



RESPONDING TO RACIAL INJUSTICE

October 2020 Update

“We will not be casual observers to injustice. We will do more, and we will do it together.” **Larren M. Nashelsky, Chair**

This update highlights the key initiatives Morrison & Foerster has undertaken over the last few months to promote racial justice. If you are interested in collaborating with us, please submit your contact information [here](#) so we can send you future opportunities.

LEGAL SERVICES

Reforming the criminal justice system

- We aided nearly 100 clients of the [Southern Poverty Law Center’s Three Strikes Project](#) by researching and filing petitions for a new parole hearing for individuals serving excessive sentences for non-violent offenses under Mississippi’s Three Strikes law.
- We are representing five people serving sentences in Louisiana state prisons after being convicted by non-unanimous juries, asking the courts to apply the Supreme Court’s decision in *Ramos v. Louisiana* to grant new trials, in partnership with the [Promise of Justice Initiative](#).

Promoting fair and inclusive elections

- We worked closely with the [Healthy Elections Project](#), joined by 50 in-house lawyers from our clients, to build a database of more than 200 lawsuits in state and federal courts that request or challenge measures to ensure accessible and safe voting. The database is an indispensable tool for election officials, journalists, activists, and the public to understand the legal landscape at this time in our nation’s democracy.
- Our lawyers and staff have answered questions from voters about how to obtain and cast their ballots by volunteering more than 2,500 hours to the nonpartisan [Election Protection hotline](#).

Striking back against racially biased school discipline

- We filed a federal lawsuit along with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund against the Binghamton City School district for conducting baseless and intrusive searches of four 12-year-old Black and Latina girls. The case highlights the disparate treatment and discipline rates of Black and Latina girls in their school and has helped to expose this issue [across the country](#).



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EDUCATION

Impact of diversity on American politics

- The first event in our new virtual series, titled “Power, Politics, and Perspective,” will feature Mark Hanis. Mr. Hanis is a social entrepreneur, research fellow with Stanford University’s Center for Human Rights and International Justice, and co-founder of Inclusive America, a nonprofit working to increase diversity in government, and Progressive Shopper, a technology company working to harness conscious consumption.

The history of the U.S. Black community and its experience with racism

- Our Asia offices hosted a special program featuring Rick Banks, Stanford Law School Professor and co-founder and director of Stanford’s new Center for Racial Justice, to shed light on Black American history and racism in the United States and discuss how the Black Lives Matter movement can be understood in the context of the Black experience in America.

The history of policing and protesting

- Harvard Kennedy School professor and former president of the NAACP Cornell William Brooks paid the firm a virtual visit to discuss recent incidents involving police brutality, the Black Lives Matter movement, and how the protests of today differ from those of the past.

Diversity in Practice

- The firm’s Diversity and Inclusion (D+I) team launched a “Diversity in Practice” podcast series that spotlights the firm’s diverse attorneys, their areas of legal expertise, and D+I best practices. Listen to the series [here](#).

The power of allyship

- We learned how to be an effective ally through a dedicated social media campaign featuring MoFo attorneys and staff sharing their experiences on the power of allyship. Access our Allyship is Action campaign [here](#).

How to talk to kids about race

- We invited Denica Gordon-Mandel, a licensed clinical social worker and co-founder of Raising Compassionate Leaders, to speak to us and to clients on how to talk to kids about race. Organized by age group, each session provided a developmental framework to help parents learn the best techniques to address the issues of race, racism, and racial injustice



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in an age-appropriate way that children can understand. We also had an extended conversation with the co-founders of Raising Compassionate Leaders, which is available [here](#).

COMMUNITY ACTION

Launched campaign to encourage all to exercise their right to vote

- With Election Day on the horizon, we developed resources for our attorneys and staff on voting, designed to be shared with friends and families. These resources provided an easy way for attorneys and staff to reach out to their communities in support of equal voting rights for everyone.

Developed a nonpartisan program to protect and enhance voting rights

- We developed a volunteer program to help protect, support, and enhance voting rights in our communities and nationwide. The program's objective is to promote and strengthen the foundations of our representative system of government by helping others exercise their right to vote. Opportunities are provided through organizations such as [Vote.org's Open Progress Turnout Troop](#) and the [Center for Common Ground's Reclaim our Vote campaign](#).

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Ongoing donations to support social justice organizations

- The [Morrison & Foerster Foundation](#) has donated to numerous organizations focused on combatting discrimination and working to improve the lives of low-income communities and communities of color. This fundraising campaign totals more than \$200,000, with donations contributed by individuals, the Foundation, and the firm, in support of organizations such as [The Bail Project](#), the [Equal Justice Initiative](#), the [NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund](#), the [Vera Institute of Justice](#), the [Brennan Center for Justice](#), the [Ida B. Wells Society](#), and [Black Women's Health Imperative](#).

Donations to organizations promoting voting rights

- The Foundation donated more than \$25,000 to election protection and voting outreach efforts, split equally among several nonpartisan organizations, including [Election Protection/866-OUR-VOTE](#), [Florida Rights Restoration Coalition Education Fund – Fines and Fees Campaign](#), [Reclaim Our Vote](#), [Voto Latino Foundation](#), and [When We All Vote](#).