SUPPORT OUR WORK

Please consider supporting CLDC today. Because we constantly fight back, using every sound legal tool available to confront corporate greed and stop government repression in our movement, we rely heavily on support from individual grassroots supporters through donations. We never take grants from the federal government or large corporations. CLDC is powered by thousands of individual people like you from across the country who commit to our work.

To put it simply, we are only able accomplish what you see in this Year in Review with grassroots support. Will you commit to our work defending frontline activists and supporting people’s rights by becoming a sustaining member, or making a one-time donation before the year’s end?

Become a Sustaining Member or donate at cldc.org/donate.

Assert your rights, we’ve got your back!

DIGITAL SECURITY

CLDC is committed to educating our activist communities on the tools that can be used with confidence by dissident organizers to resist surveillance and remain free to take action. Activist groups today are equipped with widespread and affordable digital cameras, satellite navigation, and instantaneous global communications and social networking. These technologies provide significant organizing advantages. At the same time, State and corporate opponents will turn these complex tools against activists, enabling systematic surveillance and sophisticated infiltration and disruption.

In a world where millions of digital communications are secretly intercepted, collected, and stored every day, how do activists effectively say “I do not consent to this search?” As in a physical encounter with law enforcement, we must be proactive. Online, this means using encryption along with other privacy-protecting and autonomy-preserving tools.

DEFENDING WATER PROTECTORS AT STANDING ROCK

In September, 2016 we started working with the legal collective at Oceti Sakowin, the large encampment at Standing Rock, to provide trainings, set up systems to provide legal support, and offer legal representation to water protectors in North Dakota. Even though the occupation on the ground has ended, we continue to represent water protectors in the criminal courts, defend people who are contacted or receive grand jury subpoenas from the FBI, and seek justice in the federal courts for those whose constitutional and treaty rights have been violated by the State (including police and jails). Our litigation work in North Dakota will continue for at least two more years. Once the headlines subside and the activists move on to the next battle, CLDC lawyers continue the legal fight—which is often a lonely, hard road. Your support for our continued work at Oceti Sakowin is even more important now.

Right now we are representing 14 indigenous water protectors from Standing Rock with pending criminal cases. The next round of trials for these cases are scheduled in June 2018. These fourteen cases are in addition to the work resulting in dismissals for dozens of other water protectors, who faced similar criminal charges.

In troubled political times like these, Civil Liberties Defense Center is called upon to provide expert legal support to a wide variety of social and environmental movements with unprecedented frequency.

We are proud and honored to have defended over 150 climate defenders nationwide this year, including those in Skagit County, Washington and spanning all the way to Huntington, Pennsylvania. We have offered more than 80 Know Your Rights, digital security, and other trainings to over five thousand participants. We also trained and provided legal observers for dozens of rallies, protests, and direct actions across the country, including those at Standing Rock in North Dakota. Since we worked so hard on so many fronts this year, we decided to publish an end-of-year newsletter to recap some of our major projects and accomplishments. We hope you enjoy it!
CLDC is representing Sophia Wilansky, both in criminal and civil court cases. Sophia is the young activist who almost lost her arm while at Ocei Sakowin when police launched a concussion grenade directly at her, from a short distance. Immediately, the State concocted a false narrative attempting to blame her, accusing her of blowing herself up in an attempt to suicide themselves from responsibility for her grave injuries.

Even more appalling, the State and FBI immediately showed up in her hospital room and threatened her family and doctors, as well as threatening criminal charges against her as she fought for her life.

CLDC and the Williams Connelly law firm in Washington, DC are in the early stages of bringing a federal civil rights action on Sophia’s behalf. We also continue to defend her and her family against the unethical attempts to criminally investigate Sophia for the abuse she sustained at the hands of law enforcement.

In May of 2016, hundreds of climate activists organized an action in Anacortes, Washington to stop oil trains heading to the Tesoro Oil Refinary. The refinery is the largest source of carbon pollution in the Pacific Northwest, and activists shut down all oil trains heading towards the refinery for more than two days. At the time, it was the longest train blockade in history.

On that day in May 2016, 52 activists were arrested, and CLDC has provided legal support and representation since. The cases are ongoing, with the final trial scheduled for January 2018.

CLDC provides legal support and representation to all of the Valve Turners who engaged in direct action to protect the climate from the fossil fuel industry. Last October, climate defenders shut off valves on the four pipelines that carry tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada into the United States. Their action blocked 15 percent of U.S. crude oil imports for nearly an entire day. The activists took these actions with the intention of bringing forth a climate necessity defense in the various state courts of Washington, Montana, Minnesota and North Dakota. The legal teams drafted extensive legal briefings on the necessity defense, and lined up dozens of expert witnesses, policy experts, movement experts and engineers. These professionals were ready to inform the jury exactly why the Valve Turners actions were justified (or necessary) in the face of imminent climate catastrophe – exacerbated by carbon emissions from tar sands oil extraction and government inaction on climate policy.

In the Washington case, we recently filed an appeal of the court’s decision to deny the necessity defense in order to try and create strong case precedent that may permit climate activists to unscramble a false narrative in the future. If this appeal is successful, it will help establish a legal defense that will recognize the severity of the climate crisis and the greed of big corporations who profit from the destruction of the planet and the suffering of its inhabitants, as well as the unwillingness of the government to protect the people from egregious profiteering.

In North Dakota and Montana, necessity defenses were denied, sentencing is pending, and appeals will likely follow. The Minnesota Court has granted the use of the necessity defense at trial—stay tuned for exciting updates in the near future!