

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/three-advocates-on-the-lasting-legacy-and-hopeful-future-of-the-criminal-justice-reform-movement>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

The Vera Institute of Justice recently welcomed three new members to its board of trustees. Now in its 60th year, the organization has changed and grown, ebbing and flowing with the most critical issues facing criminal justice reform.

Nonprofits like Vera are accountable to many people. There are the thousands of individuals who may be impacted by the policy, programmatic, or advocacy efforts made by the organization; the community partners and coalitions that the organization works with every day; and the staff, donors, volunteers, and supporters who keep the work moving forward. Then there are the board of directors and board of trustees—both groups of volunteers who serve terms of anywhere between four and eight years. These boards govern the nonprofit itself and, in the case of trustees, take on a leadership role in their personal connections with supporters.

Three new trustees—Helam Gebremariam, Lili Lynton, and Nelson O. Fitts—are helping to steer Vera itself as well as its supporters into the coming years. These representatives join the organization in its 60th year, and each has their own personal connection to the criminal justice reform movement.

Vera's work has shifted over time to become more inclusive of and responsive to the needs of those most affected by the far reach of the criminal legal system. The organization remains dedicated to ending mass incarceration, and three questions have served as guideposts as it has pushed its work forward:

Helam, Lili, and Nelson join a dedicated board of trustees and directors who will work to advance this important work: from celebrating and amplifying [Vera's 60th anniversary](#) this year; to continuing Vera's groundbreaking, actionable research and strategic partnerships to drive meaningful policy change; to advocating on behalf of those most targeted by the system.

From Vera's work to end mass incarceration in its hidden hot spots around the country—rural communities and small cities—to its efforts to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline in favor of restoring the promise of young people, hear what drives these three advocates.

Helam Gebremariam speaks to [the possible future of criminal justice reform](#) the COVID-19 pandemic showed us.

[Learn more](#) about Vera's Center on Immigration and Justice.

As a dedicated advocate of young people's education, Lili Lynton witnessed firsthand the [devastating impacts of the school-to-prison pipeline](#).

[Learn more](#) about Vera's Restoring Promise program.

Nelson O. Fitts and his law firm have been invested in Vera's work for years. Now, he directs his attention to [improving access to education and job training](#) for incarcerated people and reducing overincarceration in rural communities.

[Learn more](#) about Vera's work to end overincarceration in rural communities.

Transformative change, sent to your inbox.

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