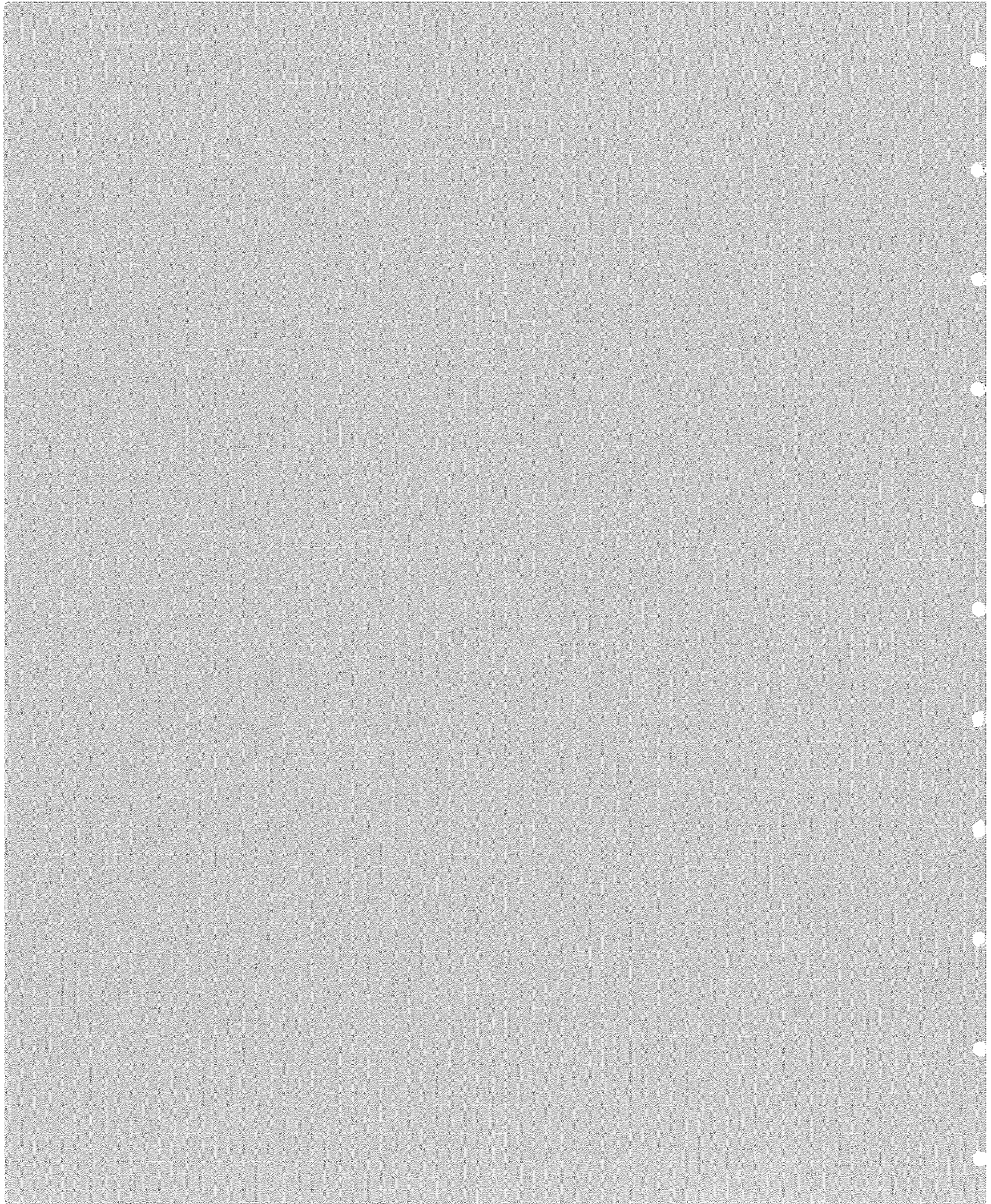


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Vera Institute of Justice 35-Year Report



The Vera Institute of Justice is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to making government policies and programs more humane and more efficient for all people. Working in collaboration with government and local communities, Vera designs and implements innovative programs that expand the practice of justice and improve the quality of urban life. Vera operates demonstration projects in partnership with government, conducts original research, and provides technical assistance to public officials in New York and throughout the world.



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## Experiments in Democracy Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., *Chair of the Board*

We in the United States usually associate “experiments in democracy” with nations emerging from dictatorship. But experimentation is essential to all democracies, especially our own, and no organization better embodies the commitment to experimentation in self-governance than the Vera Institute of Justice.

Vera was founded 35 years ago to conduct an experiment in criminal justice. Louis Schweitzer and Herb Sturz saw thousands of people locked up in the New York City jails awaiting trial, not convicted of any crime but too poor to make their bail. Others, seeing the same sight, despaired; but these two – Vera’s founder and first director – threw their energy and imagination into the problem and asked a radical question: How many of these unconvicted detainees would appear in court when required, if released without posting bail? They devised a simple measure to separate the good risks from the bad, and then they persuaded the New York City courts to host an experiment. A few years later, with the scientific results in hand proving that those released just on their promise to return would appear in court reliably, Schweitzer and Sturz persuaded legislatures around the country, and eventually the United States Congress, to reform America’s bail laws – ending a substantial injustice as well as saving public money.

By the time I took on the chairmanship of Vera’s board ten years ago, the Vera Institute of Justice – under the leadership of Burke Marshall as founding chair, Herb Sturz, and his successor, Michael Smith – had completed dozens more experiments, in fields ranging from criminal justice to transportation, housing, and employment. Vera had established itself by then as a unique institution, drawing its identity not from any particular ideology or field of expertise, but from its pioneering spirit, its entrepreneurial skills, and – most important – its commitment to careful experimentation. All this has been driven by a commitment to helping ensure that our institutions are just, as well as effective.

The creative energy that launched Vera in 1961 is stronger than ever at Vera today. If you have already been associated with Vera, I hope this report gives you a chance to catch up with our work and recall past accomplishments. If you are getting to know us, I invite you to join an extended family of dedicated public citizens.



## Speaking of Justice Christopher E. Stone, *Director*

Talk of justice is rare in our democracy today, except in calls for vengeance. Consider the change in the thirty years since President Johnson signed the Bail Reform Act, explaining that it “eliminates needless, arbitrary cruelty” and “enlarges justice.” Today, too many politicians excuse increasingly cruel policies, saying simply that those who obey the law have nothing to fear from their government. They do not speak of justice.

Yet ideals of justice stir in all people, including public servants who try to live up to them every day. Cops on the beat and police chiefs, classroom teachers and school chancellors, case workers and social welfare commissioners want to do good and are frustrated when their best efforts fall short. The genius of Vera has always been its ability to create practical opportunities for these people to do justice. Vera identifies the obstacles they face, devises new ways for them to work, sets up a demonstration to test the solution, and measures the results. Vera’s innovations all seek to enlarge justice, but to succeed they must be more efficient, effective, and rewarding than the practices they replace.

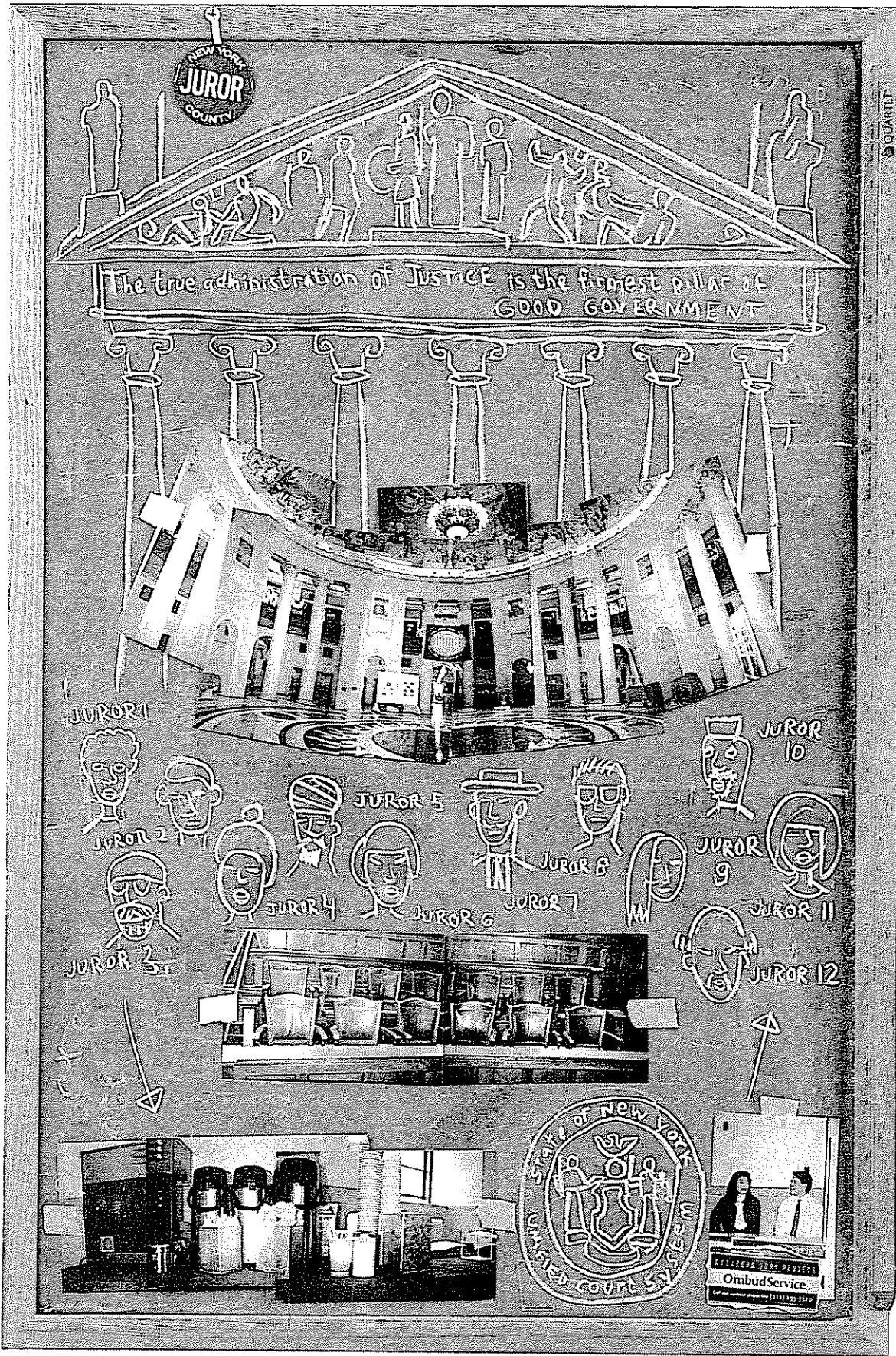
Public servants cannot put justice into practice on their own. Justice requires an active citizenry, engaged with its government. Vera’s projects connect government agencies with the people they serve, building new and vital partnerships. Vera’s Citizens Jury Project, for example, is giving jurors a voice in the reform of the American jury system. Among other techniques to improve the experience of jury duty, this project brings jurors together with lawyers, judges, and court administrators who in the courtrooms often treat jurors like conscripts. Vera’s neighborhood drug crisis center – La Bodega de la Familia – is building partnerships between families of drug users and criminal justice agencies which often ignore them. This project springs from the recognition that family members who suffer deeply from the addiction of a relative may also be the key to that relative’s recovery. Over time, engaging such families with their government’s drug control efforts may help law enforcement redefine addiction from a criminal to a medical problem.

As we mark our 35th birthday, Vera is engaging citizens with government to produce justice, not only on issues of jury service and drug abuse, but in child welfare, juvenile justice, developmental disabilities, immigration, community safety, and criminal sentencing – all issues that cry out for reform. Vera’s method is incremental: We explore our territory carefully, employing rigorous research at every stage. Vera’s voice is quiet: We prefer patient, reasoned discourse to advocacy. Yet, as this report attests, our progress has been steady, our arguments persuasive, our innovations enduring, in New York and around the world.





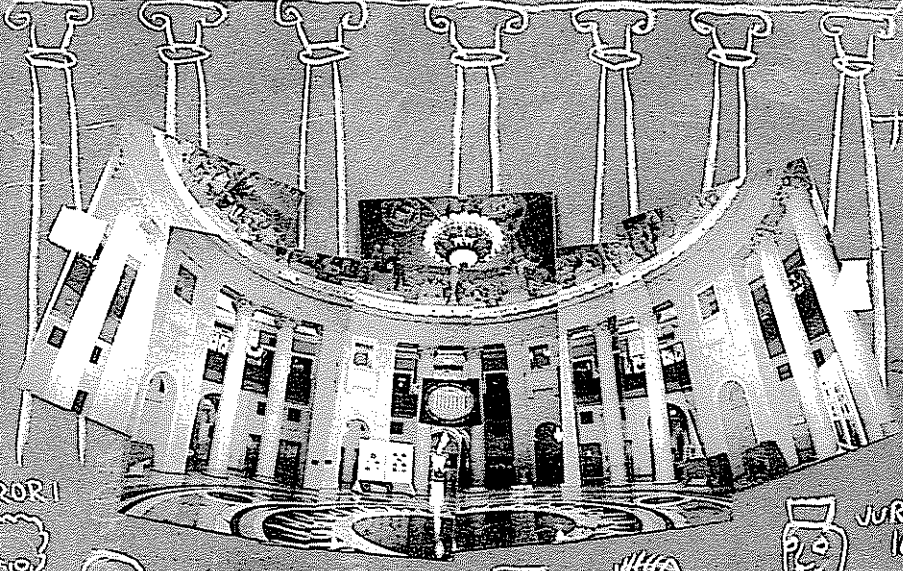
Current Work Demonstrations, Research, and Planning



NEW YORK  
**JUROR**  
COUNTY



The true administration of Justice is the finest pillar of  
GOOD GOVERNMENT



JUROR 1



JUROR 2



JUROR 3



JUROR 4



JUROR 5



JUROR 6



JUROR 7



JUROR 8



JUROR 9



JUROR 10



JUROR 11



JUROR 12



QUARTET



# Voicing the

Citizens Jury Project Julia Vitullo-Martin, *Director*

# Concerns of Jurors

The right to a trial by a jury of one's peers lies at the core of the American justice system. Yet poor administration and lack of concern for jurors have weakened popular commitment to the jury – particularly in New York City. Together with the New York State Unified Court System, headed by Chief Judge Judith Kaye, Vera created the Citizens Jury Project to improve the experience of jury duty and include jurors in efforts to reform and strengthen the system. “They also serve who only sit and wait.” That graffiti in a juror waiting room sums up how many New Yorkers feel about jury duty. Most people arrive at the courthouse willing to perform their civic duty, but many leave it frustrated and contemptuous.

While jurors overwhelmingly believe their role is fundamental to American democracy, they express outrage at the conditions surrounding jury service. Recognizing the urgent need to respond meaningfully to jurors' complaints and eliminate barriers to useful jury service, Vera installed an OmbudService table outside the main juror assembly room in the State Supreme Court building at 60 Centre Street in Manhattan. Open

five mornings a week, the table is staffed by two Vera employees and several interns. The service also operates a 24-hour telephone line available to jurors in all five boroughs. By following up every complaint and trying to solve specific problems, the OmbudService seeks to improve those parts of the system that are particularly troublesome to jurors: frequent summoning, the economic hardship of serving, uncomfortable physical conditions, inefficient use of jurors' time, and the disrespect shown to jurors by some professionals in the courthouse.

The project has fielded more than 1,000 complaints and requests for help. Among them are cases in which jury service was an unbearable hardship. In one instance, an elderly man who had been assaulted several times in the past was subjected to grueling questioning by defense attorneys about those attacks. Other hardships have been financial. A bike messenger who was paid per delivery and was the sole supporter of his family reported that he would not be able to pay his bills if he were forced to stop working in order to serve. On both occasions, project staff intervened on the jurors' behalf, and they were excused.

Juror reports have also helped the project realize two small but significant reforms: The public bathrooms at 60 Centre Street are now cleaned twice a day, and decent coffee and pastries are served outside the jury waiting room by Legal Grounds, the project's coffee bar. Physical conditions are better, but jurors are impatient to see substantial improvements in efficiency, including reform of voir dire, the excessively long and invasive questioning of jurors to select a panel. In response, the project is holding a series of roundtable discussions between judges and jurors.

Because the project has proven its effectiveness and potential to deepen reform efforts, the Unified Court System secured state funding that will enable the Citizens Jury Project to provide services in civil and criminal courts citywide. The Citizens Jury Project has been funded by the Commonwealth Fund, the New York Community Trust, and the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation.

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VERA SUPERVISION CENTER

INS DETENTION CENTER

IMMIGRATION JUDGE

# Reforming Immigration

Appearance Assistance Program Megan Golden, *New York Director*

# Detention Practices

Stephanie Marks, *National Director*

On any given day, more than 80,000 people are in deportation proceedings in the United States. Many are recent arrivals seeking political asylum. Others have green cards and live here legally but may be deported because they committed crimes. And some are long-standing illegal residents who have eluded the system. In each case, the Immigration and Naturalization Service must treat these individuals fairly during what can be a lengthy administrative and judicial process, while enforcing the law. Often the two responsibilities are at odds. The INS could guarantee compliance by holding everyone who may be deported. But detention is expensive, existing facilities can accommodate only a fraction of this population, and the buildings are not equipped to house people for long periods of time. Yet those who are not detained rarely appear in court or comply with deportation orders when they lose.

With these concerns in mind, Vera and the INS are launching a demonstration intended to reform INS detention practices and increase compliance with immigration laws. Vera's first undertaking, the Manhattan Bail Project, addressed a similar challenge: to help courts make pretrial release decisions that maximize court appearance rates while minimizing the unnecessary use of pretrial detention. Over the years, Vera has piloted several programs that supervise people released at other stages of criminal justice proceedings.

Operating initially in New York and New Jersey, the Appearance Assistance Program screens individuals when they enter INS detention and recommends for supervised release people who are likely to appear when required. Once released, immigrants are required to check in regularly at the project's Reporting and Assistance Center. There, staff give immigrants clear information about the requirements of supervised release, along with referrals to organizations that can help them prepare their cases and access services. The project's field staff ensure a quick response to a missed hearing or an attempt to escape deportation.

If successful, the project will increase compliance with the law and make the law work for the individual. Fewer immigrants entitled to legal residency will suffer the pains of incarceration, and more of these individuals will win relief, because it is easier to prepare a strong case while living and working in the community. The project will also make more efficient and humane use of detention space by limiting stays and reserving beds for people who pose a danger to the community, have no claim for residency, or have already been ordered to leave the country.

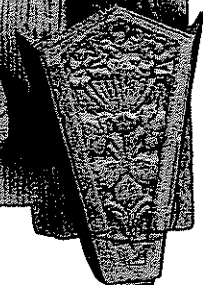
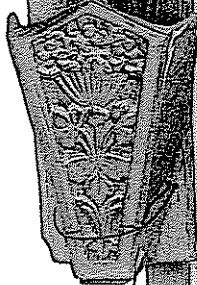
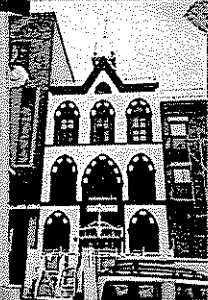
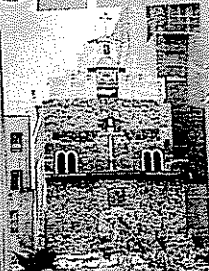
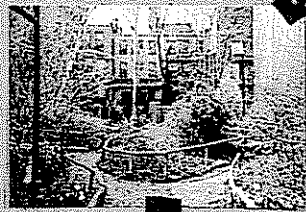
Formal research will evaluate the impact of the demonstration, and if the results are promising, support expansion to other parts of the country. As a national intervention, the Appearance Assistance Program would not only change the system, it would rebuild public confidence in government's ability to manage immigration responsibly. More broadly, the demonstration may be useful to other nations facing similar challenges in an era of transnational migration.

La  
**BODEGA**  
DE LA  
*Familia*

27



EL CORAZON





# Support for Families

La Bodega de la Familia Carol Shapiro, *Director*

## Struggling with Addiction

Vera is starting a new kind of community-based service to help drug users succeed in outpatient treatment and protect families and neighborhood residents from the repeated theft, verbal abuse, and physical violence that often accompany addiction. The neighborhood drug crisis center aims to serve a 24-square-block area in New York's Lower East Side from a storefront office, La Bodega de la Familia.

Why would a mother, son, or roommate use the center? The destructive behavior that often accompanies drug abuse can strain intimate relationships to the breaking point. Struggling in poverty and without support, family and friends may feel that they have no choice but to abandon the individual to the streets or to jail. Recently, a woman called the police precinct in which the center operates. Her 31-year-old son, a former drug user, had just been released from prison and diagnosed as HIV positive. The mother was distraught: She wanted to help her son, but did not feel she could care for him. She needed someone to talk to. In the

past, the police could have dealt with the son's problem by referring him to a treatment program, but they would not have been able to help the mother. This time, they sent her to La Bodega.

The center exists to alleviate family strain and enable relatives and friends to help drug abusers complete treatment. From its small storefront, it provides three basic services to neighborhood residents: 24-hour crisis intervention, counseling and relapse prevention services on a walk-in basis, and family case management for residents who have an addicted relative or friend involved with the criminal justice system.

The center is an experiment that will evolve over time. To assist staff in monitoring and refining their services, Vera's research department will record who uses the center, how they use it, how they are referred, and how their family situations change. This information will also help researchers evaluate the impact of the program on treatment retention and drug-related crime.

Government investment in this service makes sense if the center improves the success of nonresidential drug treatment that is ordered in thousands of criminal cases. Until now, such treatment has produced discouraging results – in part, because the justice system and conventional treatment providers have failed to involve family and friends, an individual's natural supports, in the recovery process. Vera hopes to demonstrate that a neighborhood service for drug users and their family members will increase support for the person in recovery and reduce the use of jail to punish relapse. The center has been funded jointly by the

New York City Mayor's Coordinator of Criminal Justice; the Bureau of Justice Assistance, an arm of the U.S. Department of Justice; and the Drug Policy Foundation.

Placing drug-related problems within the context of homes and neighborhoods changes public conversations about drugs, crime, and treatment. If successful, the center will serve as a model for a new treatment paradigm, one that can deal honestly and effectively with substance abuse in poor communities.

The Vera Institute of Justice is launching its family-centered drug crisis center in the Lower East Side, a densely populated, 24-square-block area in lower Manhattan. Vera chose the site because the community has serious social needs as well as a commitment to developing grassroots solutions. Although drug abuse and its destructive consequences permeate neighborhood streets, businesses, and residences, the Lower East Side is home to health clinics, churches, and welfare meal homes – organizations that provide crucial support to drug users and their families. Vera hopes that by locating its service in a grounded yet vibrant neighborhood – one that resembles so many other communities – it will encourage planners in other parts of the country to attempt similar projects.

BEDFORD HILLS

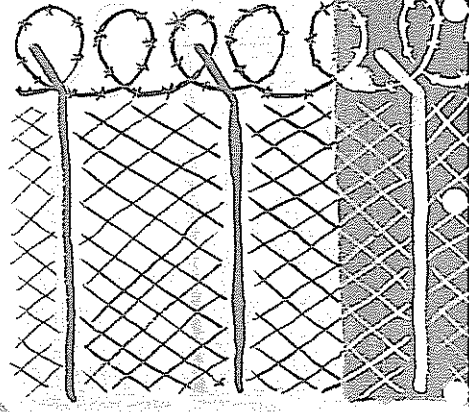
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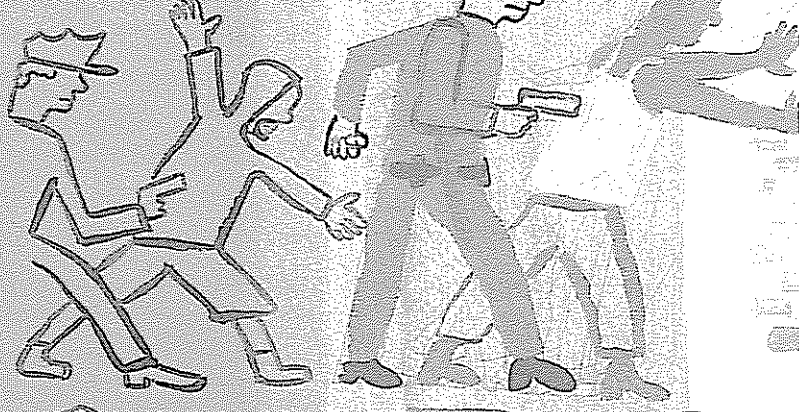
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Harlem GROCERY  
GROCERY Harlem GROCERY



BAPTIST CHURCH

LAGREE

BAPTIST CHURCH

JEFFERSON

# They took her kids & threw her in jail — now mom sues city for \$5M

**COLUMBIA** A week later, a mental worker arrived from the Thomas Institute for the Blind, a mental hospital for the blind, and Taylor was taken to the hospital. Taylor had been in the hospital for a week, and she had been in the hospital for a week. Taylor had been in the hospital for a week, and she had been in the hospital for a week. Taylor had been in the hospital for a week, and she had been in the hospital for a week.

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# Improving Legal Defense

Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem Leonard Noisetete, *Director*

## of Indigent People

Most public defenders face similar problems: huge caseloads and other barriers between them and their clients that undermine defense efforts. In 1989, Vera began to design an affordable way to provide indigent defendants with high-quality legal representation, the kind they would buy if they could afford it. This meant getting lawyers involved earlier, allocating resources to thoroughly investigate the circumstances of an alleged crime, and responding to the broader social problems that bring poor clients into court in the first place. A year later, Vera opened the Neighborhood Defender Service on 125th Street in Harlem.

Over the past five years, NDS has defended more than 6,000 Harlem residents, mostly in felony cases. NDS provides strong legal representation – earning the trust of a community highly suspicious of the criminal justice system, and gaining support and recognition from New York City's other public defenders as well as the National Legal Aid and Defender Association. And Vera's research shows that NDS clients receive significantly shorter jail and prison sentences than similar individuals represented by traditional defenders.

There are many reasons for this success. Foremost among them are the organization's roots in the community. Physical proximity, combined with outreach and education, encourages clients or their relatives and friends to seek help early. Since September 1994, the project's entire caseload has come from residents walking in or calling for help either prior to an arrest or shortly thereafter. Its neighborhood location also means that witnesses and other community members who may be able to offer help and insight do not have to travel the length of Manhattan to consult with a court-based lawyer. As a result, NDS can present more information about its clients to prosecutors and judges.

Recognizing that quality defense involves much more than the skills of an attorney, NDS developed a unique team approach, which unites lawyers, community investigators, and caseworkers as equal partners in the process. Team members share information, and if a client's lawyer is unavailable, another attorney on the team or a paraprofessional can provide interim support. NDS attorneys also represent clients in civil court proceedings, such as eviction or child custody hearings, that result from their criminal court cases. Drawing connections between the two cases increases the quality of representation in each. All of these benefits add up to the strongest possible defense – representation that helps arraignment judges make informed pretrial release decisions and sentencing judges determine fair and meaningful punishments.

NDS completed its demonstration in December 1995. Today, Vera is working to imbed NDS's most successful practices in public defender offices across the country, while NDS itself tries to make a permanent home in Harlem as an independent organization. The demonstration of NDS was funded by the New York City Mayor's Coordinator of Criminal Justice, the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Public Welfare Foundation, and the Commonwealth Fund.





**Job Path**

HELPS PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES

AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED. JOB PATH HELPED HIM FIND WORK AND  
BECOME

**Active Members**

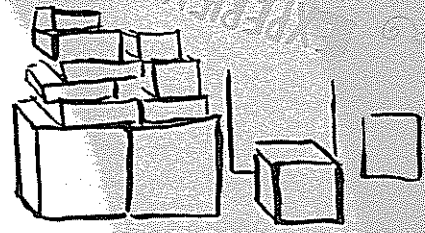
**ROBERT**

**HOPES**



is mentally Retarded and Visually Impaired. Job Path helped him find work and become Active Members

for the Future. ROBERT is mentally Retarded and Visually Impaired. Job Path helped him find work and become Active Members



**LIFE CHOICES**



for the Future. ROBERT is mentally Retarded and Visually Impaired. Job Path helped him find work and become Active Members

for the Future. ROBERT is mentally Retarded and Visually Impaired. Job Path helped him find work and become Active Members

for the Future. ROBERT is mentally Retarded and Visually Impaired. Job Path helped him find work and become Active Members

for the Future. ROBERT is mentally Retarded and Visually Impaired. Job Path helped him find work and become Active Members



# Living and Working

Job Path Fredda Rosen, *Director*

## in the Mainstream

Twenty years ago, the Willowbrook Decree required New York State to close large public institutions for people with developmental disabilities and open small, community-based facilities. Although many individuals found homes in neighborhoods across the state, they spent their working hours at segregated job sites. And while government envisioned them gaining skills in a protected environment, then finding unsubsidized employment, in reality, sheltered workshops became a terminal placement.

In 1978, Vera established Job Path in partnership with New York State to demonstrate that its supported work techniques, developed to assist former offenders and addicts, could help people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities make the transition from special schools and sheltered workshops to employment in the competitive labor market. The demonstration has been remarkably effective: Close to 1,300 Job Path trainees have become employees of banks, law firms, department stores, restaurants, and other large and small businesses in New York City. More significant, by the 1980s Job Path had changed federal and state policies, encouraging the use of supported work nationwide.

Not content with the success of supported work, two years ago Job Path started helping people with developmental disabilities find apartments and make the adjustment to independent living. A recent initiative, funded by the Dole Foundation and now in its final stages, involves training United Parcel Service recruiters, managers, and line staff to support the company's developmentally disabled employees without drawing on invasive and costly social service agency involvement.

The lessons learned through implementing supported work techniques have also helped Job Path find ways to raise the quality of life for people with the most severe disabilities and limited skills. Job Path's Living Resources team uses person-centered planning to help these individuals become full participants in their communities through paid or

job. Families helped Robert France and hundreds of other people with developmental disabilities avoid segregated work sites and group homes. Though mentally retarded and visually impaired, Robert holds a mainstream job, lives independently, and contributes to his community. Every weekday for the past seven years Robert has taken the subway from his apartment in Brooklyn to his job at the Samuel Aaron Jewelry Company, in Queens. In his free time, he visits his family, reads books and those magazines, takes swimming lessons, and listens to music. He soon will become a volunteer dogwalker for the Center for Animal Care and Control. "I do things for myself," he says.

ing special education teachers in New York City to use person-centered planning in order to avert day treatment placement. In the spring, several special education students graduated with community activities and supports already in place.

Finally, a three-year, federally funded project is testing the utility of fully combining person-centered planning and supported work. The participants are residents of the Harlem-South Bronx Empowerment Zone and other disadvantaged communities in New York City. Over the past two decades, the opportunities for people with developmental disabilities have grown tremendously, and Job Path has been an integral part of these changes. As it continues to reach out further and refine its services, Job Path is also preparing to become an independent organization in 1997.

volunteer work, neighborhood activities, and friendships with people without disabilities. Central to this approach is the effort to engage and develop the support of close friends and family members. Job Path began using person-centered planning to create a way out of day treatment, the state's most restrictive program for people with severe developmental disabilities. Now the Pathfinders Project, funded in January 1996 by the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, is training

## Reducing Violence in the Lives of Adolescents

Violence has become too familiar an event in the lives of children growing up today: in their homes, on the streets, and even in their schools. Among adolescents, the cost is high and often deadly. The rate of homicides committed by American teenagers, ages 14 to 17, increased 172 percent between 1985 and 1994, and murder is the second leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds. Public safety suffers too, particularly in high-crime areas where many people live in fear of stray bullets from crossfire and intimidation by street gangs. Finding effective ways to reduce adolescent violence is vital to solving the problem.

Alarm over the issue has prompted a wide array of preventive efforts, from conflict resolution classes to special policing of "safe corridors" to and from schools. Are any of these programs making a difference in the lives of urban teenagers? What can we learn from the experience of young people that can help parents, community organizations, and government agencies reduce the level of violence? How can government investments in education, juvenile justice, and child welfare be coordinated effectively and fairly?

In the fall of 1995, Vera launched an ambitious four-year initiative to answer these questions. This work has three parts: an ethnographic study of violence in the lives of adolescents from three different New York City neighborhoods, a planning effort focused on improving anti-violence work in urban middle schools, and a re-examination of the work of the family courts.

This multifaceted initiative carries forward Vera's tradition of reforming juvenile justice, a tradition that began with the Court Employment Project in the late 1960s, continued with studies of violent delinquents and the family court in the 1970s, and extended in the 1980s to the prevention of abuse within foster care.

*Growing Up Safe and Smart* Vera's ethnographic research project, headed by Mercer Sullivan, breaks new ground in its approach to adolescence and violence: examining the influence of violence on adolescent development in homes, schools, and communities.

Violence involves adolescents as victims, offenders, and witnesses. Engaging with violence in any of these ways can profoundly alter how kids grow up. Faced by this problem, Vera's team of ethnographers wants to know: What do adolescents actually do to stay safe? What supports do they draw upon to avoid violence and cope with exposure to it? What is the relationship between fear of being a victim and becoming a victimizer? How do adolescents themselves understand violence?

The researchers are focusing on 75 seventh graders in three junior high schools in widely scattered neighborhoods of New York City, following them for three years, through junior high and into high school. Each ethnographer is recording daily events including situations of conflict and the many reactions to violent confrontations.

The research is supported by the W.T. Grant Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Pinkerton Foundation, and the National Institute of Justice.

### *Focusing on Students in the Justice System*

Vera's planning effort, headed by Amy Loi, draws on the Institute's ethnographic research as well as the experience of violence prevention programs throughout the country. The focus is on improving the personal safety and addressing the developmental needs of junior high school students involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. While school officials understand that these students often become involved in violence, as victims or aggressors, and are at great risk of failing in school, no specialized programs exist for them. Such programs are not in place today partly

because they would require differentiating court-involved students from other students. The aversion to such special treatment is rooted in genuine concerns about labeling and discrimination, but these can become excuses to ignore obvious problems that schools are best positioned to solve.

The form and content of Vera's intervention will evolve based on discussion with the participating students, information generated by the ethnographic research, and input from teachers and school administrators. If the pilot efforts appear promising, Vera will design a full-scale demonstration project. Vera's planning work is supported by the J.L. Foundation, and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

*Reopening the Family Courts* In partnership with the New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children, Vera is examining the operation of New York State Family Courts as they deal with adjudication of abuse and neglect cases. Planner Molly Armstrong is looking at family court practice regarding infants entering foster care and 16 to 18-year-olds leaving foster care. This older group is particularly interesting because many of the adolescents have been involved in the juvenile delinquency jurisdiction of the court, yet the court rarely takes advantage of this double jurisdiction to coordinate prevention efforts with children involved in both systems. The first stage of Vera's work in family court aims to produce baseline data on the quality of proceedings in five counties across New York State, against which the success of future demonstration projects to improve the court can be judged.

## Exploring New Drug Treatment Options

Doug Young heads Vera's current research on community-based treatment for offenders with drug problems. Vera's research focuses on the Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison program (DTAP), developed by the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office in 1990 and later expanded to Manhattan and Queens. DTAP offers non-violent repeat felony defendants the option of completing long-term residential drug treatment instead of going to prison. Graduates have their charges dismissed; those who fail face mandatory prison terms of at least one and a half years.

Funded by New York State, Vera's research on DTAP provides evidence of the model's achievements: DTAP participants stay in treatment longer and have higher completion rates compared with people in similar programs; they are unlikely to commit crimes during treatment – to date, there have been no arrests for violent crimes among participants; and early data indicate low rates of recidivism among DTAP graduates.

In a separate study, funded by the National Institute of Justice, Vera is comparing retention among Brooklyn DTAP participants and a statistically matched group of probationers, parolees, and others ordered by the court to attend the same treatment facilities DTAP uses. Findings based on responses to a questionnaire Vera designed to measure perceived legal

pressure indicate that this factor is a powerful predictor of whether and how long someone remains in treatment. Other analyses focus on the effectiveness of specific coercive strategies, such as closely monitoring treatment progress, using special enforcement squads, and imposing severe penalties for dropping out.

With a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Vera, the New York City Criminal Justice Agency, and other researchers are expanding this work. The five-year collaborative study will measure the impact of DTAP and compare its costs and benefits to those associated with traditional court processing of repeat felony drug offenders. Vera's primary contribution to this research is an exhaustive study of treatment retention comparing DTAP participants with all other criminal justice involved clients who attend the treatment facilities DTAP uses.

The hard data generated should help policymakers answer questions about the value of investing in treatment alternatives: Do they reduce crime rates and prevent recidivism? Do they lead to reduced drug use and more stable, productive lives? How much do they cost in comparison to other punishments?

## Alternatives to Eviction in Narcotics Cases

Drug dealing and addiction can destroy the quality of public and subsidized housing. While evicting residents involved in narcotics activity makes sense, eviction is not always possible or fair.

When residents who sell drugs are arrested, the testimony of the arresting officer makes eviction likely. Without police testimony or a statement by another resident who is willing to come forward in court, attempting eviction is a futile response to the problem of drugs in housing. And even when eviction is assured, it often means punishing everyone who lives in the apartment – an innocent grandparent, parent, children, or others who are not directly involved but may be homeless as a result.

Frustrated by those cases in which eviction was unlikely or affected whole families, in January 1995 New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) asked Vera to help it develop an alternative. Any plan would have to reduce drug trafficking and abuse, protect the people who live in low-income apartments, and preserve family unity.

Vera planners reviewed HPD's current policies and case files, and confirmed that it is possible to target problem cases. To find an effective strategy, the planners talked with community-based nonprofit housing managers who had cleaned up drug-infested buildings. Vera learned that the key to their success was employing negotiation techniques and enlisting building-wide participation in the problem-solving process. These tactics proved to be quicker and more effective than eviction proceedings.

Drawing on this experience, Vera developed a way to use mediation in public and subsidized housing disputes that involve drugs. Under the plan, an impartial facilitator would help the parties involved – including all of the family members living in the apartment – reach a mutually acceptable settlement. The terms of the agreement would be written and signed by everyone. This approach combines the advantage of voluntary cooperation outside of the justice system with the practicality and power of a binding contract. Those who refuse to participate in the mediation process or fail to comply with the terms of the agreement would be forced to move out. The Institute is working with federal and local housing agencies to find a setting to test this design.





Vera's Method Explore, Plan, Demonstrate, Evaluate



The Institute's current work is always changing, but its method is constant: Vera explores a social problem and the response of its government partners, generates and implements alternative practices, and evaluates its efforts for government and the people served. Vera's approach connects theory with practice, creativity with pragmatism, and local needs with national ideals. Other institutes and conventional think tanks study some of the same issues that concern Vera, however, none offer such an organic approach to solving social problems.

Vera is unique in its expertise to combine exploratory research, project planning, demonstration, and evaluation. Vera takes the time to condition independent research and assumes the responsibility to test and refine promising projects or close failing ones. Yet government is by no means a silent partner. The long-term viability of any Vera project depends on government involvement and support from beginning to end.

**Explore** At Vera, exploratory research may mean talking with kids about the expression of violence in their lives, surveying tenants about drug use and eviction from city housing, assessing the operational strengths and weaknesses of New York's Family Court System, or bringing together a diverse group of academics to discuss how rising rates of incarceration are changing families and neighborhoods. Though different in form and content, these recent efforts share the same goal: to challenge conventional wisdom and expand narrowly defined streams of information.

Vera never studies a topic solely to generate knowledge. The best exploratory research combines the science of observation and measurement with the know-how of skilled and experienced practitioners. By surveying the field, identifying trouble spots, and proposing possible explanations, staff can begin to imagine what kind of intervention might offer a solution to the problem at hand. Vera's demonstration projects are normally funded by government, but the Institute receives considerable support from private sources to conduct exploratory research, such as its current

three-year ethnographic study of adolescent violence, called Growing Up Safe and Smart.

For this project, three ethnographers, each based in a public junior high school in New York City, have been following the lives of 75 adolescents as they move from the seventh through the ninth grades. The schools have different racial and economic compositions and various degrees of enrichment programs and community engagement.

The heart of ethnographic research is observation and documentation. But unlike an experimental researcher behind a one-way mirror, an ethnographer is also a participant: a role model, confidant, advisor.

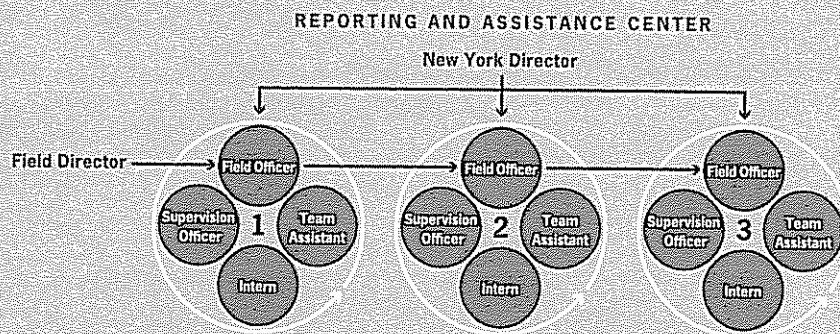
Over the course of this study, the researchers will record thousands of events in the lives of fewer than a hundred teenagers. These stories – along with corresponding life histories and interviews with parents, teachers, counselors, community leaders, and police officers – will bring greater understanding to reports of escalating juvenile violence in New York City and nationwide.

For example, when a researcher encounters a conflict between two

students, he or she will try to answer the following questions: How was the fight instigated and what was at stake? Was there an attempt to resolve the conflict before it became physical? If so, did school personnel or other students help resolve the problem? What kinds of disciplinary actions follow the fight, and how do school personnel view the students involved? What are the social consequences of the fight, and what is the role of the students who witness it?

Existing research on violence prevention focuses primarily on actions adults take to protect the young and tells us very little about what adolescents do: how they stay safe, how they define and cope with violence and danger, and how they relate the fear of being victimized with the propensity to hurt others. Similarly, because most research on adolescent development examines maturation outside of social contexts, the effects of growing up in a violent environment are largely uncharted.

Deepening and expanding existing knowledge through ethnographic inquiry should help Vera and others create effective violence prevention programs that can change young peoples' lives.



**A Model for Team-Based Supervision**

Efficient organizing of staff is crucial for an effective demonstration. The planning group for the Immigration Appearance Assistance Program created three teams, each with a field officer who visits and provides transportation to the hearing, and a community-based supervision officer who has biweekly meetings with the participants. At the center of each team is a team assistant and an intern. The field director supervises field officers, and the New York director provides overall leadership and guidance to the three teams.



**Plan** Exploration becomes project planning when a government agency solicits Vera's help to solve a problem in the way it delivers a vital public service, or when Vera identifies such a problem and approaches government with a solution. In either situation, Vera plans a project to serve both its government client and the individuals who need government's assistance. And unlike traditional consultants who dispense advice and move on to other work, Vera's planners become project directors and managers. Because they take responsibility for putting their ideas into practice, they have a real stake in each project's success.

A recent planning process involved helping the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service increase compliance with U.S. immigration laws without having to build more detention centers. Exploratory research led Vera to design the Appearance Assistance Program to screen immigrants entering detention, and release and supervise those who have a chance of winning. Community supervision should increase court appearance rates and better ensure physical removal, when necessary. And more immigrants entitled to legal residency should be granted relief because it is easier to prepare a strong case while living in the community.

But defining the problem, setting goals, and developing broad strategies is just the beginning. Planning a demonstration project involves countless decisions: from shaping program procedures to finding office space to hiring staff. In this case, planners knew that to be

affordable, the project must carry out its core service – supervision – with maximum efficiency. Consequently, their ideas about the best way to organize staff occupied center stage during the early days of the planning process.

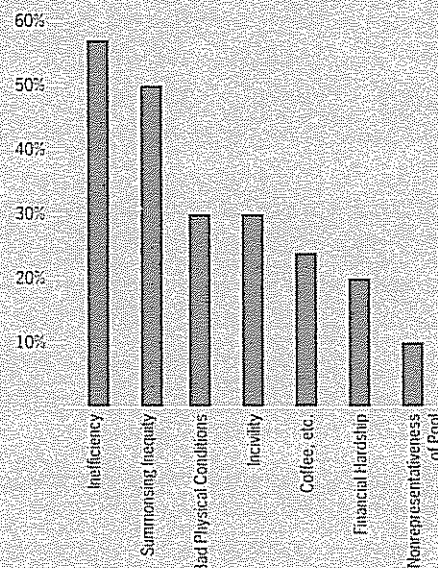
The planning group identified two modes of supervision: in the office and in the field. Office supervision would involve orienting new participants and then meeting with individuals at least twice monthly. Field supervision could involve regular home visits, or it could be used only when a participant violates a project rule or attempts to flee.

Next, the planners decided what kind of field supervision was needed. Drawing on Vera's experience designing supervision programs for pretrial detainees, the group agreed that regular home visits would be necessary for the majority of participants, who might otherwise flee the program and the area. It also seemed wise to pool supervision forces, so that field officers could meet and become familiar with participants as they enter the program. Familiarity should make community supervision less adversarial and more effective when strict enforcement proves necessary.

The group began building a model team, which included a supervision officer, a field officer, an assistant, and an intern. Next they faced the question of team leadership. On the surface, it seemed natural for an office-based staff person to manage the team. But the field officers were likely to be older and more experienced than the supervision officers. It was artificial to elevate a less experienced person and equally untenable

#### JURORS MAKING COMPLAINTS

April 12, 1995 – March 31, 1996



**Juror Concerns:** Vera's Citizens Jury Project seeks to eliminate barriers to public jury service. To that end, researchers are tracking jurors' complaints so they can better identify solutions to the most pressing problems.

to make a community-based staff member the team leader. To break out of this dilemma, the group took one step back and focused on the value of having team leaders. When they realized that specialized team leaders would add another layer of management without necessarily providing more expertise, they agreed to locate leadership responsibilities for several teams with the program director and hire a field director to provide enforcement back-up and guidance.

Conceptualizing supervision was just one of the many design questions the planners confronted. Yet this challenge and its solutions exemplify how Vera planners make practical choices about service delivery that protect a project's core identity, while building a program that they themselves can manage and government can later run effectively.

**Demonstrate** Just as exploratory research feeds into project planning, planning leads to demonstration: putting ideas into action and testing their practicality. By definition, a demonstration has a finite life span. Some have shorter lives, and not every pilot project succeeds. However, most demonstrations run for at least three years, during which time Vera has a chance to refine and sometimes expand project operations.

While exploratory research forms the foundation for any demonstration, fact finding and analysis continue after this phase. The Citizens Jury Project provides a good example of how Vera managers can use new information to extend a project's reach and impact. The Citizens Jury Project runs an OmbudService to handle jurors' complaints and help them



secure remedies. The service, the first of its kind in the nation, opened in April 1995. Its initial public face was reserved: a table outside the jury assembly room at 60 Centre Street, New York City's main civil court, and a 24-hour complaint line, available to jurors in all five boroughs of New York City.

Through both sources, project staff heard about the futility of hours of waiting, the economic hardship incurred when time away from work is not compensated, the intrusiveness of unrestricted voir dire (the process by which attorneys question potential jurors), and the incivility with which jurors are treated. They also took down complaints about dirty bathrooms, disagreeable clerks, and lousy coffee. Staff helped individual jurors whenever they could, and they meticulously collected every testimonial. But more than that, they used this cumulative narrative to generate ideas for further program development.

For example, in February 1996, the Citizens Jury Project opened Legal Grounds, a coffee bar next to the OmbudService table. Criticism of the coffee available in the courthouse was the third most frequent complaint logged by the OmbudService. This rapid, enterprising response to a well-documented problem encouraged jurors and court administrators to place increased trust in the project as complaints about coffee disappeared.

In this and other ways, the Citizens Jury Project embodies the essence of Vera's method: start small, stay focused, and let growth follow the facts.

**Evaluate** Moving from the blackboard to the playing field is never a flawless transition. And putting into practice even the best designs always involves a degree of trial and error. Knowing this, Vera closely monitors the start-up phase of every demonstration. The goal of early assessment is to help managers overcome any barriers to full implementation, document the process, and identify accomplishments and shortcomings in program performance.

Process evaluations examine both prescribed and accidental activities and are meant to reveal the reasons for operational success and failings. This feedback can help staff modify procedures and improve performance levels and can help others who seek to build on Vera's innovations learn from its mistakes. Because every locale is unique, exact replication of Vera projects is unlikely. Therefore, revealing the mechanisms at work and the lessons learned extends the value of Vera's work beyond the original participants.

If a process evaluation indicates that the project is successfully delivering services to the target population, Vera's next step is to evaluate impact. The purpose is to pinpoint the outcomes of the intervention and attribute these results to the program, ruling out other influences. Most impact analyses compare an experimental group, whose members participate in the project, with either a control or a comparison group, whose members do not receive the project's services. The experimental and the control or comparison groups should be as similar as

possible, so that differences can be attributed to the intervention.

What outcomes does Vera measure? The answer depends on the project. The staff of Vera's neighborhood drug crisis center, La Bodega de la Familia, believes that by supporting families of drug users, they will help the entire neighborhood become healthier and stronger. But they will measure their success in narrower terms: More drug users should complete treatment, and families should suffer less abuse.

The impact analysis will compare the demonstration area with a virtually identical neighborhood adjacent to the test site. Comparing the frequency of 911 calls for drug-related domestic violence and the return to custody of drug users for failure in outpatient drug treatment in the two areas will measure the impact of center services.

This example illustrates one way to objectively measure results. It also underscores the importance of choosing the right outcome variables to examine, since program success or failure will be based on these criteria. For example, focusing on overall drug use would probably yield different conclusions about the effectiveness of the center. Measuring narcotics arrests and the number of residents entering drug treatment might fail to reveal how the center reduces the harm associated with addiction, damage which encourages a cycle of drug dependency within families and neighborhoods.

Evaluation is an integral part of Vera's method. Without it, the Institute would lack the know-how and credibility to function as a suc-

cessful innovator. Vera's research department also evaluates programs outside the Institute. These assignments are carefully selected to expand the Institute's knowledge of problems that are related to ongoing planning and demonstration work or are likely to inform future projects.



History 35 Years of Justice in Practice

**Introduction** Vera's origins are rooted in one citizen's belief in the principles of equality and justice articulated in the United States Constitution and his drive to make these ideals real. In 1960, Louis Schweitzer learned that New York City's jails were dangerously overcrowded. Thousands of people charged with minor crimes were being detained at great public expense simply because they could not afford to post bail. Many were innocent, and even those found guilty were likely to receive probation or a fine rather than a jail sentence. As an immigrant who had prospered in this country, Schweitzer was shocked to realize that poverty was a punishable offense. He sensed that people with no financial collateral could be trusted to appear in court for a hearing as much as people with a great deal of money. And he believed public funds were wasted on building more jails if the bail system was flawed and unjust.

In search of a solution, Schweitzer hired Herbert Sturz, a young magazine editor who had managed a successful youth project. Together they designed an experiment to test whether judges would release defendants with proven community ties simply on their promise to come back, and whether these individuals would return to court any less frequently than people released on bail. To conduct the study, Schweitzer created the Vera Foundation. He and Sturz launched the Manhattan Bail Project in 1961.

The demonstration ran for three years. Based on the project's recommendations, judges did release defendants on their own recognizance, and less than two percent of these individuals failed to return to court, while defendants who posted bail were twice as likely to fail to appear. Moreover, the project saved the city's department of corrections more than a million dollars in operating costs. In 1964, Mayor Robert Wagner institutionalized the project within the city's department of probation, and later that year, Herbert Sturz testified at the National Conference on Bail and Criminal Justice. When President Lyndon Johnson signed the Bail Reform Act of 1966, the first reform of the federal bail system since 1789, he credited Vera for leading the way.

The Manhattan Bail Project eventually evolved into the Criminal Justice Agency, an independent, nonprofit organization that makes recommendations regarding release for nearly every accused person in New York City. Yet the legacy of Vera's first endeavor extends beyond CJA. Schweitzer's and Sturz's approach – to reach inside a government system and make it fair to the individual and responsive to public demand for efficiency – set a precedent for every Vera project that followed. Their original methodology – to explore, plan, demonstrate, and evaluate – is reflected in Vera's work over the last 35 years.

Vera has no political agenda. The Institute exists to bridge competing interests and to work quietly and persistently with established government agencies to make the practice of justice measure up to society's ideals. And from its earliest days, it has shared the belief of the 1967 Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice that: "Even a vastly improved criminal justice system can[not] substantially reduce crime if society fails to make it possible for each of its citizens to feel a personal stake in it – in the good life that it can provide and in the law and order that are the prerequisites to such a life. That sense of stake, of something that can be gained or lost, can come only through real opportunity for full participation in society's life and growth."

The research, demonstration, and technical assistance projects described below are a testament to Vera's history of helping local and national justice agencies give more Americans a stake in a just society.

**The following chronology includes selected milestones in Vera's history as well as significant research, demonstration, and technical assistance (T.A.) projects.**

<b>1961</b>	Louis Schweitzer creates the Vera Foundation, named for his mother, and hires Herbert Sturz as director.	<b>1964</b>	National Conference on Bail and Criminal Justice Manhattan Summons Project (assumed by the police department in 1966)	<b>1966</b>	The Vera Foundation becomes the Vera Institute of Justice, with support from the Ford Foundation.  President Lyndon Johnson signs the Bail Reform Act of 1966, the first reform of the federal bail system since 1789.	<b>1967</b>	Mayor John Lindsay establishes the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and appoints Vera as consultant to the council.  Manhattan Bowery Corporation (renamed Project Renewal in 1994)  Experimental Twenty-Four Hour Arraignment Court (T.A.)  Police Guidelines On the Use of Firearms (T.A.)  Monitored Interrogation Project
	Members of the Advisory Board include Margaret Mead and the Hon. William O. Douglas.  Manhattan Bail Project (spun-off as the Criminal Justice Agency in 1977)						

The First Projects: Experiments With Diversion The Manhattan Bail Project not only sought to protect the rights of the accused but to conserve resources by limiting the use of pretrial detention. Vera's next project intervened at an earlier point in the criminal justice process. If a defendant could be safely released after arraignment, why not free the person earlier – at the local station house after an arrest? To keep patrol officers on the streets instead of escorting accused persons through central booking and arraignment, Vera launched the Manhattan Summons Project in 1964.

Again, Vera assumed the responsibility for recommending which persons should be released and notifying defendants of their scheduled court dates. The Summons Project also operated as an experiment, this time to see whether the police would issue more summonses if they had verified information about defendants – where they lived and worked, and their prior criminal history, if any – and whether those individuals would appear in court as required. The project succeeded on both counts.

Vera's position as a central change agent was strengthened in 1967 when Mayor John Lindsay established the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and asked Vera to function as a consultant to the council. Created to improve the flow of information among New York City's various criminal justice agencies and to facilitate reform efforts, the council increased Vera's opportunities for working creatively with city criminal justice agencies.

Work on the Summons Project revealed that nearly one-third of all the arrests in New York City were for public drunkenness and alcohol-related offenses. Not surprisingly, most of these individuals were repeat offenders. They were also mainly poor, ill, and homeless. Moving alcoholics through a revolving jail door wasted law enforcement, court, and detention resources because it failed to address the problem of addiction.

In 1967, Vera created the Manhattan Bowery Corporation to put derelicts in treatment instead of jail. The centerpiece was a 48-bed detoxification facility in a former New York City Men's Shelter, just off the Bowery. It was one of the first alcoholism treatment facilities for public inebriates in the United States. Every day, two-person rescue teams, consisting of a recovered alcoholic and a plainclothes police officer, patrolled the Bowery area in unmarked cars. They offered people who appeared to be intoxicated an opportunity to come to the project, receive medical care, and dry out. In addition, clients had an opportunity to talk with a social worker about rehabilitation programs.

In 1969, the project opened an emergency care unit run by St. Vincent's Hospital and an outpatient clinic. In 1970, it opened a long-term residential treatment center and began experimenting with work programs for recovering alcoholics. These initial efforts have lasted and grown. Today, the Manhattan Bowery Corporation, now called Project Renewal, provides services to more than 20,000 alcohol-addicted and homeless women and men each year.

The Manhattan Bowery Corporation relieved pressure on local police, courts, and jails. Perhaps more important, it helped redefine alcoholism as a medical and social problem rather than a crime. In different ways, each of Vera's first three demonstrations not only changed procedures within the system but questioned how the system should respond to someone accused of a crime, and, in the case of the Bowery project, whether the criminal justice system should be involved at all.

<b>1968</b>	<b>1969</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1972</b>
<p>Manhattan Court Employment Project (spun-off as the Court Employment Project in 1970; folded into the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services/CASES in 1989)</p> <p>Community Patrol Corps [T.A.]</p> <p>Criminal Court Information Booth [T.A.]</p> <p>Family Court Law Officer Project [T.A.]</p>	<p>Administration of Justice Under Emergency Conditions [T.A.]</p>	<p>Neighborhood Youth Diversion Program (spun-off as Neighborhood Youth and Family Services in 1979)</p> <p>Appearance Control Project (assumed by the police department in 1979)</p>	<p><b>Vera's founder and president, Louis Schweitzer, dies.</b></p> <p>Pioneer Messenger Service (spun-off as Wildcat Services Corporation in 1973)</p> <p>Study of Preventive Detention in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>Criminal Justice Unit in the Police Department [T.A.]</p> <p>Supported Work in an Off-Track Betting Office [T.A.]</p>	<p>Study of Wildcat Service Corporation (completed in 1973)</p> <p>Felony Disposition Study (completed in 1976)</p>



**Expanding the Diversion Concept** In 1968, with the support of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Vera launched another project aimed at diverting offenders from the criminal courts and jails. In response to a national call for programs to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents, Vera created the Court Employment Project to offer young defendants counseling, job training, and employment rather than time in jail. If participants made progress, the pending criminal charges were dropped. The Court Employment Project was the first pretrial diversion program in the country. It had tremendous national impact: More than 200 jurisdictions designed programs based on the model. But in 1979, Vera's research showed that the project was not keeping juveniles out of jail or prison, since its participants' cases would likely have been dismissed or discharged. With the Institute's help, the Court Employment Project reemerged as an intensive program for convicted young offenders facing jail or prison sentences.

Today the Court Employment Project is part of CASES, the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services. Most of the 900 people judges send to the Court Employment Project each year are young men between the ages of 14 and 21. Nearly all are first-time felons, but their offenses are serious, often involving possession of a weapon or drugs, the sale of drugs, or robbery. The project's services – counseling, education, vocational training, employment placement, and substance abuse prevention and treatment referral – are intended to give young offenders the skills that will help them live within the law. About 67 percent of participants complete the program successfully.

In 1970, as the Manhattan Court Employment Project was spinning off, Vera piloted another alternative to the prosecution of juveniles. The Neighborhood Youth Diversion Program targeted juvenile offenders from

I began working for Vera in 1962, my first legal job after a decade of child raising. In that small side-street loft of ideas and enthusiasm, my bagel and cream cheese and Herb Sturz awaited with impossible schedules to maintain, impossible coalitions to forge, and impossible tasks to perform. But somehow it all worked, and until I retired in the 1970s from the Board, these were among the happiest and most fulfilling years of my life. To watch ideas and a few dedicated men and women make a difference, that is what the good life and Vera are all about. *Patricia M. Wald, United States Court of Appeals*

age 7 to 16 living in the East Tremont section of the Bronx, a predominantly African-American and Latino community. The goals were to prevent incarceration, maintain family unity, and support positive development. The project also used mediation as a way to resolve conflicts outside the criminal justice system. Nine years later, the project became Neighborhood Youth and Family Services, an independent organization that still works to keep Bronx families together by provid-

ing a variety of services that help at-risk youth lead drug-free and productive lives.

The Institute buttressed its juvenile justice demonstration work with research. In 1975, at the request of the Ford Foundation, Vera initiated a study to define and quantify violence among a group of juvenile delinquents involved in the New York City Family Court system. The research revealed a shocking lack of information on the subject and the absence of accepted treatment ideologies. Vera followed this project with a comprehensive study of selected family court cases, which indicated that most youth who enter family court as defendants leave without receiving any help for their physical, emotional, or psychological problems.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Vera developed alternative to incarceration programs for a variety of offenders, most notably, making community service a viable sentence in its own right. In 1979, the Institute

**1973**

Supported Work in Public High Schools [closed in 1974]  
Legal Action Center [continuing]

**1974**

Vera opens London office [closed in 1992].

**1975**

Victim/Witness Assistance Project [spin-off as Victim Services in 1978]  
Study of Women on Patrol [completed in 1977]  
Evaluation of Victim/Witness Appearance Management [completed in 1976]  
Early Case Assessment Bureaus [T.A.]

**1976**

Easyride [closed in 1991]  
Research On Violent Delinquents [completed in 1978]  
Inmate Rulebook for New York State Prisoners [T.A.]  
Caseworker's Guide to the Juvenile Justice System [T.A.]

**1977**

Vera opens Paris office [institutionalized as the Association de Politique Criminelle Appliquée et de Reinsertion Sociale].



opened the Community Service Sentencing Project to demonstrate that repeat petty thieves could be effectively punished without jail. Project staff screened defendants in the lower courts throughout New York City and, in appropriate cases, recommended 70 hours of unpaid labor on one of the project's work crews. Ten years later, having proved its value, Vera institutionalized the project as part of CASES. Few of the 1,800 offenders sentenced to the Community Service Sentencing Project each year are employed; some are homeless; and at least half are drug addicted. Yet approximately 70 percent fulfill their community service obligations.

Over the past 35 years, much of Vera's work emanated from the Institute's belief in expanding the range of responses to crime available within the criminal justice system. Vera's experience confirmed that diversion from jail and prison in carefully targeted cases can protect the public and help offenders, while freeing up scarce criminal justice resources. Diversion programs also have a broader public value: They bring residents, community-based organizations, and private businesses into the rehabilitation process. As more citizens become involved, public understanding of the social problems that influence criminal behavior increases.

**Working on the Inside: Projects with the Police and the Courts** When the Manhattan Summons Project began in 1964, there were few if any precedents for the presence of a civilian organization in a police station house. The idea that outsiders could help police improve procedures was anathema. However, the mutual respect that developed between Vera and the police as a result of working together on the Summons Project led to the establishment in 1966 of a police liaison office at Vera. The liaison office was an outpost where unconventional ideas could be discussed and then tested with the full cooperation of the police department. This office solidified Vera's working relationship with the police and improved the police department's communications with other criminal justice agencies.

The first project to emerge from this alliance aimed to streamline procedures between arrest and arraignment in criminal court. For six months in 1967, Vera monitored an experimental 24-hour arraignment court in Manhattan designed to relieve the backlog of cases that accumulate during the night. That year, Vera also helped the police department develop stricter guidelines on the use of deadly force.

Vera and the police continued to work closely, and in the mid-eighties, the department asked Vera to survey a decade of research on police patrol. The findings were clear: Many 911 calls were not emergencies; random patrols were not deterring crime; and most cops had become strangers to the law-abiding as well as the delinquent. In response to this research, from 1983 to 1984 Vera and the department developed and piloted the Community Patrol Officer Program. By the end of 1986, 43 of the department's 72 precincts were deploying trained community patrol officers.

Vera has served the people of New York in so many ways that it is difficult to limit one's praises to only a few. From bail reform, victim assistance, community policing evaluations to our very own Drug Treatment Alternatives to Prison program evaluation, Vera has lent its expertise to problem-solving in new and innovative ways while ensuring the safety of our citizens. Vera is recognized as a leader in analyzing data and producing reports that evaluate and validate some of our more innovative proposals. **George E. Pataki, Governor of the State of New York**

**1978**

**Michael Smith becomes Vera's director.**  
Job Path [continuing]  
Neighborhood Work Project [spin-off as part of the Center for Employment Opportunities/CEO in 1996]  
Family Court Disposition Study [completed in 1981]

**1979**

Vocational Development Program [spin-off as part of the Center for Employment Opportunities/CEO in 1996]  
Community Service Sentencing Project [spin-off as part of the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services/CASES in 1999]  
Study of the Impact of Victim Involvement in Criminal Court [completed in 1990]

**1980**

Employment and Crime Research [completed in 1995]  
Youth Employment and Crime Research [completed in 1992]  
Spofford Pretrial Release Project [T.A.]  
Alternative Youth Employment Strategies [T.A.]

**1981**

Study of the Community Service Sentencing Project [completed in 1996]  
Felony Case Preparation Project [T.A.]

In 1990, Vera and the department established a Model Precinct to test and refine the structures and procedures necessary to implement community policing citywide. Many of these changes were technological innovations to improve the way police officers handle information. Vera and the police developed an electronic beatbook to help officers solve chronic neighborhood problems and, in 1995, an electronic crime mapping system to replace the large pin maps, which show the location, time, and type of crime in each precinct. Electronic crime mapping revolutionized the way that the police trace crime patterns. Officials at all levels of the police department now use it to plan and evaluate their crime-fighting strategies.

To better protect survivors of domestic violence, Vera, the New York State Office of Court Administration, and the New York State Police created a computerized, statewide Domestic Violence Registry. The software is designed to give police officers and judges ready access to the history of the dispute, including any court-issued orders of protection and arrests.

**Reaching Out: Providing Technical Assistance in Other States and Abroad** While Vera's focus is local, the Institute chooses projects that, if successful, will have broad appeal. And working with other jurisdictions and systems enriches the Institute's perspective on public sector reform.

Following its seminal work on bail reform, the Institute received a stream of inquiries about its mission and method as well as calls for help. Vera first responded to a request for technical assistance in 1964 when a staff member traveled to Des Moines, Iowa to help design and launch a bail project modeled on Manhattan's. Over the years, Vera has experimented with different ways to provide technical assistance without diminishing

Ever since I first met Louis Schweitzer in 1970 in the course of evaluating the Vera Institute for the Ford Foundation, I have been impressed with the many successful ways the institute has translated into reality the dreams of its founder. Vera continues today as the nation's premier private institution for innovation in the field of criminal justice. By daring to take risks, it has charted new courses of action in the continuing quest to make the criminal justice system more effective, more efficient, and more humane.

**Jon O. Newman, Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals**

its capacity to act in New York. Vera established a formal technical assistance program in 1972 with support from the Ford Foundation, and by the end of 1976, it had provided assistance to more than 35 jurisdictions in the United States as well as England, France, and Germany.

The Institute's work in England was particularly important to its growth. In 1974, Vera was invited by the Home Secretary (the English Cabinet member responsible for criminal justice and

penal policy) to establish an office in London. The idea was for Vera to learn from the day-to-day realities of the British system, while helping to reform it. Vera's first effort there focused on bail and led to Parliament's passing of the Bail Act of 1976. Through this and other efforts, Vera formed working relationships with virtually every facet of the British criminal justice system, from bobbies on the street to judges of the High Court. Vera operated an office in London through 1991, organizing demonstration projects on bail, prosecution, and finally on sentencing. Today Vera maintains a close relationship with colleagues in Britain.

**1982**

Job Site [transferred to the Lighthouse, Inc. in 1988]  
 Research on the Criminal Careers of Juveniles in New York City [completed in 1986]

**1983**

Housing Unit [incorporated as Housing and Services, Inc. in 1987; spun-off in 1991]

**1984**

Community Police Officer Program [assumed by the police department in 1990]  
 Evaluation of the Speedy Disposition Program [completed in 1986]  
 Evaluation of the Community Police Officer Program [completed in 1988]

**1985**

Study of the Male Role in Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting [continuing]

**1986**

Civilian Complaint Review Board Research [completed in 1989]  
 Fixed Tour Experiment [T.A.]  
 Prosecuting Attorneys Research Council [T.A.]

**Developing the Idea of Supported Work** In the early 1970s, Vera began to explore creating employment opportunities for ex-offenders and others in jeopardy of involvement in crime. As a result, the Institute developed a unique mix of job training and management, called supported work, to move hard-to-employ groups into the competitive labor market.

In the spring of 1971, with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, Vera created the Pioneer Messenger Service, staffed by recovering addicts from the Manhattan Bowery Corporation. More than 30,000 parcels were delivered the first year; not one was lost. In 1972, the Pioneer Messenger Service was diversified and spun off from Vera as Wildcat Services Corporation. Today, as the nation's oldest and largest supported work program, Wildcat provides vocational education and training for New York City's hardcore unemployed: teenage mothers, high-school dropouts, public assistance recipients, recovering addicts, and ex-offenders. It also runs the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy, an alternative 12-month high school for teens who have had difficulty staying in school.

During my time as Home Secretary I learned to relish the original thinking of Vera in criminal justice matters. Original thinking does not always go hand in hand with common sense, but in the case of Vera the two were inseparable companions. Several of the initiatives which Vera pioneered have now found a respected place in the British criminal justice system. The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP, House of Commons, London

Vera followed the Pioneer Messenger Service with Easyride, a transportation service for the elderly and people with physical disabilities. In addition to its core service, Easyride provided jobs for ex-offenders: They were the drivers and dispatchers of the specially designed vans that would pick up passengers living on the west and lower east side of Manhattan, deliver them to their destination, and then transport them home. The success of the Easyride demonstration led to new state legislation, which in turn led New York State to create Access-A-Ride, a citywide transportation service for this same population. In 1978, Vera launched Job Path, which uses supported work techniques to help people with developmental disabilities live and work in the mainstream.

Vera's largest supported work effort for ex-offenders was a pair of demonstration projects, the Neighborhood Work Project and the Vocational Development Program, launched in 1978 and 1979. In 1996, the two projects united to form the Center for Employment Opportunities, an independent organization. Today, CEO provides ex-offenders with transitional, minimum wage jobs and employment training and placement in unsubsidized jobs. CEO represents government's most ambitious and successful effort anywhere in the country to provide comprehensive employment services to people returning home from prison.

**Pursuing Equal Justice through Advocacy** To administer justice equitably, government sometimes has to provide advocates to those whose voices are unrepresented and whose rights have been compromised. Vera has helped government create strong advocacy for such individuals and groups throughout its history.

In 1973, Vera created the Legal Action Center to advance the rights of ex-offenders and former substance abusers through class-action litigation. The Institute's earlier efforts to create employment opportunities for ex-offenders and recovering alcoholics had revealed that formal policies or informal practices excluding these

**1987**

Bail Bond Supervision, Nassau County Project [transferred to the Education and Assistance Corporation/EAC in 1992]  
Federal Sentencing Reporter [continuing T.A.]

**1988**

Staten Island Day Fines Project [closed in 1991]  
Day Fines Research [completed in 1990]

**1989**

Police Recruitment Study [completed in 1989]  
Tactical Narcotics Teams Research [completed in 1992]

**1990**

Bail Bond Supervision, Essex County Project [transferred to Volunteers of America in 1993]  
Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem [continuing]

**1991**

Bail Bond Supervision, Bronx Project [closed in 1994]  
Study of Innovative Policing in Eight Cities [completed in 1993]  
Model Police Precinct [T.A.]  
National Demonstration of Day Fines [T.A.]

individuals from full participation in the society were often irrational and illegal, but only the courts seemed likely to change the laws involved. The Legal Action Center filed, argued, and won cases involving employment discrimination, housing, health care, insurance, and access to public benefits. These court decisions helped former offenders and recovering substance abusers across the country reintegrate themselves into their communities.

Victims of crime also needed strong advocates. Thus, in 1975, Vera launched the Victim/Witness Assistance Project to improve the treatment of crime victims and other civilian prosecution witnesses. Vera believed that better treatment would increase witness participation and bring more credibility and fairness to the criminal justice system. The original demonstration notified witnesses of upcoming court appearances and provided prosecutors with a daily accounting of witnesses. The project created a reception center and children's play area inside the Brooklyn Criminal Court building, provided transportation to court and counseling services, and managed a 24-hour crime victim hotline and a burglary repair unit to protect businesses and homes from additional victimization.

While preventing thousands of unnecessary court appearances, the demonstration was less successful in boosting civilian witness participation. Findings from Vera's 1976 study of felony case dispositions helped explain why. Half of all victims of felony-level crimes had prior relationships – often close – with the perpetrator. Realizing that many of these victims are not motivated to seek court remedies, Vera expanded the project to include mediation services, a unit to collect restitution payments, and specialized counseling services for

The new approaches introduced by Vera are now well known in New York and throughout the nation – among them bail bond reform, community policing, and supported work. In many ways, Vera set the standard in the use of social science research as a means of analyzing problems and rigorously testing solutions. But what might not be appreciated by those who admire Vera's accomplishments is its deep commitment to an ever-improving democratic society. We are proud that the Ford Foundation has been Vera's partner for most of its remarkable history. Susan Berresford, President, The Ford Foundation

victims of ongoing abuse, and for the friends and family of homicide victims. The demonstration helped focus the national movement around victims' rights, and in 1978, it was institutionalized as Victim Services, an independent nonprofit agency. In the mid-1980s, Victim Services created programs to target and

protect potential crime victims – including travelers, homeless teens, and battered women and their children. Today, Victim Services is the largest victim assistance and advocacy service organization in the nation.

Balancing the needs and interests of all people is a democratic government's toughest challenge and, when successful, its most sublime achievement. Whether advancing the rights of individuals on the front lines or working quietly behind the scenes, for 35 years Vera has helped government and individuals realize their vested interest in doing justice. The independent nonprofit organizations that evolved from Vera's demonstration projects are enduring proof of the Institute's commitment to justice and its influence on the life of the city.

**1992**

Delta Drug Treatment Project [closed in 1994]  
 Research on Legal Coercion in Drug Treatment [continuing]

**1993**

Research on Supported Guardianship [completed in 1993]  
 Publication of *The Vera Institute Atlas of Crime and Justice in New York City*  
 Computerization of the Midtown Community Court [T.A.]  
 Electronic Beatbook [T.A.]  
 Problem Solving Annual for Community Policing [T.A.]

**1994**

**Christopher Stone becomes Vera's director.**  
 Research on Employment for Welfare Applicants [completed in 1995]  
 Computerized Crime Mapping [T.A.]

**1995**

The Citizens Jury Project [continuing]  
 Research on the Unintended Consequences of Incarceration [completed in 1995]  
 Research on Adolescent Violence Prevention [continuing]  
 Computerized Statewide Domestic Violence Registry [T.A.]



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Produced by the  
Communications Department  
of the Vera Institute of Justice

Director Ellen Sweet

Writer Jennifer Trone

Design 214

Illustration Josh Gosfield

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