

Movement Lawyering: Resources and Key Points

Readings

Movement Lawyering, Scott Cummings, 2017 Univ. of Illinois Law Review 1645 (2017), available at <https://illinoislawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Cummings.pdf>

Movement Lawyering Reading Guide, Initially Compiled by Purvi Shah and Published in April 2013 by Bertha Social Justice Institute, Center for Constitutional Rights, Edited by Ellen Yaroshefsky, 47 Hofstra Law Review 99 (2019), available at <https://www.hofstralawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/bb.9.movementlawyeringreadingguide.pdf>

“20 Tools for Movement Lawyering,” Bill Quigley, available at <http://lawatthemargins.com/20toolsmovementlawyering/>

Key Points

What makes an organization a “movement lawyering” organization? How is this different from “community lawyering” and from other kinds of public interest legal work?

- The goal of movement legal work is to help build the power of movement organizations and the communities they serve, using integrated, multi-faceted advocacy strategies.
- Movement lawyers work for and with organizations (i.e. clients who are mobilized), not issues.
 - This is different from impact litigation or law reform work, although it may include that kind of work.
 - The organizations make the decisions about legal work, not the lawyers (just like paying clients).
- Movement lawyers take a back seat with media; organization and community voices are the primary speakers.
- Movement lawyering may take the form of providing individual direct services, but unlike community lawyering, is not necessarily focused on meeting individual community members’ legal needs.
- However, some people do use the phrase “community lawyering” to mean the same thing as “movement lawyering,” so when in doubt, find out more about what the speaker has in mind when they use these terms.

Movement Lawyering: Tools for Advisors

What are some strategies students can use to find organizations with a movement lawyering approach?

- Start with the issues they are already engaged in or passionate about.
 - Use online research to identify what issue campaigns or direct actions have happened in this field and learn which organizations are leading those efforts.
 - Lawatthemargins.com
 - rabble.ca
 - The Guardian
 - Solutions Journalism Network's SolutionsU
 - Podcasts (Changemakers, The Progressive Happy Hour, On Being, etc)
 - Of those, which appear from their websites (or through cross-referencing on PSJD) to have lawyers? These are the organizations to target.
- Or, start with organizations that are well-known for movement lawyering as an approach and target those regardless of issue.
 - Look for the organizations mentioned in the Resources articles above and in social change-oriented media.
 - Look at agendas or programs for conferences on alternative/social justice/rebel lawyering (i.e. RebLaw and Shaking the Foundations).
 - Search for "organizing" on PSJD and research the employers whose profiles come up.
 - Look for lawyers active in the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) in your area, the Law Union of Ontario (LUO), or the Law Union of British Columbia (LUBC), and identify where they have worked and what boards they are on.
 - Conduct informational interviews with faculty, alums, etc who are active in the NLG, LUO or LUBC.
 - The more geographically flexible the student is, the more options there will be.

What do movement organizations look for in law students/lawyers?

- A shared understanding of how social change happens, including understanding the importance of organizing, and a shared perspective on the supporting rather than central role of lawyers within movement work.
- Skills that go beyond traditional lawyering skills, including organizing, relationship- and coalition-building, supporting and/or engaging in direct action, and designing/implementing issue campaigns.
- Resilience, humility, and the willingness to be uncomfortable and to be held accountable by non-lawyers.