



LEGAL AID CHICAGO

EQUAL JUSTICE STARTS HERE

MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER: DONOR EDITION

YOUR IMPACT, UP CLOSE

A Closer Look at a recent win from our Consumer Practice Group



In this edition of Your Impact, Up Close, our Consumer Practice Group shares a closer look at the work we highlighted in this month's *Justice Up Close* interview. Every client's experience is unique, but Richard's story provides a moving example of the victories our clients and advocates achieve together every day.

RICHARD'S STORY

Last year alone, our Consumer Practice Group handled over 1,800 cases, many of which involved homeownership preservation. In one such case, we succeeded in saving our client's home from foreclosure not just once, but twice!

Richard called Legal Aid Chicago when he learned he was facing foreclosure. His home was owned by his wife, but she had moved into a nursing facility over a year ago. She was also the sole borrower on a reverse mortgage tied to the home. As our advocates explained, reverse mortgages carry additional grounds for default including, for example, if the borrower does not carry homeowner's insurance or lives outside the home for more than 12 consecutive months.

Richard's mortgage company initiated foreclosure citing a lack of homeowner's insurance. In fact, Richard did have coverage, but the lender had not received proof of his new insurance policy. We assisted Richard in proving his coverage, and the foreclosure was dismissed.

However, there was more to be done. Because Richard's wife no longer lived in the home, the lender still had grounds to seek foreclosure. We worked closely with Richard and his family to apply for the Mortgagee Optional Election Assignment, a program that would permit him to remain in the home as a non-borrowing spouse. That application then led to the dismissal of the second foreclosure.

Richard's story is a powerful example of how Legal Aid Chicago's advocacy protects not just homes, but stability, dignity, and peace of mind for the people we serve. Thanks to this advocacy, and the donors who make it possible, Richard can continue living in the home he and his wife built together

WORN ON THE EL AN INTERVIEW WITH GIOVANNI ADORNO

This month, we are also excited to share our recent conversation with **Giovanni Adorno**, the owner and creative mind behind Worn on the El, the Chicago-based streetwear company we highlighted last month. Like you, Worn on the El has chosen to support our work as a donor, contributing a portion of the proceeds from their Little Village line to Legal Aid Chicago. In our interview, Giovanni tells us more about his designs, shares his vision for our partnership, and gives us a sneak peek at what's next for Worn on the El.

Can you tell us more about the origin of Worn on the El? What inspired you to start a clothing line specific to Chicago?

It started about 3 years ago, as a company called The Rat Hole, named after the rat hole in Roscoe Village. I thought the popularity of the rat hole was so quirky, so I started to look into the culture of Chicago and its history. I created designs related to George Streeter of Streeterville and the legend of O'Leary's cow (which really isn't true). Some of my designs were based on history. Some were based on Chicago life, like getting trapped in Lower Wacker: The Lower Wacker Racing Club.

When I started to look at different neighborhoods and thought about the needs of the community, I rebranded completely. It was about understanding each neighborhood, going wherever there was a need or something interesting that I wanted to share. I started off with Portage Park, then went to Bronzeville, Wicker Park, Rogers Park. It was a matter of just going to different neighborhoods, talking to the individuals and understanding where they come from. Then I would translate that into designs and share with others.

When you visited the neighborhoods, who did you talk to?

To anyone that was willing to have a conversation. It always started with a restaurant. Little Village was a blast. It was one of my favorite places to go. It started off with a place called La Cathedral. Remarkable food. From there, I walked around the neighborhood, talked to the vendors and store owners. All the while, I'm recording it on my Meta glasses. When I got home and downloaded the footage, it gave me the opportunity to pull different colors and textures from the environment.

When did you decide you wanted to partner with a legal assistance organization for this collection? How did you become aware of Legal Aid Chicago, and what made you choose us for this partnership?

I guess it started with seeing what's happening in Chicago with ICE. It really hit close to home. I come from a family of immigrants. My mother came here when she was 11 years old. For her, the immigration process took two years, but that's nothing compared to now. She has talked about her gratitude for being here, but I can't imagine coming to a new country, fleeing a government, and then, on top of that, having to deal with being afraid for your personal safety, being afraid of disappearing from your family. I can't wrap my head around it.

I knew I had the ability to do something and help other people. I did some research on law firms that assist the community, trying to find a really good fit. When I read about Legal Aid Chicago and what they do for the community, I was really impressed and thought this was an organization I wanted to be associated with. So, I reached out to share some ideas.

What experiences influenced the design direction for the Little Village collection?

Mexican culture was a big part of it. There were icons and imagery that I found there, in certain boutiques and around Little Village itself. I stopped at a vendor selling skulls for Día de los Muertos. There were all of these little things that were just amazing, different images, sculptures. I saw clothing and took inspiration from subtle things like texture.

When you think about the communities these collections represent, what do you hope they feel when they see the designs? What do you hope someone wearing a piece from this collection communicates to the world?

One of the first things I would like people to take away is that it's not "them." It's us. When someone wears my designs, I want them to see not only their community, but a little bit of themselves in that community. And I want people to see there's more woven into the fabric of who we are as Chicago.



An early design from Worn On the El, when they went by the name Rat Hole, featuring Mrs. O'Leary's famous (and wrongly-accused) cow.



Worn on the El's Little Village collection boldly represents the culture and community of La Villita, and a portion of the proceeds directly supports Legal Aid Chicago's services. [Click here](#) to check out their online store

What do you envision for the future of Worn on the El?

I'd love to get feedback and see where I can help if there's a neighborhood in need. I want to bring attention to neighborhoods when they need it and support local businesses. Currently, I'm working on a new design for Brighton Park. Belmont Craigen is the next neighborhood, and I'm still toying with a couple of other ideas, like a universal South Side shirt. I want to create a South Side line and go through every neighborhood. Once those are done, then I think I'll work on something else, but for right now, I'm focused on Chicago's neighborhoods.

Thank you to Giovanni and Worn on the El for uplifting Chicago communities and supporting Legal Aid Chicago!

Please click [here](#) to visit Worn on the El's website and check out their designs! A portion of the proceeds from your purchase support Legal Aid Chicago.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Giovanni.

THANK YOU

Thank you for reading this supplemental newsletter, our exclusive publication for Legal Aid Chicago donors. Thanks to supporters like you, Legal Aid Chicago is able to pursue justice for thousands of individuals and families across our city.

