

# Pro Bono and Indigent Defense

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At Sher Tremonte, serving the public good is embedded in our DNA. From litigating cases in the public interest to representing clients who cannot afford legal services, we maintain an active pro bono docket focused on improving lives, strengthening communities, and promoting social justice.

Under the direction of a dedicated program coordinator, our team pursues pro bono work with the same vigor and diligence that we apply to billable matters – a commitment that has earned us a reputation for “punching above our weight” in the public interest arena ( *Law360* ). Our lawyers include veterans of a wide range of public service organizations – from the ACLU and the Equal Justice Initiative to the Federal Defenders of New York, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and the SEC – and hold leadership positions at nonprofits such as the Citizens Budget Commission and Hudson Valley Legal Services.

Indigent defendants, victims of domestic violence, asylum seekers, environmental nonprofits, and other clients in need rely on us to defend their rights, advocate for their interests, and give them a voice in the courtroom. We are frequently appointed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit as well as the U.S. District Courts for the Eastern and Southern Districts of New York to handle complex, challenging cases presenting issues of first impression or constitutional significance. We also regularly draft amicus briefs on behalf of public interest organizations in courts of appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court.

## Experience

### *Pro Bono Representations*

- Obtained a landmark First Amendment ruling in the U.S. District Court for the Second Circuit for a prisoner who faced retaliation from guards for refusing to become an informant.
- Obtained compassionate release for vulnerable clients serving sentences in federal custody during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Secured a highly favorable settlement on behalf of a woman who was physically assaulted by police officers.
- Won a rare reversal by summary order in the Second Circuit of a pro se plaintiff’s case that was erroneously dismissed for failure to prosecute.
- On appointment by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, won release from immigration custody and removal of the threat of deportation for a Haitian national who had been a lawful permanent resident in the U.S. since age seven.
- Obtained asylum for a Syrian doctor who was threatened by the Bashar Al-Assad regime for providing medical assistance to peaceful demonstrators.

# SHER TREMONTE

- Secured “Special Immigrant Juvenile Status” and an ultimate path to citizenship for a minor whose parents brought him to the U.S. as a small child and abandoned him here.
- Advocated on behalf of individuals detained at John F. Kennedy International Airport pursuant to the Trump Administration’s “Muslim Ban” executive order.
- Represented an animal rights organization seeking records on the medical treatment of an elephant at the Bronx Zoo.
- Helped a longtime Brooklyn resident who had fallen prey to a predatory development scheme regain ownership of his family home.

## *Criminal Justice Act Representations*

- Obtained dismissals of criminal charges and deferred prosecution agreements for a variety of clients indicted with federal crimes, including a 20-year-old facing RICO gang charges, an individual charged in a methamphetamine conspiracy, and a woman with a long history of mental health problems implicated in a multistate heroin distribution ring. We also helped a 24-year-old charged with narcotics conspiracy secure enrollment in the Southern District of New York’s Young Adult Opportunity Program over the U.S. Attorney’s Office’s objection, which led to the dismissal of all charges after our client successfully completed the program.
- Obtained misdemeanor pleas and no jail time for a client charged with importing and distributing synthetic cannabinoids as well as a client charged with gun possession after a suppression hearing revealed inconsistencies in police officers’ accounts of the arrest.
- Obtained a full acquittal for an indigent client in a federal weapons trial in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. At trial, we conducted vigorous cross-examinations of the government’s law enforcement and forensic expert witnesses, and the jury returned a not guilty verdict after less than two hours of deliberation. This was the first acquittal in federal court in New York City since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resumption of jury trials.
- Obtained a hung jury and partial acquittal in a federal drug case in the Eastern District of New York. We argued that the drugs purportedly found in our client’s possession were planted by the police; the jury deadlocked on whether our client possessed cocaine base and acquitted him of possessing marijuana. The client was sentenced after trial to time served.
- In a two-week trial in the Southern District of New York, we obtained a not guilty verdict on two murder charges for an indigent client indicted for murder, murder-for-hire, drug conspiracy, and weapons charges. Pre-trial, the team vigorously litigated *Brady* issues, successfully precluded the admission of Facebook and other evidence, and challenged the admission of expert cell-site location testimony in a *Daubert* hearing. The trial involved the cross-examination of seven cooperating witnesses.