

SECTION I: NARRATIVE

Introduction

Initial Goal: Our grant proposal centers around the newly enacted Clean Slate multi-package of bills, which expand record expungement opportunities within the state of Michigan. Preliminary assessments showed a deficit of financial support to complete the expungement process, particularly for individuals in Washtenaw County; our goal was to subsidize and cover the cost of expungement for our local community members.

Goal Transformation: Throughout our research and planning process, county officials and legal nonprofits within the Washtenaw County Expungement Coalition described an alternative need. We observed that while there were hundreds of thousands of people eligible for expungement, a majority of those people were unaware of how to begin the process or even of their eligibility. In response to the priorities in our community, we shifted our initial proposal to focus more on raising awareness of expungement laws, benefits, and processes.

Summary and Project Outcome: Over the past several months we have worked with representatives and officials from Southeast Michigan to streamline our expungement efforts and target several areas with the greatest need. We created public service announcements to alert formerly incarcerated people of this new law and the resources available to help them set aside convictions. In partnership with the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office and the University of Michigan Law School, we were also able to help establish a pro bono program where law and undergraduate students can work together with community members to determine their eligibility and represent them through their expungement processes. Finally, we have also done grassroots outreach to expungement fairs, and we subsidized application fees at events which saw over hundreds of attendees.

Project's Contributions to Peace

Public Service Announcements

Video Topics: Recorded and edited by Krymson Media, LLC., we authored and produced five public service announcements demystifying various aspects of the expungement process.¹ The video topics are as follows: The Benefits of Setting Aside Convictions, Categorizing Your Convictions, How to Get My Convictions Set Aside, Introducing the UM Law School Pro Bono Expungement Program, and A Clean Slate Vision of Peace (recounting our process and inspiration for the project).

Video Speakers: We ensured video content digestibility and accuracy by undergoing extensive self-education, meeting with community members and those who may undergo the expungement process, and consulting with activists and leaders spearheading expungement efforts, from May-July of 2021. Speakers in the videos include J.J. Prescott, a University of Michigan Law Professor and economist who authored the most extensive empirical study on expungement to-date in the Harvard Law Review; Ashley Tingstad, founder of a local law firm and supervising attorney of the incoming University of Michigan Expungement Pro Bono Program; Honorable Judge Prentis Edwards, the presiding criminal judge in the Wayne County Circuit Court, and Shannon Lucas, a lawyer, representative of Safe and Just Michigan, and Director of Advocacy for the Michigan Advocacy Program.

Recording Process: Video filming took place throughout August of 2021 on the University of Michigan central campus, following current campus and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. We expect these videos to be relevant through 2023, when automatic expungement opportunities may increase. Funding was allocated towards hiring Krymson Media, LLC. for video production.

¹ Krymson Media, LLC. is a company started by Adam Kouraimi, who was formerly incarcerated and is a current student at Washtenaw Community College. Adam's mission is to highlight the authentic experience of the client, bringing the real world into documentary and helping people tell their unique stories through film. Learn more about Krymson Media, LLC. at the following website: <https://krymsonmedia.com/>

Redemption Through Record Expungement: A Student-led Campaign Initiative
USA | University of Michigan | 2021
Peggy Randon, USA, University of Michigan
Katharine Boasberg, USA, University of Michigan
Ashley Hayes, USA, University of Michigan

Video Distribution: With endorsements from State Representative David LaGrand, Attorney General Dana Nessel, and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, we intend to publicize the videos within Michigan Department of the Secretary of State offices, with a continual list of upcoming expungement clinics in the area, as well as on social media platforms for the Department of Attorney General, Clinton Global Initiative University, and various community organizations.

Record Expungement Pro-Bono Program

About the Program: A secondary component of our project was partnering with the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office, Michigan Advocacy Program, Treetown Law Center, and the University of Michigan Law School to establish an expungement initiative set to begin in the Fall of 2021. This initiative will doubly provide continual, free expungement assistance to Washtenaw County residents and engage university students with these processes.

Functionality: Attorneys from the initiative will train and supervise students that will, in turn, assist applicants with the expungement process. Logistically, undergraduate volunteers will be paired with law students to help with eligibility screenings, intake forms, and collect records. First-year law students may assist with applications, while second- and third-year law students will represent clients in expungement court hearings.

Collaborators: Our participation in the program's establishment was facilitated by meetings with representatives within Prosecutor Eli Savit's Office, such as Conviction Integrity and Expungement Unit Director, Frances Walters and Chief Assistant Prosecutor, Victoria Burton-Harris, and approval from Attorney, Clinical Professor, and University of Michigan Law School Director of Externship and Pro Bono programs, Amy Sankaran.

Sustainability: We expect that our team will continue to be involved with the program's longevity over the 2021-22 academic year as a liaison for undergraduate student volunteers. Funding from Projects for Peace was partially allocated to start-up costs for application and processing fees for the program.

Community Expungement Fair Donations

Community Engagement: Many successful organizational and individual actions to advocate for record expungement precede our summer efforts. In acknowledgment of this, we felt it necessary to uplift longstanding efforts. We contributed a portion of our funding to pay the cost to request offender records at two community expungement fairs in August of 2021: Grace Fellowship Church's Back-to-School Bash and a New West Willow Neighborhood Association Meeting. This allowed us to uphold many of our original plans for community-based canvassing.

Community Partnerships: Furthermore, much of the project design and community contacts were provided by A Brighter Way, a Washtenaw County-based nonprofit organization that mentors formerly incarcerated people to ensure a sustainable and permanent return home.² We intend to publicize our summer work through a joint effort with A Brighter Way, and we attribute much of our project's success to their advisement.

Discussion

Our Vision of Peace: Projects for Peace encourages creativity, not just in how we define peace, but in every effort to uphold it in our communities. We were driven to see what sustainable impact we could make under the new record expungement bill package, despite the topic's contentiousness and recent implementation. We saw it as no coincidence that the same Black people, communities of color, and

² **A Brighter Way** also helps connect returning citizens, whom it does not have the capacity to mentor, to beneficial resources for employment, housing, and rehabilitation programs. Learn more about this organization at the following website:
<https://www.abrighterway.org/>

Redemption Through Record Expungement: A Student-led Campaign Initiative

USA | University of Michigan | 2021

Peggy Randon, USA, University of Michigan

Katharine Boasberg, USA, University of Michigan

Ashley Hayes, USA, University of Michigan

poorer people who are unjustly affected by the prison system also face the negative implications of a prolonged criminal record. Record expungement we determined would likely be an under-publicized process because it aids communities that are often neglected by the government. Our project served to remind our University of Michigan community that we should all seek to support those with issues and identities that we may not readily see reflected in ourselves. Redemption requires an investment in a person's future, beginning with a clean slate to ensure equal treatment under the law. As we move forward in different fields of academia, we will continue to work creatively to upend oppressive structures and systems to promote a more peaceful world.

Personal Statements

Peggy M. Randon (pmrandon@umich.edu). "Through independent research, the project enabled us to become our own experts on expungement and adapt quickly to a revolutionary, ongoing process. I recognize a moral need to continually improve the record expungement architecture, like making it so that newly acquired misdemeanors do not restart the clock on eligibility for felony conviction expungements."
-Peggy M. Randon, pmrandon@umich.edu

Katharine Boasberg (boasberg@umich.edu). "I was moved by the project's ability to foster relationships and bridge connections across multiple reentry organizations and legal officials across the state. We unified "opposing sides" [prosecutor and offender] of the criminal legal system and saw the incredible impact of working together."

Ashley Hayes (ashmh@umich.edu). "I value the experience that I gained from being a researcher on Michigan prisons throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to hands-on work with community and county leaders. I witnessed tangible, humanity-centered change, not in a distant system but our shared reality."

SECTION II: PHOTOGRAPHY

Redemption Through Record Expungement: A Student-led Campaign Initiative
USA | *University of Michigan* | 2021
Peggy Randon, USA, University of Michigan
Katharine Boasberg, USA, University of Michigan
Ashley Hayes, USA, University of Michigan

