

Annie Benson Bio

“Everything that is useful to the whole business of living together in a civilized way is energy well spent.” (*Italo Calvino*.) Annie has devoted decades to this “whole business” by defending and expanding civil rights for noncitizens and people accused of crimes. A refugee from the heartland (Ohio), Annie’s 30 years of West Coast living, from Guatemala to Alaska, transformed her from a Catholic Young Republican into a queer social justice lawyer. Annie is honored to collaborate with brilliant, committed, creative people comprising the immigrant rights and criminal legal system reform movements. She arrived in Seattle in 1995 to become the Legal Director of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project. In 2000 she became the founding Directing Attorney for the Immigration Project of the Washington Defender Association. She has served on the boards of the National Immigration Project, the Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women and OneAmerica. Annie taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Washington’s School of Law. She is a long-standing member of Washington State’s Minority and Justice Commission. The wonders of the earth, Marcel Proust and a fascination with big history help Annie think in geologic time, which she considers an essential skill for long-term social justice work. When not in Seattle, Annie lives in Port Townsend Washington.