



For the last 15 years, Guatemalan Judge **Erika Aifan** has gone everywhere with a security detail, some of them armed with AK-47s. Since 2019, she's also moved about in an armored vehicle. It seems that her rulings have pissed off the rich and powerful. And dangerous.

The death threats and official complaints escalated after she ordered that business-people convicted of bribing a former minister must pay compensation and make public apologies.

In the past, judges such as Aifan had received assistance from the United Nations-backed anti-corruption mission, but in 2019 the then-President of Guatemala ended that assistance.

Staffers in Aifan's own court have stolen evidence against defendants, in efforts to obstruct justice.

Judge Aifan is undaunted and determined. She's had to hire lawyers to defend her from attempts to remove her from the bench.

When people have urged her to leave the country, as other judges have, she's been adamant. "We can't keep leaving the country out of fear for our lives. That is what the criminal structures want."



**Loujain al-Hathloul** has been imprisoned, isolated, and tortured for challenging Saudi Arabia’s policies toward women.

It all began when al-Hathloul got a driver’s license in the United Arab Emirates and drove into the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. She was arrested. She then moved to the UAE, but Saudi security forces kidnapped her there and imprisoned her again.

When al-Hathloul discovered that other prisoners were permitted to communicate with family members, she went on a six-day hunger strike to get the same “privilege.” Saudi officials conceded, but commanded her not to tell her parents about being held in solitary, beaten, waterboarded, electric-shocked, and sexually harassed. If she told them, the officials said, she would be raped, murdered, and her body thrown into the sewage system.

Despite being warned, she reported it all to her parents when they came to the prison. She could have said nothing. When they left they reported that her “thighs were blackened by bruises” and that she “was shaking uncontrollably, unable to hold her grip, to walk, or sit normally.”

According to Human Rights Watch, “Loujain’s abuse exemplifies the methods of Saudi thuggish and lawless leadership, hell-bent on exacting sadistic vengeance against any citizen who dares to think freely.”

The world took notice. In September 2020, 30 countries (not including the US) called on Saudi Arabia to release al-Hathloul and other women’s rights activists. The European Parliament followed suit, as did seven European envoys to Saudi Arabia.

In February 2021, after 1,000 days in prison, al-Hathloul was released.

Her trials—literally and figuratively—are not over. As Human Rights Watch asserts, “She is not free. Banned from travel and coerced into silence by a suspended sentence hanging over her, Loujain’s ordeal remains a flagrant miscarriage of justice.”

Despite the continued threats to her freedom and her life, Loujain al-Hathloul continues to fight for women’s rights. She’s coordinated with human rights organizations, run for a seat on the municipal council, signed a petition asking for the male guardianship system to be abolished, and challenged Saudi policies toward women in general. Her campaign for women’s right to drive ended when that stricture was rescinded throughout the kingdom.



Silence about widespread violence against women is the norm in Colombia. **Mayerlis Angarita** is breaking that silence.

Every year, thousands of women are victims of violence, and fear of reprisal makes most unwilling to report the crimes. Angarita's nonprofit "Narrate to Live" gives them a way to speak their truth, growing out of a group she gathered in a field following an attack on their town by paramilitary forces that had killed, tortured and raped the residents. The women told each other what had happened to them, and Angarita saw that those narrations helped them begin to heal.

Angarita knew what it was like to live in danger. When she was only 15, her uncle was murdered and her mother was kidnapped, never to be seen again. Her father moved the remaining family to another town. There, they lived in poverty, and she was unable to attend school and always wondered what had become of her mother. It was clear why the family was targeted, though; her mother and other activists had marched in the streets to protest the perpetual Colombian conflicts.

"The guerrillas attacked us because they said we aided the paramilitary, the paramilitary attacked us because they said we aided the guerrillas, and the government was suspicious of us because they believed anyone speaking up was a left-leaning extremist."

Things got worse when drug cartels, rich landowners, and prominent political figures banded together to oppress average citizens.

Seeing the devastation in the town and listening to the women who survived, changed Angarita's life.

"That's when I realized," she says, "that what had happened to me was nothing compared to what happened to these people, and that what I was doing till then was never going to win against bullets."

Hundreds of women have joined Narrate to Live since the gathering in the field. The group lobbies the government for women's education and security, putting themselves in great danger. Their homes have been burned down. The group's headquarters has been burglarized and they've received pamphlets showing images of butchered women. Angarita herself has been attacked several times, including having shots fired at her car.

She's not quitting. "Narrate to Live goes where the government doesn't have a presence, informs women about the government's duties, and then supports them in demanding its presence to guarantee their rights." That's too important to stop.

**Amy Cordalis** has dedicated her life to championing the Yurok, a nation indigenous to what is now northern California and southern Oregon. It began when she was a “summer fish technician intern” recording the tribe’s daily catch along the Klamath River.

She’d grown up on her Yurok family’s stories of the abundant fish stocks that were key to the tribe’s survival. Now, salmon were jumping out of the water, mouths agape; salmon corpses were floating everywhere, seagulls swooping to feast on the remains. No one knew why it was happening, but soon the number of dead salmon was estimated to be 34,000, a devastating loss for the Yurok.



Turned out that earlier in the year the federal government had diverted water from the Klamath to irrigate nearby farms, and the Oregon legislature had approved the diversion, and the depletion killed the salmon run. The Yuroks’ well-being was not a factor in the federal and state decisions.

Then and there, Amy Cordalis determined to become an attorney for her tribe. She went to law school, and as the first woman to be named general counsel of the Yurok, filed an Endangered Species Act lawsuit, and succeeded in reversing some of the decisions that had diverted the flow into the Klamath River. Not only were salmon now protected, she also recovered 60,000 acres of tribal land as a salmon sanctuary!

Cordalis didn’t stop there; she got “personhood rights” to the Klamath for the Yurok, the first river in the country to be so designated.

She continues to work for her tribe, despite prejudices against Native Americans and against women in general, and without the earnings of a private attorney. “We are back to the time of the tribes on the river again,” she said. “We are reclaiming that governance now.”

“You talk about the American Dream. My family has experienced the exact opposite, through assimilation and genocide — just taking, taking, taking. . . . We see who we are, and our core values don’t change. And the funny thing is that we’ve been fighting that same thing since white people came here, so we’re kind of good at it by now.”



**Woody Faircloth** just couldn't take it when he saw reports of the fire that killed 85 people in Paradise, California and left almost 50,000 others homeless. There he was, regular guy with a good job, safe in his Denver home with his wife and children, stunned at the horror of what was happening in Paradise.

"These are people that lived lives like we do," says Faircloth, "that went to work every day, went to school, and had very normal lives that now find themselves homeless with nowhere to turn, nowhere to live. I just couldn't imagine being in that position. I had a hard time letting it go. I knew I wanted to do something to help."

He figured out what that something would be. He started with a GoFundMe campaign to buy a used RV that could be a home for someone's family in Paradise. He got donations of vital items from his neighbors, then he and his seven-year-old daughter headed for the burned town, on Thanksgiving. "When we drove in," remembers Faircloth, "it was surreal. Everything was gone. These people really needed help. They were really broken down."

The gift of the RV and the donations in it were clearly useful so Faircloth decided to keep going. Since then a nonprofit he created, EmergencyRV has gotten more than 60 RVs to families displaced by disasters.

Faircloth searches for RVs, refits them, negotiates costs for needed repairs, and gets them to the people who need them, all the while doing his fulltime job as an account manager.

His refitted RVs have gone to Berry Creek, California where a wildfire destroyed the fire station and the homes of six of the community's volunteer firefighters. They've gone to the Gulf Coast, Iowa, and Oregon. Faircloth has also partnered with RVs 4 MDs to provide mobile homes for frontline medical workers fighting the COVID pandemic.

He credits the people who have helped him move so many RVs to people who desperately need them. "I think people genuinely are good; they just don't know how to help."

Woody Faircloth figured out an answer to that question, for himself and for all those he's persuaded to help him at EmergencyRV.

There's a stigma to being the only kid in a sixth grade classroom who can't read. **David Flink** was that kid and knows that the prejudice against people who are "different" goes on into adulthood. He's standing up and speaking out on behalf of all the people like him who are dealing with learning challenges, and with others' preconceptions about learning disabilities.



Flink has what's been labeled Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder—ADHD—and he says his early school experiences convinced him he was “stupid, lazy, and crazy.” He was clever enough, however, to duck his turn to read out loud by pretending repeatedly that he needed to leave class to go get a tissue. But his teacher figured that one out. “I got kicked out and went to a school for kids with learning disabilities, but it didn't fix the hardest part of the challenge, which was the shame.”

Thanks to his parents' persistence and their resources, Flink did well in special schools and was accepted into Brown University. There, in 1998, he co-founded Eye to Eye, a nonprofit that matches college-student who have ADHD and other learning disabilities to mentor elementary and middle-school students who are struggling with have a better schooling experience than he had.

Eye to Eye helps the mentors themselves as well as the kids they're mentoring. Flink offers the example one mentor he knows well. “He was the kid you would have judged most likely to fail. He struggled with reading. His grades were poor.” Today, that mentor is a renowned cancer specialist In Manhattan. Flink says, “As we taught our students they were not broken, we learned we were not broken, either.”

Flink knows how important the work of Eye to Eye is. About 20% of the US population has learning disabilities, cutting across race, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, and geography. That's a lot of ability lost to society, by being stigmatized and sidelined.

“A learning problem is not an intelligence problem,” says Flink. “These children are smart, creative, and capable. However, they think differently, access and process information in an atypical way. That is where opportunity lies, and where we are falling far short.”

Flink has seized that opportunity. Currently Eye to Eye has more than 60 chapters in 20 states, serving thousands of students. Besides mentoring, the organization runs a camp, a speakers' bureau, and various events throughout the U.S., including campaigns to explain learning disabilities. Flink has written books, delivered keynote addresses, served on boards of nonprofits, and promoted Eye to Eye far and wide, ignoring people who might think less of him because he has ADHD.

“There's so much stigma,” he says, “and we're changing that.”

**Cariol Horne's** life changed forever in 2006, in Buffalo, New York. There was a dispute between a woman and an ex-boyfriend and Horne was one of the police officers who showed up at the scene. Another officer handcuffed the ex-boyfriend, a Black man named Neal Mack, put him in a chokehold, and started punching him. Mack said, "I can't breathe," but the officer attacking him, a white man named Kwiatkowski, didn't stop, and all the other officers, save one, stood by.



The one officer who didn't just watch, Cariol Horne, was also Black. According to Mack, "Cariol Horne said, 'You killing him, Greg,' and she reached over and tried to grab his hand around my neck." Horne pulled Kwiatkowski backward, jumped on him, and hit him in the face. That ended the incident. And Neal Mack lived.

In the aftermath, Horne was fired, one year short of the 20 years she needed to collect her full pension. Kwiatkowski was promoted to lieutenant, sued Horne for defamation, and won a \$65,000 judgment.

Horne worked wherever she could and lived out of her car. Neal Mack sued the other officers, but a jury found no wrongdoing; one juror agreed with Mack—the only Black juror.

A year before his retirement, Kwiatkowski used "unreasonable and excessive" force on some Black teenage suspects and was subject to an internal affairs investigation. He was indicted, pled guilty, and was sentenced to four months in prison. Justice was served.

But it wasn't until more than a decade later that *Horne* received some justice. At the time of the worldwide protests of George Floyd's murder, Horne sued to vacate her firing. She was hugely successful not only for herself but for other potential victims of police violence and for any officer who intervenes to stop that violence.

The City of Buffalo adopted "Cariol's Law," which makes it a crime for a law enforcement officer to fail to intervene when another officer is using excessive force. And a state court judge, citing Cariol's Law, turned everything around for Horne personally, granting her back pay and benefits while declaring: "The City of Buffalo has recognized the error and has acknowledged the need to undo an injustice from the past. The legal system can at the very least be the mechanism to help justice prevail, even if belatedly."

"My vindication comes at a 15-year cost," says Horne. "I don't want any officer to go through what I have gone through. I had five children and I lost everything, but [Mack] did not lose his life. So, if I have nothing else to live for in life, at least I can know that I did the right thing and that [he] still breathes."



Political leaders aren't usually scared of musicians. But Maria Kalesnikava has certainly frightened Alyaksander Lukashenko, the president of Belarus. Kalesnikava, a flutist and conductor, was art director of a culture club in Minsk, but then she got into national politics.

A capable organizer, she managed the campaign of a man who ran against Lukashenko, until her candidate was arrested and forbidden to run. So she joined the campaign of a woman running against the president and became a member of a council working against Lukashenko's dictatorial regime. Most of the council's members have been arrested, deported, or have left Belarus.

Kalesnikava's response to all that was to form a new political party. Days after that new beginning, she was kidnapped. Government security agents drove her to the border with Ukraine and told her to leave the country or else she would be deported "alive or in bits." Kalesnikava ripped up her passport and climbed out the window of the car.

She didn't get away from the agents and was taken to a detention center, charged with "actions aimed at undermining Belarusian national security" and later with "conspiracy to seize state power in an unconstitutional manner" and "establishing and leading an extremist organization."

She was offered release if she'd meet with Lukashenko to discuss the nation's future. Certain that was a ploy to make her seem his ally, she refused.

Kalesnikava is still in prison, facing up to five years there. Individuals and governments around the world have demanded her release, including almost 100,000 protestors in Minsk.

Kalesnikava has said, "For the first time in the history of modern Belarus, we have the responsibility for our own future. . . . This is exactly the main idea of the protests: to build another type of society which is civil, peaceful, and democratic—which we did not have before."

The musician has become a statewoman. "It was a very difficult transformation for me personally because I was not ready to make it so soon and so quickly: Three months ago I was the director of a cultural hub in Belarus and now I am a leader of the Belarusians."



The proclamation of Juneteenth as a national holiday may have meant more to Opal Lee than any other American citizen. The 94-year-old has been campaigning for this since she was a mere 89.

That was when she began a 2½-mile-a-day walking campaign—from her home in Fort Worth to Washington DC, 1,400 miles away—speaking in cities along the way: “I was thinking that surely somebody would see a little old lady in tennis shoes trying to get to Congress and notice.”

Lots of people did notice. Lee presented Congress a petition urging them to declare Juneteenth a national holiday; it was signed by 1½ *million* Americans.

Why 2½ miles a day? That represented the two and a half years that enslaved people in Texas were not told that they had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. They found out on “Juneteenth.”

It was a long road to this victory for Opal Lee. When she was 12 years old, a mob set fire to her family’s house and burned it to the ground. They even took the furniture outside and burned that, too. Police were there, but they stood by and did nothing. It happened right there in Fort Worth, and the mob was hundreds of white supremacists. The Lee family was living in a white neighborhood. Oh and the do-nothing police officers were also white.

Lee became a teacher and school counselor until retiring in 1977, when she began working as a community organizer, helping Black Texans get access to housing, always talking to them about the history behind current events, and making sure they knew about Juneteenth.

On June 19, 2021, Lee once again walked her 2½ miles, this time, on a national holiday.

**Long, Josh** Neal is chasing nominator



In 2013, Cameroon activist **Maximilienne C. Ngo Mbe** moved her children to France, to protect them. The powers that be in central Africa were not pleased with her fight for civil rights in the region and there had been too many threats against her and her family. She sent the children to safety. She stayed.

Mbe leads the Network of Human Rights Defenders of Central Africa (Réseau de Défenseurs des Droits Humains de l'Afrique Centrale)—REDHAC. She's also treasurer of the African Democracy Network.

REDHAC reports on human rights violations as well as threats to attorneys representing victims of such violations, and journalists covering the stories.

Attorneys and journalists in central Africa have been routinely arrested if what they are doing doesn't jibe with the goals of their respective governments.

Mbe has spoken out against security forces in different parts of Cameroon, and against the national government of Cameroon, as when she challenged the government's version of the massacre of 22 civilians, killed by Cameroonian soldiers.

Mbe is operating on little to no money as well as constant threats, assaults, burglaries, and smear campaigns. Mbe has gotten some relief from knowing her children are now safe.

Despite it all, she's not pessimistic. "The fact that REDHAC's doors have not been shut down despite these challenges shows a level of respect for human rights. People allowed to talk freely on TV stations without being arrested shows some positivity on the respect of human rights."

Mbe's advice to others: "Never give up, despite the huge challenge we face in our country. We have to continue to work for peace and protect human rights. . . . We are vulnerable, but we have to find the courage. Courage is the only way."



When she was 23 years old, Indian journalist Priya Ramani was sexually harassed during a job interview, but she didn't say anything about it at the time.

Twenty-four years later, however, she published an open letter in *Vogue India* describing the encounter. She described the man asking her personal questions about her boyfriend, offering her alcohol, singing to her, and gesturing for her to come sit next to him on a

small sofa near the bed. Concerned for her safety, she had left the room. She did not name the man.

A year after that, the Indian #MeToo movement was gaining momentum, and Ramani decided to accuse the man directly in a Tweet, because, as she said, "Lots of women have worse stories about this predator. Maybe they'll share."

And they did. More than 20 women journalists came out to accuse then-Minister of State for External Affairs and former journalist M.J. Akbar of sexual misconduct. According to the *New York Times*, Akbar was "the most prominent figure so far to be felled by the #MeToo movement sweeping the world's largest democracy."

Akbar's response was to file a criminal defamation suit against Ramani; then resign from his post. Facing a prison sentence of up to two years, Ramani filed a response of Not Guilty.

She posted bail, the case dragged on, and she was asked to consider settling out of court. Despite the intense negative pushback from parts of the public, she refused. In court, she testified: "It was my hope that the disclosures, which were part of #MeToo, would empower women to speak up for their rights at the workplace. This case has come at great personal cost to me. I had nothing to gain from it. . . . By keeping silent, I could have avoided the subsequent targeting. But that wouldn't have been the right thing to do."

The court's decision was to dismiss Akbar's defamation complaint against Ramani. Part of the judge's ruling: "The time has come for our society to understand sexual abuse and sexual harassment and its implications on victims. The woman cannot be punished for raising (her) voice against the sex abuse on the pretext of criminal complaint of defamation, as the right of reputation cannot be protected at the cost of the right of life and dignity of woman as guaranteed in the Indian Constitution."

Priya Ramani says the outcome was worth all the difficulties she's endured. "I feel vindicated on behalf of all the women who have ever spoken out against sexual harassment at the workplace. It feels amazing to have your truth validated in a court of law."



**Omar Salisbury** found his calling in Seattle's 2020 violent protests: front-line journalist.

A son of the city, he grew up in Seattle's Black community, got a degree in geology, worked as a radio DJ, and had formed his own company, Converge Media, where he anchored an in-studio talk show about issues and arts.

When protests began in Seattle's Central District following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, all Salisbury had at hand was a half-charged cell phone, but he hit the street and started streaming the protest.

He kept filming through pepper spray and deafening blast balls, recharging his phone, interviewing police officials as well as protestors.

He went on to film virtually everything that was going on over several months, sometimes getting involved, as when he helped form a human barricade to stop angry teenagers from charging the police.

"The first night I went live," remembers Salisbury, "I had like 60 people watching, which was amazing. . . . Next thing I know, it's four, five, six thousand people on the stream." Soon, Salisbury's Twitter following had grown from 114 to 30,000. People from all around the world were watching.

Since then, he's gone on to cover many issues that are significant to Seattle's Black community, including gun violence, homelessness, and COVID relief. He's getting maybe three hours of sleep a night. "That's not a good look, not a badge of courage," he says. But he doesn't seem to be stopping. Not when there's a story to cover that his community needs to know about. It's endless, it's exhausting and he's definitely not in it for the money:

"I've never sold any of my footage. Being from Seattle and loving Seattle, it's more important that the right story is told, to get the city that we deserve, than it is for me to provide content for sensationalism."

"I would like to see people who love Seattle to act like they love Seattle. Let's roll up our sleeves to do what it takes to make it a better city."



**Bryan Stevenson** went from a life of relative safety in Delaware and at Harvard to head south with his law degree and spend decades fighting for justice, in Alabama.

His hometown in Delaware was segregated, by tradition if not by law. Black children never played with white children; Black families had to use the back door of doctors' and dentists' offices; and white children got their polio vaccines hours ahead of the Black children who had to wait in the back.

His career began with fighting to free wrongly accused men on death row. That grew into his Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), a nonprofit based in Montgomery that represents the poor, the disenfranchised, and most especially, the wrongfully condemned. EJI has helped to eliminate excessive and unfair sentencing, has won exonerations for innocent death-row prisoners, and has represent children—particularly poor children—who were prosecuted as adults. As Stevenson has said, “Capital punishment means ‘them without capital get the punishment.’”

Representing clients with no money, he's argued and won multiple cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, including a landmark decision that made it unconstitutional to sentence children under 18 to death, and another landmark decision that made it unconstitutional to give children under 18 mandatory life sentences without parole. He and his staff have won reversals, relief, or release from prison for hundreds of wrongly convicted prisoners on death row.

Stevenson continually goes on speaking tours to raise money to keep EJI going. He's received numerous honorary degrees, including a Macarthur “Genius Award” which he turned over to EJI to help cover the operation's costs. In addition to his vital legal work, Stevenson spearheaded the planning for the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and a Legacy Museum—a powerful reminder of the US history of slavery, including thousands of lynchings.

Stevenson often does commencement speeches, telling graduating students they should, “do uncomfortable things, inconvenient things, because we cannot change the world, we cannot increase justice, we cannot make a difference across the planet if we only do the things that are comfortable and convenient. . . . I believe the way we change the world, the way we create more justice, is affirming the basic humanity and dignity of every human being.”



**David Tuckman**'s life has been one of constant service, starting as a teen leading a Red Cross blood drive 30 years ago, through recently being a front line essential worker rushed away from his job in an ambulance, unable to breathe.

Tuckman is an Immigration Services Officer, coming into daily contact with people in distress, many of them ill, all of them needing his presence and concern. After the ambulance crisis, he was in recovery for weeks, not returning to his job for fear of infecting people he was eager to serve.

Doing his job despite risks isn't new to him. In his decades as a Red Cross volunteer, he's done emergency first aid, run shelters in wildfires and floods, done casework during numerous hurricanes, led teams responding to house and apartment fires. Along the way he's trained hundreds of young people in disaster relief procedures and has been a Red Cross information officer, getting warnings and disaster updates to the public.

Along with his public health actions, he's repeatedly marched in demonstrations that were met with police arrests. The issues that have sent him into the streets? He's against animal testing in the cosmetic industry, minefields, violence, hunger, and malaria. He's marched *for* affirmative action, refugees, and women's rights.

If anyone understands the poet John Donne's line, "I am involved in mankind," it's David Tuckman.



**Wang Yu** is a human rights lawyer in China, an extremely dangerous choice of professions, one that has brought her endless trouble.

Her problems with her government began when she was not allowed to board a train although she had a valid ticket. She got into a fight with railroad employees and was sent to prison for assault.

In her two years of imprisonment she was appalled at the treatment of the prisoners and made the decision to become a human rights defender when she got out.

Wang Yu has since represented activists, academics, farmers, and the banned Falun Gong spiritual group. She's fought for women's rights, children's rights, and the rights of people to attend religious services. She's taken cases on freedom of expression, and assembly.

Through it all, she's been harassed, threatened, searched, and physically assaulted by police.

One evening in 2015, the electricity in Wang Yu's home was cut off. Ten men broke down her door, pushed her to the floor, handcuffed her, put a bag over her head, and took her away, under arrest. Hundreds of other attorneys and activists were also taken that night.

Wang Yu's husband, once arrested, is now "free." Her son was also imprisoned, then escaped to the United States where he was put in detention, his passport confiscated, and, depending on the court's judgment, may be deported back to China.

For months, no one knew where Wang Yu was. Over a year after her arrest, she made a televised "confession" and was released on bail. It was common knowledge that she was forced to make the confession after being subject to shackled interrogations, isolation, and sleep deprivation.

Despite it all, Wang Yu continues to speak out and to provide legal advice as a "citizen advocate." "The law," she says, "is only made for showing the outside world that the Chinese legal system is great. If you try to use the law for real, it harms [the authorities'] interests. But I want to be a person of the law."

"Many people think 'China is rich, China is developing quickly, China has tall buildings, wide highways, fancy cars.' They don't know that Chinese people are like animals that don't have any basic rights."

Wang Yu and her husband miss their son. "Sometimes my heart hurts," she says. "He is my only child."