identity,” Daniella Zalcman, Foto Evidence, National Geographic, Smithsonian  
- RADIO: “The Strange Death of Jose de Jesus,” Fernanda Echávarri, Marlon Bishop, and Maria Hinojosa, Latino USA  
- NEW MEDIA: “Vacation in no man’s sea”, Almudena Toral, Univision News  

ROBERT F. KENNEDY HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD RECIPIENTS:  
Alfredo Romero, 2017, Venezuela

RIPPLE OF HOPE AWARD RECIPIENTS:  
- Harry Belafonte, Singer, Songwriter, Actor, and Activist  
- Alex Gorsky, Chairman of the Board and CEO, Johnson & Johnson  
- Hamdi Ulukaya, Founder, Chairman and CEO, Chobani, LLC

In addition to the Annual RFK Awards, Robert F. Kennedy Human rights kicked off the 50th anniversary commemoration of Robert Kennedy’s campaign for the Presidency and the half century mark for Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights.

Working with community organizations, schools, public service leaders, museums, publishers and filmmakers around the globe, groundwork was laid for collaborative events to connect past with present, engage new audiences and inspire young people to take action.

In keeping with that spirit, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights launched a digitization project with the support of the Fund2Foundation, to create a catalogued, accessible, online archive of historic photos, film, audio, slides and documents.
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“EVERY TIME WE TURN OUR HEADS THE OTHER WAY WHEN WE SEE THE LAW FLOUTED—WHEN WE TOLERATE WHAT WE KNOW TO BE WRONG—WHEN WE CLOSE OUR EYES AND EARS TO THE CORRUPT BECAUSE WE ARE TOO BUSY, OR TOO FRIGHTENED—WHEN WE FAIL TO SPEAK UP AND SPEAK OUT—WE STRIKE A BLOW AGAINST FREEDOM AND DECENCY AND JUSTICE.”

—ROBERT F. KENNEDY