

Pro Bono

At Rothwell Figg, we believe *pro bono* legal services are a fundamental part of the practice of law, and we have the track record to prove it.

In selecting the *pro bono* matters upon which we work, we seek to advance the public interest or the greater good, right wrongs, or prevent or remedy injustice. Importantly, we also look for cases that can have broad impact, and deal with complex legal or social issues. As lawyers, we have a unique ability to effect change and to influence both the content of laws and the manner of their implementation. We believe our *pro bono* work is an expression of our values through this unique role.

The firm's recent *pro bono* work includes assisting:

- **Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition (BACC) and the pastor of the Macedonia Baptist Church in Bethesda, Maryland** in a fight to halt the sale of the Moses African Cemetery, the burial ground of hundreds of formerly enslaved Africans to a developer. In a historic ruling, Judge Karla Smith of the Circuit Court for Montgomery County granted our clients' motion for a preliminary (and then a permanent) injunction preventing the sale of the Moses African Cemetery unless and until the owner of the property complied with a Maryland law that requires the seller of land that is or was used as a burial ground to bring an action for approval of such sale so that the court may decide whether, and under what terms and conditions, such a sale might take place. A guest essay in *The New York Times* cites the BACC and the lawsuit filed by Rothwell Figg to preserve the burial ground.
- **The Women in STEM Solving Problems (WISSP) student group at The Pennington School in Pennington, New Jersey**, in filing utility and design patent applications for their invention of a hybrid, partially-reusable, partially-disposable, menstrual product for young women in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi, many of whom have to stop attending school when they start menstruating because such products are not available to them. The WISSP team also established an economic infrastructure in Dzaleka that allows the local women to sew, sell, and distribute the products. Ultimately, this innovation allows more young refugee women to stay in school and helps them build essential business skills for future success. Their innovate product was the Grand Prize Winner in the Lemonade Stand Contest, a competition produced by Whalebone Magazine and Faherty Brand designed to kickstart projects and small businesses.
- **Flare**, a startup founded by two survivors of sexual assault, invented a line of personal safety jewelry products that allows wearers to discreetly request help without using a phone. The design features an audible alarm, automatic texts to emergency contacts specifying a GPS location, and a recording device to capture audio evidence. We are helping Flare develop a comprehensive IP portfolio, including utility and design patent applications, and trademark and copyright registrations. Flare's products were named among the best inventions of 2020 by *Time*.
- **Chabad**, a worldwide Jewish organization established 250 years ago in eastern Russia, in its long-running lawsuit against the Russian Federation to recover its archives and library which were stolen in part by the Soviet Union, and in part by the Nazis and that are currently held illegally by Russia. The government of Vladimir Putin refuses to return them, despite a ruling from the United States District

Court for the District of Columbia imposing sanctions of \$50,000 a day on the Russian Federation for each day that it continues to wrongfully withhold Chabad's sacred books. Sanctions against the Russian Federation currently exceed \$175 million.

- **Kurt Eichenwald**, a highly-regarded journalist, in a civil case arising from a weaponized Twitter attack on him. Mr. Eichenwald is an epileptic who was sent a flashing strobe light with the phrase "You deserve a seizure for your posts" by John Ravello, a white supremacist. The message caused a seizure. After three years of litigation, Mr. Eichenwald won on all of his civil claims, including assault, battery, and intentional infliction of emotional distress, and was awarded a \$100,000 judgment. The groundbreaking case is already being taught in law schools around the country, including the Duke University Law School and William & Mary Law School.
- **The Committee of Concerned Scientists**, a non-profit association of scientists, physicians, and engineers, who advocate on behalf of researchers around the world who are denied the rights guaranteed to them by their local laws and by international agreements. The organization's core focus is on freedom of inquiry, freedom of association, freedom to research, and freedom to emigrate for all academics, regardless of their race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnic identity, national origin, or political views. As counsel to the Committee, we have advised on its internal organization, on threatened litigation, on trust and estate issues, and on a variety of other matters.
- **Desmond Jackson**, a young entrepreneur we first met when he was a computer science student at the University of Alabama. At the time, Desmond was under indictment for (allegedly) hacking into the computer system of a well-known publisher. The charges were finally dismissed when Desmond explained to the prosecutors how his computer program did not violate computer tampering laws. We've been delighted to work with Desmond to obtain patents for his inventions, and on his other creative pursuits. Please look for Desmond's soon-to-be published memoir, *Crimson Code: The Price of Success*, describing his experiences growing up in Alabama, and the fascinating – and unique – story of his college years.

Pro bono matters are handled, supported, and staffed in the same manner as any firm work. We provide the same quality of representation regardless of the client's ability to pay. We also support *pro bono* projects through our compensation structure. For associates, *pro bono* work is given billable hour credit. Further, an attorney's commitment to *pro bono* is an important consideration in advancement and evaluation.

Rothwell Figg believes that *pro bono* service is essential to every attorney's professional responsibility. Through our dedication and commitment to achieving justice (or the closest one gets to justice in court) on matters of significant societal importance, we try to use our expertise to make the world a better place.