

CORPORATE  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
LAB

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022

Unleashing the creative potential of the law to  
protect people & the planet from corporate  
abuse.

# DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear friends and supporters,

In 2022, Corporate Accountability Lab celebrated our fifth birthday. Five years ago, my co-founder and I had a vision to build a legal design lab that could identify, test, and scale new strategies for combating corporate impunity for human rights and environmental abuses around the world. We wanted to create a place where we could foster creativity, dynamism, playfulness, and hope in the face of some of the world's most daunting problems. To do this, we knew that we needed to build a culture where our staff would be effective for the long-haul and encouraged to bring their full selves to the office. If we were to fight extractivism in the global economy we had to fight it within our own workplace as well. And so we created a team that operates by consensus, prioritizes collegiality and curiosity, and resists the prevailing scarcity mindset. It is this culture that allows us, day after day, to challenge the dominant global narrative that profit is more valuable than people and the planet. We know this is not so, and by unleashing the creative potential of the law we are beginning to set the record straight.

We are five years into making this vision a reality, and it's been an incredible journey. Over the years, CAL has challenged the exploitative models major companies rely on across various industries. We have tested supply chain contract language that works *for workers* - by ensuring that, wherever they are in the world, they have the right to seek justice when they are hurt or their rights are violated. We have innovated within trade law, by leveraging access to the US market in order to pressure companies to clean up their supply chains and remediate egregious abuses like forced labor and trafficking. We have worked with partner organizations, workers, and communities on nearly every continent to parse the root causes of corporate abuse, determine points of influence, and develop out-of-the-box strategies for justice.

From conversations with cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire to coal mining unions in Colombia, we have heard first-hand - from those directly affected - what must change, and we have used these conversations to set our agenda. We have tested strategies in the courtroom, through administrative processes, and in negotiations with public and private actors. We have demanded accountability for human rights abuses - often those largely hidden from the public- in collaboration with the media, before the US Congress, and before regional and international organizations. And it's been pretty damn fun.

In the pages that follow, you'll catch a glimpse of our vision in action through highlights of our projects and the partners we worked with in 2022 and over the past five years. We know a more equitable global economy - where communities and environments thrive, rather than suffer within a system that treats them as disposable - is not only possible, but on its way. We are relentlessly optimistic because we must be. This is how we'll win.

**We are relentlessly optimistic  
because we must be.  
This is how we'll win.**

We have a lot to be proud of five years in, but we're just getting started. Thank you for doing this work with us. We love what we do, and it is only possible because of our fantastic community of supporters.

Here's to the next five years!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charity Ryerson".

Charity Ryerson  
Executive Director, Founder  
Corporate Accountability Lab

# ALL ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

## WHAT IS CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY?

Corporate accountability means holding companies to account for the human rights abuses they commit or facilitate and the harm they cause to environments. To CAL, corporate accountability is also:

- **Justice** for *workers, families, and communities* who have been exploited and their resources extracted by companies;
- a set of **legal strategies** to achieve **remedy** for those impacted by corporate abuse *on their own terms*; and
- a long-term vision of an **equitable, inclusive global economy** that *prioritizes human thriving and a healthy planet* over private profit.

# HOW DOES CAL FIGHT FOR CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY?

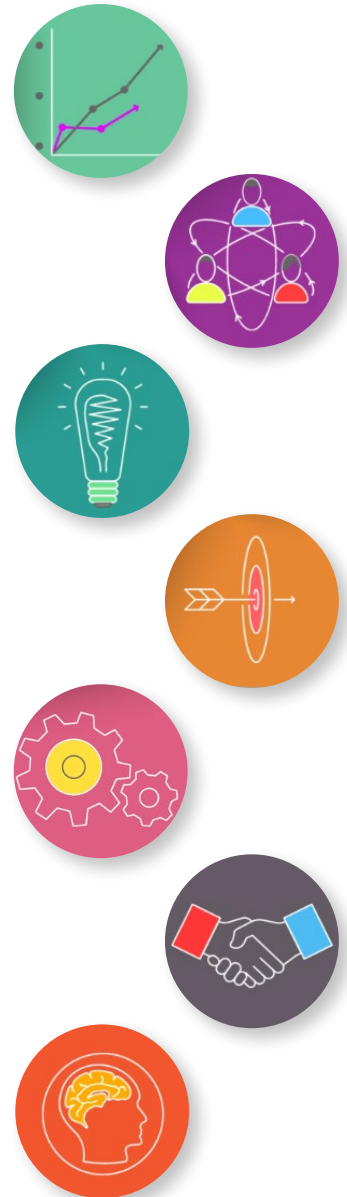
CAL seeks corporate accountability by expanding the number and efficacy of legal strategies available to workers and communities impacted by corporate abuse. We develop legal strategies through our legal design process, an adaptation of the more traditional design thinking process utilized in many creative industries. (CAL is proof positive that lawyers can be innovative too!)

We map the system and stakeholders behind a particular situation involving corporate abuse, define the problem we need to solve, then ideate, prototype, test, pilot, and scale solutions that have the potential to create community-level change and broad, systemic impact. It is our mission to **unleash the creative potential of the law to protect people and the planet from corporate abuse.**

This approach depends on our ability to work closely with - and take directions from - the organizations and individuals closest to the harm. Legal design is, at its core, a movement lawyering tool; we begin and end with the communities most affected by abuse, build coalitions, unroot exploitative systems, and design worker-driven and environment-first remedies that promote and incentivize systemic and structural change.

**“Being creative with the law is not something that is mainstream, but someone has to do it or we are going to be stuck with a status quo that was created by and for very powerful people in rooms where the people impacted were not present.”**

**Charity Ryerson, Executive Director, Founder**



# 2022 AT A GLANCE



Legal Fellow Laynie Barringer takes illustrative notes at a convening for US-based corporate accountability practitioners hosted by CAL and partners.



Members of the Corporate Liability and Sustainable Peace (CLASP) Lab tune in (in three languages!) for a discussion convened by CAL and partners on accountability for companies that abuse human rights in conflict settings.



Special Advisor Dean Pinkert and Staff Attorney Reynolds Taylor ideate with colleagues in legal design activities at the CAL office.

CAL celebrates its 5th birthday in May 2022.



CAL visits 9 cocoa farming villages across Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in 2022. Here, Staff Attorney Reynolds Taylor asks Ghanaian farmers what a fair price for cocoa would be. The answer: at least triple the current price.



Cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, who grow cocoa that is sold for a hefty profit by multinational companies, walk CAL staff through the details of cultivation during field visits in 2022.

Several CAL team members meet for strategic discussions with partners from around the world - including activists, policymakers, and litigators - in the business and human rights field in Washington, D.C.



**COLLABORATING  
WITH IMPACTED  
COMMUNITIES**

**CONFRONTING  
EXPLOITATIVE  
SYSTEMS**

**DESIGNING WORKER-  
DRIVEN REMEDY**

**BUILDING STRATEGIC  
COALITIONS**



# COLLABORATING WITH IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

Our vision of an equitable, inclusive global economy - that prioritizes human thriving and a healthy planet over private profit - can only be realized through leadership by those most affected by corporate abuse.



A Ghanaian cocoa-growing community met with CAL staff in September 2022 to discuss the poverty prices paid by large cocoa and chocolate companies for cocoa beans.

For the last several years, CAL has worked closely with Colombian communities affected by the country’s armed conflict. Many of these community members are victims of human rights abuses - including targeted killings of union members - connected to multinational companies. Colombia’s civil conflict took the lives of more than a quarter of a million people, and half a million more were directly impacted by abuses like gender-based violence, kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, and forced disappearances. Millions of others were forcibly displaced. The responsibility of armed actors for these abuses is widely recognized, but the role of companies in financing and fomenting abuses has been less visible.

In March and November 2022, CAL submitted detailed information to Colombia’s Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) about relevant proceedings and evidence in US courts suggesting that multinational companies facilitated systemic human rights abuses committed against civilians during the Colombian armed conflict. We also provided observations and recommendations based on our work with victims, civil society organizations, and communities impacted by human rights abuses associated with financing schemes between multinationals and armed groups.

**“Understanding the role of corporations in conflict settings and holding them accountable when justice requires is especially important in the extractives sector, where impacts on human rights are compounded by harm to the environment, which in turn affects the human rights of current and future generations.”**

Tatiana Devia, Staff Attorney



JEP Deputy Judge Ana María Mondragón Duque addresses affected community members, CAL, and civil society partners advocating for corporate accountability in transnational justice in Bogotá in 2022.



“There is a future if there is truth!” CAL’s Charity Ryerson joins corporate accountability colleagues from Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South America to celebrate the long-anticipated publication of the Colombian Truth Commission’s report in June 2022. Along with the JEP, the Truth Commission is part of Colombia’s transitional justice system, considered to be one of the world’s most advanced.

In our first submission to the JEP, we presented evidence related to European and US multinational coal companies’ alleged financing of right wing paramilitary organizations in the Gran Magdalena region. Communities and workers in this region suffered widespread abuses during decades of armed conflict, including labor rights abuses, forced displacement, and targeted killings. Later, the CAL team submitted allegations about the role of US multinational banana companies in the armed conflict.

**We’re continuing to build relationships with families and communities impacted by the conflict and to develop corporate accountability strategies driven by community demands.**

In September and October 2022, Staff Attorneys Allie Brudney and Reynolds Taylor visited cocoa growing communities in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana to hear firsthand what sourcing companies owe farmers and how CAL can best carry communities' demands forward.

CAL's work in West Africa focuses on the poverty prices companies pay for cocoa and the human rights and environmental abuses - including massive and rapid deforestation - that stem directly from this system of exploitation. For five years, we have investigated hazardous child labor and trafficking, failures of eco-social certifications, interactions between multinational companies and governments of cocoa-producing countries, and the structure of the West African cocoa supply chain so that we can hold companies accountable for exploiting cocoa farmers.



Above & Opposite: West African cocoa farming communities inform CAL about the various harms they experience, including: not being paid for beans sold; twelve-year-old children performing hazardous labor; company representatives adjusting bean-weighing scales to credit farmers with less production than they are owed; devastating tree diseases; companies refusing to pay the premiums they promised to farmers; families without food or access to medical care; and communities without schools and teachers.





“Our ability to make a difference is directly connected to our capacity to go toe-to-toe with corporate giants in the cocoa sector.

It’s a long game – one we have every intention of winning – and it takes dedication to the communities we work for.”

Allie Brudney, Staff Attorney

Staff Attorneys Allie Brudney and Reynolds Taylor visited with several cocoa farmers in Cote d’Ivoire in September 2022, who shared their stories and what types of changes they need most for themselves and their families.

During CAL’s 2022 field visits to West African cocoa farms, we asked farmers about the impact of the Living Income Differential (LID), a government-mandated increase to the price of cocoa meant to help cocoa farmers. **In the nine villages CAL visited, almost no farmers knew about the LID, and the very few who did told us they had experienced no change to their income.** Instead, communities told us about the unsustainably low prices companies pay for cocoa. We heard an emerging consensus – across two countries, nine villages, and among hundreds of farmers – that a fair price for cocoa is at least triple the current price.

CAL is committed to deploying innovative legal strategies in service of corporate accountability in the West African cocoa sector. We have written reports about conditions and root causes, submitted information to the US government about forced labor in the sector, and we sued Rainforest Alliance, Inc. and The Hershey Company for deceptive marketing practices that paint over abusive supply chain practices. We’re gearing up for more remedy-driven action against the chocolate companies that have long avoided accountability for systemic abuses.

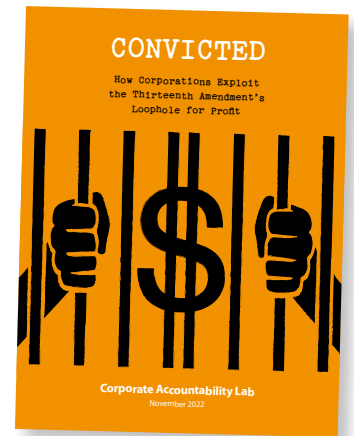
# CONFRONTING EXPLOITATIVE SYSTEMS

We analyze and challenge the systems - those abroad and those in the United States - that prioritize profit at the expense of people and planet.



This graphic represents commodification and exploitation of communities behind bars. In the United States and around the world, companies and governments benefit from exploiting labor performed by incarcerated individuals. CAL is confronting the systems that entrench forced prison labor. CAL's Executive Director, Charity Ryerson, was paid twelve cents an hour to build cages for immigrants in a federal prison factory while she served time for civil disobedience in 2003.

In November 2022, CAL released a report illustrating the many ways that corporations exploit people in US prisons, including by using incarcerated workers as a cheap, captive labor force. Two million people are currently incarcerated in US penal institutions, and many must work - often for little or no pay - or face dire consequences. In our 2022 report, *Convicted: How Corporations Exploit The Thirteenth Amendment's Loophole For Profit*, we applied the International Labour Organization's (ILO) indicators of forced labor to conditions in US prisons and found there to be a high risk of forced labor, rendering the US prison system in violation of international law.



Since the 1930s, the United States has prohibited the sale of prison-made goods between US states, but numerous exceptions substantially erode the impact of this prohibition. Private industry can - and does - legally rely on incarcerated workforces laboring in conditions of forced labor. This exploitation is possible because the legacy of slavery - and its deep connection to the US economy - was enshrined in the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, which allows for slavery and involuntary servitude as criminal punishment.

### The Eleven ILO Indicators of Forced Labor

- |   |  |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| 1<br><br>Abuse of vulnerability           | 2<br><br>Deception             | 3<br><br>Restriction of movement | 4<br><br>Isolation                               | 5<br><br>Physical and sexual violence | 6<br><br>Intimidation and threats |
| 7<br><br>Retention of identity documents | 8<br><br>Withholding of wages | 9<br><br>Debt bondage           | 10<br><br>Abusive working and living conditions | 11<br><br>Excessive overtime         |   |

This graphic depicts the ILO indicators of forced labor. Many of these indicators apply to incarcerated workers in the United States, and some - including abuse of vulnerability, restriction of movement, and isolation - are inherent qualities of incarceration.

CAL is working with partner organizations like [Worth Rises](#) to challenge this constitutional standard and the exploitative prison labor system it supports. We play an important role in this advocacy by keeping a spotlight on the companies that benefit from this system - including those that have helped perpetuate the existence of forced labor in the United States for centuries. Profit should not be made off human rights abuses, including abuses against incarcerated people, no matter where in the world those abuses occur.

**“US corporations exploit this captive labor force for profit – and those private incentives bolster the politics of white supremacy, mass incarceration, the erroneous myth that coerced labor is “rehabilitative,” and the dehumanizing trope that the incarcerated are somehow less human, less important, and less deserving of rights.”**

**Reynolds Taylor, Staff Attorney**



# HEAR IT FROM THOSE IMPACTED MOST

Profit off the labor performed by incarcerated workers should be allowed "[o]nly if the incarcerated men and women are able to unionize, neogtiate the terms, and have all protections that workers in free society receive."

**Joseph**, Illinois  
*Makes \$0.20 per hour*

"OSHA standards should be applied to prison work."

**Scott**, Texas  
*Works for no pay*

"A [person] should be paid a living wage, without the system taking 80% of your money."

**Richard**, Arizona  
*Makes \$0.10 per hour*

**"I BELIEVE THIS SLAVE PRACTICE SHOULD STOP..."**

It makes us subhuman in the eyes of those exploiting us and the officers and state officials. It makes me feel subhuman... I really hate my job. It's demeaning and it's abusive."

**Michael**, Nevada  
*Sorts cards used by casinos and makes \$8-\$10 per week*

**FAST FORWARD** ➤ The movement to eliminate the slavery exception from the Thirteenth Amendment is gaining momentum.

In 2022, Alabama, Oregon, Tennessee, and Vermont joined Colorado, Utah, Nebraska, and Rhode Island in amending their state constitutions to abolish slavery without exception.

The Abolition Amendment - proposing to do the same thing federally - was reintroduced in the 118th Congress in June 2023. CAL is a member of the #EndtheException campaign, a coalition dedicated to advancing this cause.

# DESIGNING **WORKER-DRIVEN REMEDY**

Accountability without remedy for those who have suffered most is insufficient.



Sugarcane growing in the Dominican Republic, awaiting harvest.

Over the last several years, CAL has worked with partner organizations and sugarcane workers to hold the sugar industry in the Dominican Republic accountable for systemic human rights abuses against cane cutters and their families. For more than a century, Dominican sugarcane workers, who are primarily Haitian or of Haitian descent and largely undocumented or stateless, have labored under dangerous conditions and earned poverty wages that often prohibit them from leaving their places of work.

CAL has worked with partners to file civil lawsuits, testified before the US Congress, and published an open letter to the Biden administration to raise alarm bells about the industry, which provides more sugar to the United States than any other country.

**Following a collective effort by CAL and many partners, in November 2022, the US government blocked the importation of sugar produced by sugar-giant Central Romana Corporation Ltd. (Central Romana), citing reasonable suspicion of forced labor.**

Blocking imports of sugar tainted with forced labor is a win for workers and civil society organizations who have long sought to hold this powerful company accountable by making use of strategic tools - like US trade laws that condition access to the US market on minimum labor standards.

CAL is now collaborating with partners to achieve meaningful, sustainable, and worker-driven remediation of the forced labor conditions identified by the US government in its order blocking Central Romana sugar from the United States. We know that action against companies falls short when the moment to implement real, community-led change is not seized. We are working with sugarcane workers and the most impacted communities to make sure their demands are heard.

**“With mounting economic and political pressure from the United States, all eyes are on Central Romana and the Dominican government. The stakes are high and time is short for them to step up to the plate and center the dignity, health, and welfare of the *cañeros* on whom they depend.”**

**Avery Kelly, Staff Attorney**



*New York Times* story by Ana Swanson, breaking the news that US Customs and Border Protection issued a Withhold Release Order on sugar imports by Central Romana from the Dominican Republic. The article quotes Executive Director Charity Ryerson: “Central Romana has been on notice for years but has failed to comply with even the most basic of labor and human rights standards in their operation.”

# BUILDING STRATEGIC COALITIONS

From Chicago to Washington, D.C. and Bogotá, we know that achieving accountability begins and ends with creating community.



In the summer of 2022 in Bogotá, CAL convened a global coalition of lawyers, activists, survivors, and human rights defenders from more than 25 countries, to promote collaboration between communities affected by corporate abuse.

In May 2022, CAL convened US-based corporate accountability practitioners from more than twenty organizations in Washington, D.C. to analyze recent successes and failures in the field and collaborate on emerging and evolving strategies. **To foster innovation, it is essential for practitioners to spend time together in community, take stock of where we are, and think about where we are going and how to get there.**

Our 2022 practitioner convening was co-hosted by the International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR) and Georgetown Law's Human Rights Institute and focused on making progress as a community on some of the field's toughest challenges:

- Increasing the efficacy of litigation strategies to protect the human rights of people abused within international supply chains under a variety of US laws;
- Prioritizing legislative goals, and articulating how these priorities will impact corporate accountability litigators and the communities they serve; and
- Brainstorming new ideas and strategies for accountability and moving these ideas through a design process. (CAL's specialty!)



Friends and colleagues who are part of the US corporate accountability community engaged in a hybrid discussion (while taking breaks to doodle and brainstorm!) at CAL's 2022 practitioner convening in Washington, D.C.

In June 2022, we convened more than 40 advocates, activists, and lawyers from over 25 countries to grapple with corporate impunity for human rights abuses committed in conflict settings around the world. CAL hosted this convening to celebrate the success of the Corporate Liability and Sustainable Peace (CLASP) Lab, an ambitious social lab project designed with the African Coalition for Corporate Accountability (ACCA), Dejusticia, and the Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz.

CAL and partners established the CLASP Lab to articulate, analyze, and address the pattern of impunity enjoyed by companies that have contributed to human rights and environmental abuses during civil conflicts - for example, by financing armed groups and perpetuating violence and unrest for their own benefit. The 2022 Bogotá convening was the culmination of this work. We spent our days workshoping strategy “prototypes,” analyzing restorative justice experiences, sharing country-specific expertise, and creating international solidarity for the corporate accountability movement, particularly as it relates to accountability for corporate abuse in conflict settings. Participants elected a leadership team to advance the Lab’s work and ensure the sustainability of this coalition beyond 2022.

**“When lawyers work intentionally with community members and activists, interventions can be identified which expand what is possible in resisting and challenging the violence of these systems.”**

**Ed Vogel, Board of Directors Chair**



Human rights lawyers and activists from South Sudan, South Africa, El Salvador, the United States, Colombia, and Peru collaborate on a strategy “prototype,” practicing cross-jurisdictional legal design for corporate accountability.

Opposite: Marina Parada, advocate from El Salvador, addresses colleagues from around the world at the 2022 Bogotá convening. Marina participated in the CLASP Lab and is now part of the CLASP Coalition Leadership Team.



# FINANCIAL REPORT

**Corporate Accountability Lab** is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. We do not accept funding from corporations or corporate foundations in order to avoid apparent and/or actual conflicts of interest.

Corporate Accountability Lab is committed to pay equity and just allocation of resources. Our policy ensures that the highest paid staff member may not earn more than 200% the salary of the lowest paid staff member. In 2022, our highest paid staff earned 155% of the salary of our lowest paid staff.

We are grateful to our foundation funders who have chosen to give anonymously, as well as to the Open Society Foundation, the Michael and Alice Kuhn Foundation, the Wheaton Franciscans, and *Cuore e Mani*. Thank you for your generosity and dedication!

**We also rely on individual support to conduct this important work.  
A special thank you to our largest individual donors of 2022:\***

---

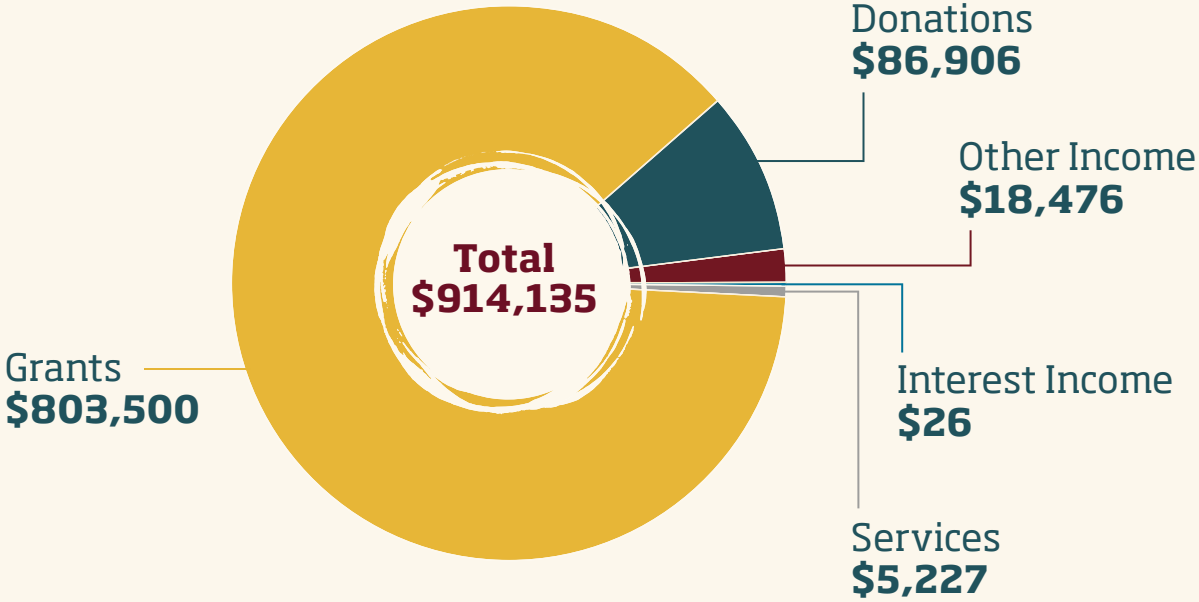
Beth & Paul Taylor	Avis & Frederick Miller
Brian Mustain	Mark Hejinian
Secretary Raymond E. Mabus Jr.	Devin Chesney
Kaitlin Cordes	Katharine & Blaine Larson
Victoria Young	Ellen Rosendale & Daniel Brudney
Micah Bales	Kim & Clark Kelly

---

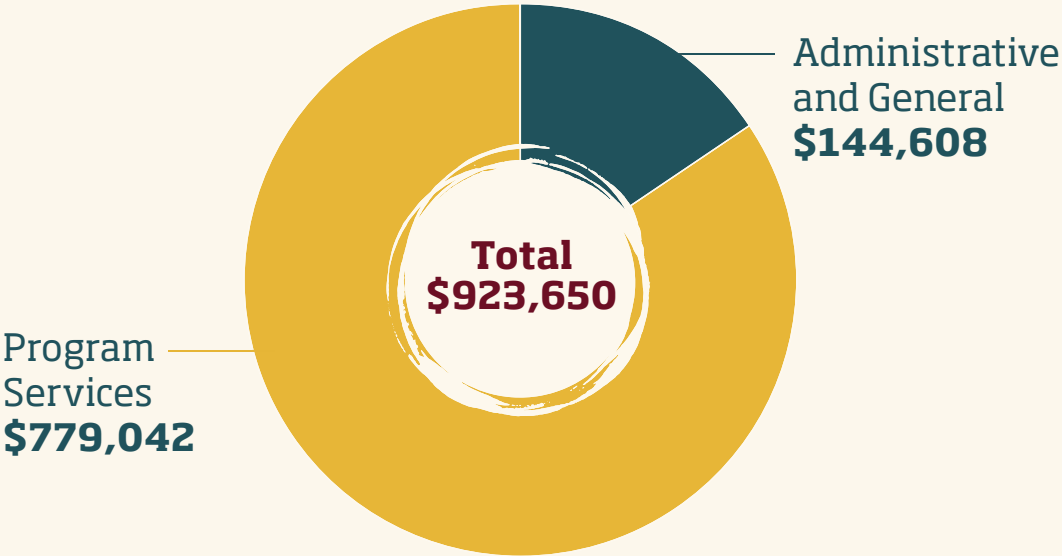
\*Only those donors who granted permission to be named are shown here. We are grateful to those named and unnamed.



# INCOME



# EXPENSE



# THE CAL TEAM



Board members and staff at the Fall 2022 Board Retreat in Chicago.

## Staff

### **Charity Ryerson**

Executive Director

### **Allie Brudney**

Staff Attorney

### **Avery Kelly**

Staff Attorney

### **Dean Pinkert**

Special Advisor

### **Daniel Kiefus**

Office & Program Coordinator

### **Laynie Barringer**

Legal Fellow, Communications  
& Development Associate

### **Reynolds Taylor**

Staff Attorney

### **Samee Haque**

Staff Attorney

### **Tatiana Devia**

Staff Attorney

## Legal Interns

### **Agrismary Santiago**

Loyola University Chicago,  
School of Law

### **Danielle Cossey**

George Washington University  
Law School

### **Julia Lee**

Harvard Law School

### **Julián Murcia Rodríguez**

Universidad de la Sabana

### **Jumpei Nagaoka**

Georgetown University Law Center

### **Justin Bertsche**

Northwestern University Pritzker  
School of Law

### **Kathrina Dabdoub**

Columbia Law School

### **Laura Sabia**

New York University School of Law

### **Rebecca Apell**

Harvard Law School

### **Zara Salman**

University of Chicago  
(undergraduate intern)



CAL staff celebrating CAL's fifth birthday at the Chicago office in 2022.

## Board\*

### Ed Vogel

(Chair), Surveillance Resistance Lab

### Laura Vilim

(Treasurer), Valdez Vilim & Wunrow, LLP.

### Lupita Aguila Arteaga

(Secretary), SEUI Local 1

### Elisabeth Mabus

Office of the Governor of Colorado

### Erin Essenmacher

Feisty Aphrodite Media, Athena Alliance

### Jenna McElroy

Emancipet

### Jillian Tuck

Harvard Law School

### Kaitlin Cordes

31 Days of Climate Action

### Kish Parella

Washington and Lee University School of Law

### Elizabeth Deligio

Heartland Alliance, Rooted Global Village

### Micah Bales

Google

### Raphael Hoetmer

Amazon Watch

### Zamira Djabarova

American Bar Association

\*Employers and affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.

CAL never shares photos, quotations, or identifying information without informed consent. All individuals appearing in this report asked for their photos, stories, or names to be shared publicly.



Scan to support CAL with a donation today.

# THANK YOU

Thank you to all of our partners, donors, and supporters for making Corporate Accountability Lab's work possible.

6214 N Glenwood Ave, Chicago, IL  
60660

[info@corpaccountabilitylab.org](mailto:info@corpaccountabilitylab.org)

 Corpaccountabilitylab

 @CorpAcctLab

 @CorpAcctLab

©2023 Corporate Accountability Lab

All rights reserved. All content contained herein is subject to the terms and conditions of Corporate Accountability Lab's Copyright License, available at [corpaccountabilitylab.org](http://corpaccountabilitylab.org).