

50

YEARS of
INNOVATION

1961 – 2011

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VERA
INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

2 Letters

4 Our Story

12 Justice for All

18 Race and Justice

24 Immigration and Justice

30 A System Too Big for Justice

36 Conserving Scarce Resources

40 Financial Overview

42 Recent Major Supporters and Partners



THE VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE has been partnering with leaders in government and civil society to improve the systems people rely on for justice for 50 years. This report provides an overview of its work, along with highlights of some of the current projects extending Vera's remarkable record of accomplishment.

As a longtime member of Vera's board of trustees and its current chairman, I have witnessed much of this activity—and along with my fellow board members, I have played a role in sustaining the organization that makes it possible.

Yet, even at this close proximity, the determination, creativity, and fundamental decency of Vera and its staff continue to amaze me.

By any measure, justice is a high ideal to achieve—whether in family courts, state prisons, immigration agencies, or direct services. Those who came before us—Vera's founders, its first board chair, Burke Marshall, and his colleagues, and Vera's dedicated staff—have shown that government not only needs, but it also often wisely welcomes, assistance to realize its own best intentions.

I believe I speak for everyone associated with Vera today when I say that it is an honor to be part of this legacy and a privilege to help facilitate Vera's continued contribution to justice for the decades to come.

JOHN SAVERESE

Board of Trustees Chair



THE VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE came of age during a time of ambitious government activism. In more recent years, many have espoused a less expansive role. Vera has been able to find common purpose for five decades with both sides in this debate. I believe this is because the principles that guide Vera—its commitment to making justice systems fairer and more effective—are fundamental, and therefore universal.

Vera is an idealistic organization, of course. It seems amazing, after all, that Louis Schweitzer, a businessman, and Herb Sturz, a magazine editor, had the temerity to believe they could devise a better way for courts and jails to handle arrested people who are awaiting trial. Looking back, it is even more amazing that the courts and jails agreed to let them try.

But as times have changed, so has Vera. Today, our staff have extensive education and experience that prepare them for their tasks—whether collecting and analyzing data or helping system leaders and staff do things differently. This is true whether they are working in Brooklyn, New York, or Beijing, China. Nevertheless, the core principles—a commitment to fairness and effectiveness—still apply.

It would be nice to believe that all the obstacles to justice could be resolved, making Vera obsolete for the coming fifty years. But no one is that idealistic. Fortunately, the Vera Institute of Justice is prepared to continue partnering with government officials who seek to do better for as long as it takes to get the job done.

MICHAEL JACOBSON

President and Director

Our Story



THE philanthropist Louis Schweitzer was passionate about justice and believed that ordinary people had an obligation to make the Constitution work. When he learned that poor defendants who could not afford to post bail were being held in crowded New York City jails for weeks or months awaiting trial, he recognized the injustice and was determined to remedy it. He hired a young magazine editor named Herb Sturz to lead the way and using his own money created the Vera Foundation as their base of operations, naming the organization after his mother.

Together, Schweitzer and Sturz explored the problem of pretrial detention from many angles, mining the wisdom of professionals but also following their instincts about what would make a difference. They rejected, for example, the creation of a bail fund that would need to be replenished by wealthy individuals and would not fix what they both viewed as a broken system. In the end, they set their sights on developing a practical alternative that judges could use in lieu of setting bail.

The experiment they quietly launched on October 16, 1961 with support from city officials showed that poor defendants with ties to their community who were released on their own recognizance were even more likely to appear in court than people who had posted bail. Similar projects soon sprang up across the United States, and what began as a one man's commitment to remedy an injustice led in 1966 to the first reform of the federal bail system since 1789. That same year, the Ford Foundation provided support to turn Schweitzer's small family-funded initiative into the Vera Institute of Justice, and former Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Burke Marshall agreed to chair Vera's newly established board of trustees.

By 1977 the Manhattan Bail Project had become essential to New York City's courts. Setting a precedent that would keep the Institute focused on innovation, Sturz spun off the project as the New York City Criminal Justice Agency, an independent nonprofit organization that continues today to make recommendations about pre-trial release in nearly every criminal case in the city. It was the first of 17 nonprofit organizations that Vera has incubated over the decades. Last year, Vera spin-offs had combined annual revenues of more than \$200 million.

In creating the Manhattan Bail Project Schweitzer and Sturz forged an approach to justice reform that came to define Vera and that has remained remarkably consistent and fruitful for half a century. It is characterized by a disciplined focus on specific problems, a pragmatic appreciation for incremental reform, and a reliance on rigorous research every step of the way. Underlying this is an abiding optimism that even the most troubled systems can change and individuals can do better if given the opportunity and incentive. As Herb Sturz famously said, "Show people what works and trust them to take up the good ideas."

Although the same spirit and philosophy guides Vera's work today, the Institute has grown over the decades. But it didn't just become larger, employing more people and managing bigger annual budgets; it matured. Strategically and over time, Vera built a capacity to manage very different types of work— demonstration projects, which test and refine new ways to provide essential public services; technical assistance, leveraging skills and knowledge to help others advance reform; and research informed by the latest techniques and methods. The Institute applies these capacities over an expanding array of substantive problems in the administration of justice. With national centers on immigration, sentencing and corrections, victimization and safety, and youth justice, Vera is now doing more, in more places, than ever before.

Vera's increased capacity to provide technical assistance is a good example of the Institute's growth. The first work outside New York City occurred in Des Moines, Iowa, where a staff member helped officials design and launch a bail project

modeled on the one in Manhattan. By 1976 Vera had provided similar assistance to more than three dozen jurisdictions. In more recent years, the Institute has honed an approach to providing such support that emphasizes in-depth analysis by highly skilled practitioners and researchers and that responds to local needs rather than merely exporting Vera's own innovations.

From its beginnings in New York City, Vera's work now spans the globe. The Institute first ventured outside the United States in 1974, opening a small office in London and staying for nearly 20 years, and it had a presence in Paris for several years beginning in 1977. In 1997 Vera began a seven-year partnership with South African officials, establishing a jointly run operation in Cape Town to help that country's new democratic government deliver on the promise of equal justice. The work in South Africa was the beginning of a stream of engagements in other countries that helped Vera develop an international perspective. Since 2002, for example, Vera has collaborated with practitioners and legal scholars in China to apply empirical methods to the problems confronting China's criminal justice system.

The timeline at the center of this overview provides a necessarily abbreviated glimpse of Vera's 50 years of innovations in justice. The five essays describe some of the most timely and promising current projects, with reference to previous work that helped to pave the way.

Louis Schweitzer died on September 19, 1971. In just 10 years, the organization he co-founded had become essential to the administration of justice in New York City—trusted by officials who felt unable to make change on their own—and had earned national recognition. In praising Schweitzer's contribution to justice in America, former U.S. Attorney General Nicholas de B. Katzenbach said, "Vera means truth, literally, but what Louis Schweitzer stood for was commitment That is what the criminal justice system in America needs more than anything today—citizens who care enough to put themselves on the line." The commitment that Schweitzer embodied—to act in the face of injustice—still lies at the heart of every Vera project.

Highlights from 50 Years of Innovation



Louis Schweitzer creates the Vera Foundation, named for his mother, and hires Herbert Sturz as director.

Manhattan Bail Project [spun off in 1977 as the New York Criminal Justice Agency]

1964–1966 Issuing summonses for low-level crimes saved jail beds and kept officers on patrol instead of shepherding suspects through central booking. Pleased with the outcome, the police department absorbed the Manhattan Summons Project into its daily operations.

1961

1962

1963

1964

Manhattan Summons Project

1965

1966

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.

1967

Manhattan Bowery Corporation [spun off in 1971]
Experimental 24-Hour Arraignment Court
Monitored Interrogation Project
Police Guidelines on the Firearms Law



1968

Manhattan Court Employment Project
Community Patrol Corps

1969

Administration of Justice under Emergency Conditions

1970

Neighborhood Youth Diversion Program [spun off as Neighborhood Youth and Family Services in 1979]

1971

Pioneer Messenger Service [began operating independently as Wildcat Services Organization in 1972]

1972

1973

Legal Action Center

1974

Vera opens London office [closed in 1992]

1975

Victim/Witness Assistance Project

1976

Easyride [forerunner of Access-A-Ride]

1977

Vera opens Paris office [institutionalized as the Association de Politique Criminelle Appliqué et de Reinsertion Sociale in 1980]
Felony Arrests: Their Prosecution and Disposition in New York City's Courts



1978

Michael Smith becomes director
Job Path [spun off in 1998]
Neighborhood Work Project
Violent Delinquents: A report to the Ford Foundation from the Vera Institute of Justice



1979

Vocational Development Program
Community Service Sentencing Project
Study of the Impact of Victim Involvement in the Criminal Court

1980



1981

1982

Research on the criminal careers of juveniles

1983



1984

Community Patrol Officer Program (CPOP)



1985

Research on the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board

1967-TODAY One of the first alcohol treatment facilities for public inebriates in the United States, the Manhattan Bowery Corporation provided an alternative to cycling addicts in and out of jail. It operates today as Project Renewal.

In **1966**, in response to a series of suicides by Puerto Rican defendants in New York City police lockups, Vera developed a system to quickly transfer Spanish-speaking defendants to the Department of Correction, which had more bilingual staff.

1967 Following a rise in incidents where white police officers shot and killed black youth, Vera partnered with the NYPD and drafted stricter rules on the use of deadly force in *Police Guidelines on Firearms Law*.

1968 The Community Patrol Corps enlisted Harlem youth to improve safety in their own communities.

1970-TODAY Operating in the East Tremont section of the Bronx, the Neighborhood Youth Diversion Program used mediation to resolve conflicts outside the criminal justice system. It spun off in 1979 as Neighborhood Youth and Family Services.

1973-TODAY Through victories in class-action lawsuits to end discriminatory policies, the Legal Action Center has helped countless former offenders and drug users participate fully in their communities.

1975-1978 The Victim/Witness Assistance Project failed to engage crime victims and other witnesses in the judicial process as Vera had hoped but was retooled to provide victims much-needed support. It was spun off in 1978 as Victim Services and operates today as Safe Horizon.

The Neighborhood Work Project, **1978**, offered temporary work to people coming out of prison. The Vocational Development Program, **1979**, trained people to find better paying jobs. In **1996** the two combined and spun off as the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO).

1984-1988 When research showed that most New York City police officers were disconnected from the communities they patrolled, Vera and the NYPD piloted the Community Patrol Officer Program. The program and Vera's four-year evaluation were influential nationally.

1979-TODAY The Community Service Sentencing Project helped to make community service a viable punishment for crime. The project operates today as part of CASES.

1968-TODAY The Manhattan Court Employment Project aimed to operate as an alternative to incarceration for juveniles. When Vera's research showed that it was enrolling defendants whose cases would have been dismissed the Institute refashioned the project to intervene after conviction, when sentences are certain. It operates today as part of Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES).

1986

Punishment Without Walls: Community Service Sentences in New York City
Creation of the Crown Prosecution Service in England

1987

Federal Sentencing Reporter [continuing]
Housing and Services, Inc.

1988

Demonstration and research on the use of day fines

1989

Getting Paid: Youth Crime and Work in the Inner City

1990

Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem [became independent in 1996]

Study of innovative policing in eight neighborhoods

1991

1992-2003 Over a decade, Vera demonstrated and studied mandatory treatment as an alternative to incarceration for drug-addicted offenders, with a focus on whether the looming threat of incarceration compelled people to stay in treatment and led to better outcomes.

1992

1993

Vera Institute Atlas of Crime and Justice in New York City
Computerization of the Midtown Community Court

Chris Stone becomes director

1994

1995

Citizens Jury Project [spun off in 2000]
Development of electronic crime mapping
Technical assistance to the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women [continuing]

1996

La Bodega de la Familia
Ethnographic research on adolescent violence

1997

Appearance Assistance Program
Bureau of Justice Assistance in South Africa

1998

Project Confirm
Research and demonstration to improve school safety
National Defender Leadership Project

1999

Vera launches National Associates Program on Sentencing and Corrections
Respectful and Effective Policing: Two Examples in the South Bronx
Prosecution Task Force on Car Hijacking in South Africa

2000

Thuthuzela Care Centre for Rape Survivors in South Africa
Center for Justice Assistance in Moscow
Dedication of Herb Sturz-Burke Marshall Conference Room at Vera

2001

Study of the administration of justice in the wake of September 11
Adolescent Portable Therapy (APT) [continuing]
Vera establishes Police Assessment Resource Center (PARC)
Project Affirm: Enhancing the Role of School Safety Agents

2002

Esperanza/Hope [spun off in 2006]
Dreams, Gangs, and Guns
Promoting legal reform in China [continuing]
Safe Return Initiative

2003

Research on reducing repeat sexual assault
Global Guide to Measuring Progress toward Safety and Justice

2004

2003-2004 In collaboration with the New York Police Department, Vera held a series of forums with Arab Americans, African immigrants, and emerging Latin-American communities to strengthen their relations with the police.

2005

Vera opens an office in Washington, DC
Accessing Safety Initiative [continuing]
Legal Orientation Program [continuing]
Prosecution and Racial Justice Program [continuing]
Guardianship Project [continuing]
Unaccompanied Children Program [continuing]

Altus Global Justice Alliance [continuing]
Hard Data on Hard Times: An Empirical Analysis of Maternal Incarceration, Foster Care, and Visitation
Changing the Status Quo for Status Offenders
Translating Justice [continuing]

1985-1989 In the wake of allegations of police brutality against minority residents and racial bias, Vera conducted an independent study of the New York City's Civilian Complaint Review Board.



1990-TODAY By rooting public defense services in the community where clients live, the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem provided more responsive and effective representation.

1997-2004 Following the end of Apartheid and the founding of a democratic government, Vera partnered with South Africa's Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Development to form the Bureau of Justice Assistance to design, test, and evaluate projects that expanded access to justice for black South Africans. It became part of the National Prosecuting Authority in 2004.

1996-2008 From a storefront in Manhattan's Lower East Side, La Bodega de la Familia (The Family Grocery) proved the value of a family-centered response to drug addiction and crime. Its approach is reflected today in Vera's Family Justice Program.



1997-2000 At the request of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Vera piloted the Appearance Assistance Program to supervise immigrants in removal proceedings in New York City. Ninety-one percent of participants who received intensive supervision attended all court hearings. The demonstration also proved that supervision is more cost-effective than detention.

2002 Unlike previous research that explained gang violence among immigrant teens as a result of cultural alienation, the groundbreaking ethnographic study *Dreams, Gangs, and Guns* framed it as a pragmatic response to unsafe streets: Teens turned to their peers for protection when parents were unable to help them navigate the dangers of their new U.S. neighborhoods.

2002 Vera and the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC) formed the Safe Return Initiative to understand and reduce domestic violence among African Americans in the criminal justice system. [Became part of IDVAAC in 2006]



2002-TODAY Esperanza/Hope applies family-centered and strengths-based techniques to help youth with a history of criminal behavior finish school and make smart life choices. It became an independent nonprofit in 2006.

2000-TODAY The Thuthuzela Care Centre, which was piloted initially in Cape Town, South Africa, to treat survivors of rape and facilitate the prosecution of perpetrators, has been replicated throughout the country and has influenced practices internationally.

1998-TODAY When Vera discovered that teenagers in foster care were likely to be incarcerated for minor crimes while judges sent other teens home with their parents, the Institute created Project Confirm—now part of the child welfare system—to remedy this injustice.

2005–2009 When New York City faced allegations of impropriety for enrolling hundreds of African American and Latino foster children in HIV/AIDS clinical drug trials, Vera researchers reviewed case files and data dating back to the early 1980s and recommended steps to ensure better adherence to federal and state protections.

2004–2006 In the wake of September 11, Vera’s two-year study of relations between Arab Americans and law enforcement found that Arab Americans feared federal policies and practices more than individual acts of hate or violence. The report recommends ways to create police-community alliances to prevent hate crimes and terrorism.

Vera establishes a Center on Victimization and Safety.

Cost-benefit analysis of raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction in North Carolina

United Nations Rule of Law Indicators Guide

Juvenile Detention Reform in New York City: Measuring Risk through Research

2006

Confronting Confinement: A Report of the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons
 Study of Police-Arab American Relations after September 11
 Vera establishes centers on Immigration and Justice, Sentencing and Corrections, and Youth Justice
 Substance Use and Mental Health Program [continuing]
 Vera publishes Chinese-language book about its empirical research methodology

2007

Vera opens an office in New Orleans
 Technical assistance to the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission
Reconsidering Incarceration: New Directions for Reducing Crime

2008

Common Justice [continuing]
 Center on Youth Justice provides technical assistance to New York Governor David Paterson’s Task Force on Transforming Juvenile Justice

2009

Cost-Benefit Analysis Unit establishes Cost-Benefit Knowledge Bank [continuing]
The Experiences of New York City Foster Children in HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials

2010–2011

Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services [continuing]

2005–2006 The Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons put a human face on the country’s 2.5 million prisoners and called on government to create safer conditions for prisoners and staff.

2007–2009 Vera helped the congressionally mandated National Prison Rape Commission develop national standards to protect prisoners from abuse and exploitation.



Justice for All

“ Vera has pursued its mission through precinct houses, holding pens, courtrooms, and prison cells. But even in the earliest days, it was clear that justice and injustice are not the exclusive province of the criminal justice system. ”

– FROM A VERA REPORT PUBLISHED IN 1986 ON THE OCCASION
OF THE INSTITUTE'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

IN 1970, after working for nearly a decade on bail and incarceration, Vera entered new territory. At the time, efforts to prosecute criminals were hindered because many victims and witnesses were not participating in the court process. Through a series of projects, Vera sought to boost their attendance by providing advance notice about court appearances, creating a reception center and children’s play area inside the Brooklyn Criminal Court, and providing repairs and other services in the wake of a burglary. But a 1976 internal evaluation found that, despite these interventions, crime victims were only marginally more likely to show up in court.

1973

Legal Action Center

Around the same time, researchers learned that half of victims in felony cases were familiar with the perpetrators of those crimes—and perhaps ambivalent about seeing them prosecuted. The Institute responded by expanding the Brooklyn project to include mediation services and counseling for victims of domestic violence—novel ideas in those days. The retooled demonstration took off and quickly became an independent nonprofit—now operating under the name Safe Horizon—that helped guide a national movement for victims’ rights.

In the decades since then, Vera has continued to study and respond to the needs of crime victims—with an increasing focus on populations whose needs are often overlooked. Much of this work concerns domestic and sexual violence and has ranged from creating one of the first statewide

registries of orders of protection to strengthening judicial oversight of cases that require special vigilance. In a contemporary example, Vera's Center on Victimization and Safety is helping to improve services for women who are Deaf or have disabilities, as they are at high risk of domestic and sexual violence and, when victimized, often face institutional obstacles to services intended to prevent subsequent violence.

This project, called the Accessing Safety Initiative, provides support and training to promote collaboration among practitioners with different areas of focus but similar goals. A recent national training session for sign-language interpreters illustrates the process. Vera trainers discussed the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence, common terminology, and safety protocols and provided an opportunity for interpreters and domestic violence practitioners to learn from one another.

Recognizing that across the world police stations are often dreaded places that inspire fear rather than security, in 2006 Vera and its partners in the Altus Global Alliance launched the Police Station Visitor's Week. Last year, people from 21 nations participated in the annual event, which seeks to build trust and cooperation between police and those they serve. Vera is also working internationally with the United Nations to develop methods for gauging how justice is delivered in countries involved in or emerging from periods of conflict. Vera's multi-faceted methodology intentionally includes the experiences of poor and vulnerable populations whose access to justice can be especially attenuated.

1975

Victim/Witness Assistance Project



1978
Job Path



1998

Project Confirm

Vera's work on behalf of crime victims fits within a broader effort to advance the rights and meet the needs of a wide range of populations.

Over the years Vera projects have expanded opportunities for people with developmental disabilities, worked on behalf of former drug users facing discrimination, protected children in foster care, and raised awareness about the plight of men and women confined in unsafe and unhealthy correctional facilities. One current example is the Guardianship Project, which is demonstrating a better way to serve elderly and disabled people in New York City who can no longer function independently and need help making decisions about housing, healthcare, and finances. With approval from a judge, and in the absence of a family member or friend to take on this responsibility, the project functions as the person's legal guardian.

Traditionally, lawyers have filled this role. But there is little incentive for lawyers to take clients who cannot afford to pay, and lawyers working alone may not be well suited for the kind of case management that allows individuals to live with as much autonomy as their health and abilities permit. The Guardianship Project's team of experts, which includes social workers and financial managers as well as lawyers, prioritizes moving people out of hospitals and nursing homes and back into their communities whenever it is safe to do so. The result is "amazing," said one caseworker. "Their quality of life just skyrockets." The project has also saved New York State millions of dollars by conserving Medicaid funds that would have been spent on costly institutional care.

Expanding access to justice has been a hallmark of Vera for decades and will continue to be for decades to come.

2000

Thuthuzela Care Centre





Race and Justice

“ The criminal justice system in America is not working satisfactorily. It is entirely possible that the system as a whole actually increases the dangers to public safety by turning out a greater number of hostile and dangerous persons than it takes in. ”

— FROM A 1972 REPORT BY VERA ON THE INSTITUTE'S FIRST DECADE OF WORK

IN 1968, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders warned that the United States was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.” New York City Mayor John Lindsay, who served as co-chair of the commission, was determined to improve conditions in the city’s minority communities, in part by reducing crime and its many consequences.

Vera was deeply involved in those efforts. As consultant to the Mayor’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, the Institute designed and in some cases operated an array of groundbreaking projects, many stemming from concerns about the growing number of poor African Americans and Latinos coming into contact with the criminal justice system and its failure to make a difference in their lives and curb crime. Early projects ranged from enlisting Harlem youth to patrol their own neighborhoods to using mediation to resolve conflicts out of court.

1967

Police Guidelines on Firearms Law

In that tradition, today Common Justice is testing bold ideas about what is most effective in preventing and responding to crime, with special attention to the needs of young African American males.

In New York City and other urban centers, men of color between the ages of 16 and 24 make up the majority of those responsible for and victimized by violent crime. And all too frequently, the experience of being a victim is a precursor to engaging in violence. Based in Brooklyn and working in partnership with the district attorney, Common Justice aims to break this pattern while offering cutting-edge service to all victims.



1968

Community Patrol Corps

1970

Neighborhood Youth Diversion Program

The project invites individuals harmed by violent crime to participate in a guided dialog with the responsible party. The goal is to reach an agreement about what the responsible person must do to acknowledge what happened and repair the damage. “I knew immediately when it happened that I didn’t want those boys to go to prison,” said a participant who had been robbed at gunpoint by two strangers. “But I wanted something. I needed something. I wanted them to face me man-to-man, human-to-human.” The legally binding agreements, which take the place of a jail or prison sentence if successfully completed, have included detailed written apologies, financial restitution and community service, requirements to finish school and receive mental health

services, and creative remedies such as constructing a memorial at the site of an assault and making a movie about the crime and its impact.

Common Justice is honing a process that operates outside of courtrooms and without the use of incarceration to promote accountability, healing, and public safety—all at a fraction of the cost of usual responses to crime.

African Americans make up 13 percent of the U.S. population but account for 39 percent of people living behind bars. This disparity alone raises the specter of bias.

In the late 1990s, building on earlier work, Vera began devoting significant attention to the problem of racial profiling and other forms of police misconduct, which were generating impassioned calls for civilian oversight. Some experts believed that prosecutors would be next to come under scrutiny—precisely because they have enormous discretion and little external oversight.

1985

Study of NYC's Civilian Complaint Review Board

1990

Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem





1996

La Bodega de la Familia

1997

Bureau of Justice Assistance in South Africa

In 2005, when three district attorneys gave Vera access to data about their office operations, the Prosecution and Racial Justice Program was born. By tracking and analyzing decisions about which cases to pursue, what charges to present, and what pleas to offer and accept, the project is helping prosecutors monitor and guard against racial bias in their decision making. For prosecutors to embrace this degree of transparency is groundbreaking.

One district attorney learned, for example, that staff were prosecuting 59 percent of white defendants charged with possession of drug paraphernalia compared to 73 percent of non-whites. In response, line prosecutors were



1999

Respectful and Effective Policing: Two Examples in the South Bronx

2002

Safe Return Initiative

encouraged, where appropriate, to refer people to drug treatment instead. Moreover, a supervisor's approval was required for those who would continue to face charges. These policy changes eliminated the disparity.

Prosecution and Racial Justice and Common Justice are just two projects among many at Vera today concerned with the role of race in how justice is administered. The leaders of these projects and their partners in government are looking squarely at the ways in which the system may be failing to realize its promise and trying something new.



Immigration and Justice

“ Building a more just society is humanity’s common project. People have been at it for several millennia before us, and we are likely to keep at it for some time. ”

– FROM A VERA REPORT PUBLISHED IN 2000 TO MARK THE NEW MILLENNIUM

IN 1996, Congress passed several laws that increased the number of immigrants subject to deportation. Even before these statutes were enacted, the Clinton administration was stepping up enforcement activities, detaining increasing numbers of noncitizens facing deportation. The number of people being detained quickly outnumbered available detention beds.

Vera and some government officials believed that many of those being detained would comply with their legal obligations without being detained. In 1997, the Institute launched the Appearance Assistance Program, a demonstration project that supervised noncitizens in the community while they faced deportation, unless or until their risk of flight became too great. As part of the program, participants learned about their rights and the complex immigration court process. The experiment worked: Nearly everyone showed

up in court as required and complied with the judges' orders. The project's success helped foster other alternatives to immigration detention in the United States, Europe, and Australia.

Today, Vera operates a Center on Immigration and Justice that continues to work for fairer and more efficient immigration policies and procedures as well as to address the challenges of promoting public safety in increasingly diverse communities. The Legal Orientation Program, for example, provides legal information and assistance to people in



1997

Appearance Assistance Program



27 immigration detention facilities in 13 states, enabling them to represent themselves or obtain pro bono counsel. Noncitizens in deportation proceedings have a right to counsel, but unlike in criminal cases the government will not pay for legal representation for those who cannot afford it. As a result, 84 percent of those in detention have to represent themselves, despite a lack of English proficiency, let alone a grasp of immigration law and procedures.

Vera's evaluation of this program shows that participants' cases are resolved, on average, 13 days faster than is true for detained noncitizens not exposed to the program. The speedier resolution can result in substantial cost savings to the government, as well as averting unnecessary detentions. Giving people facing deportation better information also makes the immigration courts more efficient.

Every year, thousands of minors fleeing poverty, war, and other dangers enter the United States. Many travel alone; others lose contact with their parents during treacherous journeys. Those who are apprehended end up in shelters or juvenile detention centers and are placed in deportation proceedings where

2002

Dreams, Gangs, and Guns

they must face a judge and a government attorney. Vera's Unaccompanied Children Program coordinates a network of nonprofit organizations that provide these youth with rights presentations and, when possible, pro bono representation. In many instances, the program's legal services make the difference in establishing a child's right to stay in the United States. "I was going to ask for voluntary departure," one participant recalled, "but I explained my case to the attorneys, and they helped me to stay here."



2003-2004

Collaboration with NYPD and new immigrant communities



The foreign-born population in the United States has never been as geographically widespread as it is today. Another project of Vera's Center on Immigration and Justice, Translating Justice, has identified and fostered practices that encourage better communication between local law enforcement and the immigrant communities they serve. The project has explored the use of language assistance technologies, reviewed promising policing practices around the country, and promoted other steps that help forge mutually beneficial relationships that can lead, ultimately, to less crime and greater public safety.


A similar Vera initiative is raising awareness of the U-visa, which provides legal immigration status to crime victims who cooperate with law enforcement. Since many police officers are not aware of the U-visa or do not understand

2006

Study of Police-Arab American Relations after September 11

how it works, they are not using this considerable incentive that encourages victims to participate in holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

All of Vera's Immigration and Justice Center projects seek to ensure that the legal systems immigrants encounter in the United States, whether in immigration court or at a local police station, operate both fairly and effectively.



A System Too Big for Justice

“ Society needs not more arrests but more efficiency in handling the arrests it makes already, more justice in its adjudication of accused persons, and more success in its rehabilitation of those who are adjudged guilty.”

– FROM A 1972 REPORT PUBLISHED BY VERA ON THE INSTITUTE'S
FIRST DECADE OF WORK

IN the early years, when Vera consisted of a handful of people working from a townhouse on East 39th Street, projects developed organically. Success in creating an alternative to bail sparked an experiment with the New York Police Department in 1964 to free people safely even earlier, at the local station house. When work on that project revealed that nearly a third of all arrests were for public drunkenness and related offenses, in 1967 Vera created a sobering center on the Bowery as an alternative to jail, helping to redefine alcoholism as a public health problem, rather than a crime.

1967

Manhattan Bowery Corporation

These projects were ahead of their time. They embodied the “far broader range of alternatives for dealing with offenders” that President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice would call for in 1968. The spirit of change that prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s, which was only partially realized, is alive again today in cities and states around the country, where elected officials across political parties believe that the criminal justice system is too big and too punitive to be effective.

In New Orleans, Vera has been collaborating with criminal justice and community leaders since 2007. This has resulted in a range of improved practices and a new ethic of reform that culminated recently in the city council’s decision to significantly down-size the jail, which in 2010 held more people per capita than any other urban jail in the country. The collaboration has also helped to reduce time between arrest and the filing of criminal



1968

Manhattan Court Employment Project

1970

Neighborhood Youth Diversion Project



charges from as many as 60 days to five days and to encourage police use of summonses rather than arrests for nonviolent offenses, which means that people are spending less time in jail. Now Vera and its partners are developing the city's first comprehensive pretrial services program and a sobering center much like the one Vera piloted in New York City four decades ago. That many of Vera's earliest projects are models for reform in New Orleans is a testament to their power and also a reminder that justice is always a work in progress.

Vera is undertaking similar initiatives across the country. In Los Angeles, for example, Vera's Center on Sentencing and Corrections has conducted research and is helping officials reduce pressure on severely overcrowded jails. In New York State, where lawmakers recently revised the decades-old "Rockefeller Drug Laws" to permit some judicial discretion, shorter sentences, and treatment as an alternative to incarceration, researchers in Vera's Substance Use and Mental

1978
Neighborhood Work Project

1979
Vocational Development Program





1984

Community Patrol Officer Program

1987

Housing and Services, Inc.

Health Program are comparing people sentenced under the new and old laws to see whether either group is more likely to commit new crimes.

Over the years, Vera has worked to change how the criminal justice system responds to young offenders who are still growing and maturing. In 1968, Vera developed one of the first-ever alternatives-to-incarceration for juveniles. The Court Employment Project offered young

defendants counseling, job training and employment, and a promise that the charges against them would be dropped if they finished the program. It had tremendous influence nationally—inspiring similar programs in more than 200 jurisdictions—and was the start of a long line of juvenile justice projects at Vera.

Today, Vera's Center on Youth Justice is working with New York City and State officials to develop assessment tools and policies that allow more young defendants to remain in the community while they await trial, with little risk to public safety. The Center's researchers recently also evaluated post-sentencing reforms in Washington, DC.

Lyndon Johnson was the first American president to address Congress specifically on the subject of crime. The Crime Commission he created, as two veteran scholars have observed, "thrust 'ordinary street crime' irreversibly into policy discussions." Unfortunately, those discussions led too often to policies that enlarged the criminal justice system without enlarging justice. Today, Vera and its partners around the country are working to reverse this trend, advancing a new generation of reforms built on the wisdom and insights of the past.

2001

Adolescent Portable Therapy





Conserving Scarce Resources

PERHAPS because Vera was active in the 1970s, during the worst fiscal crisis in the history of New York City, it has always recognized that government operates with limited resources. To succeed, reforms have to produce more value than the policies and programs they replace.

Over the decades, the Institute has become increasingly sophisticated about evaluating the real costs and benefits of potential reforms. In 2009, Vera established a Cost-Benefit Analysis Unit to spread the use of reliable cost-benefit analysis among justice system practitioners. North Carolina's Youth Accountability Planning Task Force was an early partner. Although many experts believe the juvenile justice system is more effective than the adult justice system in discouraging delinquent behavior, it is more expensive to operate. The group asked Vera to assess the economic implications of prosecuting nonviolent 16- and 17-year-olds in juvenile court instead of in the adult system.

Vera found that the proposed shift would cost North Carolina \$71 million annually but would generate \$123 million in reoccurring benefits to youth, victims, and taxpayers over the long term. The analysis not only factors in savings that accrue from preventing future crimes and incarceration but also projects increased lifetime earnings for young people whose convictions in juvenile court are sealed and cannot become a barrier to employment—a stunning \$98 million for each annual group of 16- and 17-year-olds. Data about

what the state can expect as a return on its investment put the task force in a better position to recommend a change in policy.

In the 1970s, Vera developed a blend of employment training and on-the-job support aimed at breaking the costly cycle of crime and incarceration. Early experiments employed recovering addicts as messengers and people who had been in prison as drivers of specially equipped busses for the elderly and those with disabilities. The most successful of these demonstrations were two projects that provided subsidized minimum-wage jobs for people leaving prison and then prepared them to land better-paying jobs in the competitive labor market.

In 1996, Vera merged these projects and spun off the newly created Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO). CEO participants are less likely to commit new crimes than other formerly incarcerated individuals, and Vera's Cost-

Benefit Analysis Unit is working to determine if reductions in recidivism, combined with higher employment rates, outweigh the cost of operating CEO. Knowing the real benefits and costs will help policymakers around the country decide whether to adopt CEO's model or look elsewhere for affordable ways to help individuals find work during the difficult months after incarceration when roughly two-thirds are rearrested and half are returned to jail or prison.

Perhaps the most significant project to date is the development of a methodology to determine the true cost of corrections. Given increased scrutiny of government spending and growing concerns about mass incarceration, it is critical to have tools that help people choose wisely among competing criminal justice policies.



Financial Overview

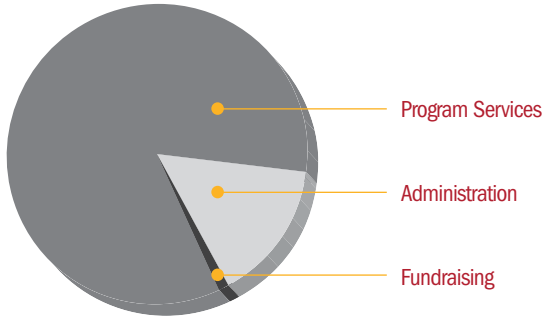
IN 1961, the year Louis Schweitzer and Herb Sturz founded Vera and launched the Manhattan Bail Project, the annual operating budget was \$21,185—equal to roughly \$156,000 in today’s economy. In fiscal year 2011, the Institute’s budget is projected to exceed \$28 million. More important than the size of the budget is how Vera spends it funds—86 percent, or roughly \$24 million, on program services, just 13 percent on administration, and only 1 percent on fundraising.

Today, Vera operates four national centers addressing key areas in the administration of justice: youth justice, victimization and safety, sentencing and corrections, and immigration. The services provided by these centers and Vera’s demonstration projects represent more than three-quarters of the Institute’s program work.

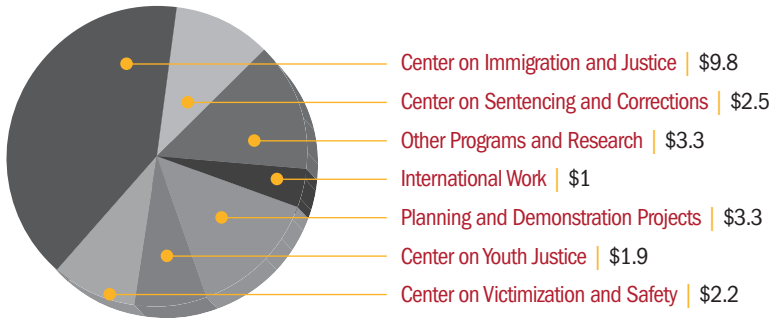
Even as the Institute has grown and evolved, it has remained committed to collaborating with government to improve the systems and services that people rely on for justice. As a result, most of Vera’s financial support comes from government agencies—\$76.6 million in the past five years alone. But many projects also rely on grants from foundations—\$23.5 million over the same five years.

Individual donors contribute a relatively small percentage of Vera’s funding. However, because these gifts are typically unrestricted they are especially crucial to the Institute’s overall health, allowing us to investigate new opportunities, share our successes, and take stock in uncertain times. A list of our recent major supporters and partners (\$10,000 and above) over the past five years appears on page 42.

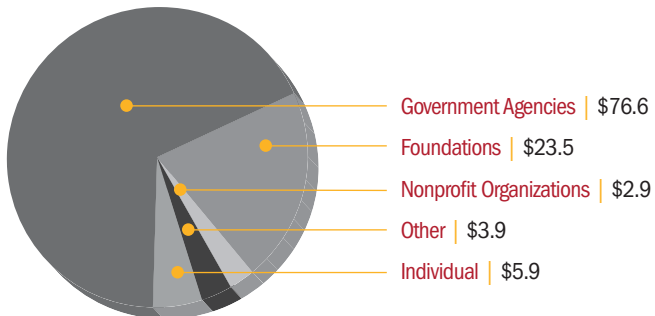
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Distribution of Program Services (in millions)



Sources of Funding FY 2007 – FY 2011 (in millions)



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RIGHT Portrait of co-founder Herb Sturz

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Page 15: Man working in store (Courtesy of Job Path)

Page 16: Man in wheelchair is assisted (© Marlis Momber)

Page 17: Women applauding (© Vera)

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Page 21: An early meeting of the Neighborhood Defender Service. Sitting at the table, from left
to right, are Haywood Burns, Chris Stone, and Randolph Stone (© Jim Belfon)

Pages 22–23: La Bodega de la Familia (© Vera)

Page 26: Two people conversing at table

Page 28: TOP Officers with pointing man (© Harvey Wang); BOTTOM Officers in dry cleaner
(© Harvey Wang)

Page 32: TOP Officers standing next to bus (© Marlis Momber)

Page 32–33: BOTTOM Inmates in class (© Vera)

Page 34: Students in lesson on how to be peaceably searched (© Jim Belfon)

Page 35: Group photo, three with caps (© Vera)

Page 39: Three benches outside cell