

Heirs' Property: Acting to Preserve Wealth

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Heather Way

Clinical Professor, The University of Texas School of Law

Heather K. Way joined the Texas Law faculty in 2006, where she co-directs the Housing Policy Clinic and teaches in the Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic. A national expert in affordable housing and community development and a frequent commentator in the media, Professor Way focuses on increasing housing stability, opening paths to economic opportunity, and fostering equitable and inclusive communities. Professor Way's work has contributed to many high-impact legal reforms at the state and local levels including, most recently, laws to facilitate the creation of community land trusts and broaden heir property owners' access to property tax relief programs. Professor Way is also the co-founder of the Uprooted Project, which provides resources and strategies for addressing displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods in Texas.

Her current work includes a focus on increasing the housing stability of homeowners with heirs' property (for example, [here](#) and [here](#)) and addressing substandard housing. Other recent work includes a community toolkit on preserving historic places with ties to African-American heritage and an analysis of the property tax breaks available for affordable housing complexes sponsored by public facility corporations. Professor Way is also the author of *Real Property for the Real World*, a book of hands-on case studies for law students in property law courses. Since Fall 2021, Professor Way has served as the ABA Real Property, Trust and Estate Law Section Advisor for the Uniform Law Commission's Tenancy in Common Ownership Default Rules Drafting Committee. She is also the co-chair of the Community Development Practitioners and Legal Educators Practice Group

for the American Bar Association's Affordable Housing and Community Development Forum.

After graduating from The University of Texas School of Law, where she co-founded the Public Interest Law Association and was Grand Chancellor, Professor Way clerked for the Honorable William Wayne Justice of the Eastern District of Texas and served as a Skadden Fellow representing tenants and community groups at Legal Aid of Central Texas in Austin. Following her fellowship, she co-founded and directed Texas Community Building with Attorney Resources (Texas C-BAR), a statewide program that has delivered millions of dollars in pro bono transactional legal resources to community organizations.

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**Abigail Suarez,
Head of Neighborhood Development, JPMorgan Chase & Co**

Abigail Suarez is Head of Neighborhood Development within the Office of Corporate Responsibility at JPMorgan Chase & Co. Abigail is responsible for designing and executing the firm's strategies on affordable housing at the intersection of policy and philanthropy, including the firm's \$400 million commitment to Neighborhood Development. The commitment includes low-cost loans, equity, grants, and advancing an evidence-based housing policy agenda to improve housing affordability and stability for Black, Hispanic, and Latino households.

Before joining JPMorgan Chase, Abigail was a Market Lead for Capital Impact Partners, a national Community Development Financial Institution. In this role, Abigail led Capital Impact's investment strategy and growth for the East Coast. Abigail started her career as a Policy and Program Officer in the New Markets Tax Credit within the U.S. Department of the Treasury's

Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. She holds an MBA from the University of Virginia, Darden School of Business, and a B.A. in Finance from St. Edward's University.

Furonda Brasfield

Director of Heirs' Property Clearinghouse, The KKAC Organization

Furonda Brasfield is an attorney and Director of the KKAC Organization's Heirs Property Clearinghouse. Furonda is a self-proclaimed abolitionist and activist for human and civil rights. Furonda's passion for justice is revealed in the social causes that she has championed, including preserving land wealth in historically disadvantaged communities, death penalty abolition, economic equity, reproductive justice, HIV/AIDS awareness, criminal justice reform, and rural access to justice. In her work with KKAC, she helps to provide legal education and support to historically disadvantaged families dealing with estate planning and heirs' property issues. During her tenure with the organization, the organization has created strategic partnerships with major church denominations and other organizations committed to assisting with heirs' property issues.

Furonda received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, and her Juris Doctor from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's William H. Bowen Law School. Furonda works in collaboration with the William H. Bowen School of Law's Rural Incubator Program and the Legal Services Corporation to increase access to justice in rural areas of the state. In addition to numerous volunteer and civic involvements, Furonda is a member of the W. Harold Flower's Law Society and she is the President of the Board of DecARcerate Arkansas, a group formed to end mass incarceration.

P. Michael Jones
Sr. Staff Attorney (Homeownership), Philadelphia VIP

Mike Jones is the senior staff attorney at Philadelphia VIP, a legal services non-profit that recruits, trains, and supports volunteer attorneys to assist clients pro bono. Mike co-manages the Homeownership Project, which includes overseeing the Tangled Title Fund and leading projects aimed at resolving widespread tangled title across Philadelphia.

Tamara Veal
Legal Fellow, The Federation of Southern Cooperatives

Tamara Veal is one of the Legal Fellows with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund. A graduate from the Southern University Law Center, she has a passion for assisting those navigating the course of clearing title tangled up in heirs property. During her time with the Federation she has been apart of numerous projects working to assist those with heirs property on a small and large scale. Tamara has been a key player in connecting landowners to the legal representation that they need to clear title to their family's land. As well as participate in active conversations around the policy of heirs property.