

August 17, 2017

PJC and allies challenge police who stop-and-frisk when people run in a “high-crime area”

It’s no surprise that he ran. When six police officers suddenly descended on a group of people standing in a dimly-lit parking lot, Jamal Sizer naturally bolted. When someone accosts you out of nowhere in the dark, you run. But simply the act of running in that neighborhood was enough for the cops to chase him down and tackle him.

What happened to Mr. Sizer happens to many people of color: police jumping out in surprise, tackling and searching them, and then justifying it all by saying they ran from police in a “high-crime area.” The justification for these stop-and-frisks began with a Supreme Court decision in 2000 and got worse with a decision in Mr. Sizer’s case. On August 7, the Public Justice Center, ACLU of Maryland and Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs challenged this practice in an amicus brief in support of Mr. Sizer. [Read more here.](#)

New York City becomes first place in US to guarantee counsel in eviction cases

On July 20, the New York City Council passed [Intro 214-b](#), which guarantees counsel to low-income tenants facing eviction, and Mayor Bill de Blasio signed the bill on August 11. This historic step made New York City the first place in the country to provide a right in any type of housing case. The passage is the result of the Right to Counsel Coalition of NYC, an organization of tenants, tenant advocates, legal aid organizations, national experts, and more. The National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel (run by the Public Justice Center) worked closely with the NYC Coalition, and has seen interest swelling in other cities and states across the country eager to join this burgeoning movement. [Read all about the bill on the NCCRC website.](#)

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Thank you! Private law firms help expand access to justice

The pursuit of justice is never a solitary endeavor, and we are grateful to the many law firms and individual lawyers who join the Public Justice Center in this mission. Thank you for your donations to our 2016-2017 campaign and your service in our Litigation Partnership. Your support makes access to justice a reality for people living in poverty. In gratitude, we recognized contributing firms

“You didn’t sue fast enough” is no excuse
Court of Appeals says companies can’t put unreasonable limits on consumers’ access to the courts

Not long after having your furnace inspected, it dies. Faced with paying thousands of dollars out-of-pocket, you try to hold the company accountable for the inadequate inspection, but they ignore you. After you sue them, the judge points out that in tiny writing, on the back of your contract with the company, is a clause that requires you to bring a suit within one year, instead of the three years allowed by law, or you forfeit your right to any legal recourse. You suddenly find yourself cast out of court based on a provision that you never had a say in.

This practice is all too common in “adhesion contracts” – take-it-or-leave-it contracts drafted by larger companies, the terms of which consumers cannot change. Companies limit their liability by adding “limitations provisions” to adhesion contracts that reduce the time the law permits a consumer to file suit. The Public Justice Center and allies challenged these abusive practices in *Ceccone v. Carroll Home Services, LLC*, and in July, the Court of Appeals of Maryland held that trial courts must carefully evaluate limitations provisions before kicking a consumer out of court. [Read more about the Court’s decision here.](#)

Legal help at Baltimore Ceasefire

With more than 200 homicides in Baltimore this year, community activists wanted to do something to stop the violence. The result was a second Baltimore Ceasefire, a call for 72 hours of peace from August 4-6. (The first was in May.) As part of the Ceasefire efforts around the city, the PJC’s Debra Gardner and Zafar Shah participated in an overnight resource fair organized by Out for Justice. Deb and Zafar provided legal advice on housing, employment, and family law. They also assisted community members with drafting expungement petitions, which should make it easier for them to leave behind a criminal record and find a job or housing. The hope for the fair was that providing access to the basics of life will play a small part in stemming the violence in our city.

Your gifts help build a just society. Donate here.



in an advertisement in the Daily Record on August 2. [Click here for the ad.](#)

Save the date for Justice for Breakfast

Enjoy free breakfast and conversation with PJC staff about social justice issues at this year’s Justice for Breakfast discussion series. Mark your calendars for the following dates and stay tuned for more about discussion topics.

November 15, 2017
March 7, 2018
April 11, 2018

Thank you to Brown, Goldstein & Levy LLP for hosting!

EXCELLENCE

PJC's e-newsletter is an occasional public notice to join, share, celebrate, or commiserate with the Public Justice Center's efforts to "pursue systemic change to build a just society." Please forward this information to others. To subscribe or unsubscribe to future e-newsletters, please send an email to info@publicjustice.org stating your preferences.