



GEORGETOWN LAW
JUVENILE JUSTICE
CLINIC & INITIATIVE

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Dear

We are now eight months into the new world of the COVID pandemic. We hope you are doing well during these unprecedented times and want to share with you how we have adapted our mission since the pandemic struck. When the virus began to affect us all in March, Georgetown responded quickly by moving classes to Zoom and the District of Columbia Courts moved to WebEx. Clinic staff and students were equally adept. While the early days of the transition created logistical headaches for us and our clients, we learned a great deal from the experience. The virus also forced the Law Center to cancel graduation ceremonies and forced us to alter our wonderful year-end Clinic traditions. Nonetheless, our new familiarity with Zoom permitted us to celebrate virtually, congratulate our students for their successes during the year, and thank them for the work they did to help their clients and make their lives better at least in some small way.

Because of our early experiences with Zoom and WebEx, we started the new year better prepared to work with our students, the court, and our clients. Classes continued virtually during the Fall, and while we are preparing for the possibility of some in-person instruction in the Spring, we are not speculating too far in the future given the status of the virus, the lack of a vaccine, and D.C. government restrictions on contact and travel. The new students endured the Clinic Orientation without the joy of personal contact with their new colleagues and with us. The University has restrictions on face-to-face contact for the time being, but we are exploring ways to have at least one

socially distanced Clinic party together. Despite the lack of in-person contact, we have adapted our classroom instruction to create opportunities for the students to get to know each other better.

We are blessed with incredible talent in the Clinic and the Initiative. This year brought some changes in personnel and some reassignment of duties. Sai Iyer, last year's 2nd year Prettyman Fellow, has completed his fellowship and is now working with the New Mexico public defender's office. Olajumoke "Jummy" Obayanju, our Racial Justice & Juvenile Defense Fellow, has also completed her fellowship but remains in the DMV. Both were valuable members of our team who performed splendidly while they were here. We expect no less as they move to the next phase of their careers. Quiana Harris, the former 1st year Prettyman Fellow, is now supervising students along with the faculty. Efosa Akenzua is the new 1st year Prettyman Fellow and Ayisha Scales-Bruce is the new Racial Justice & Juvenile Defense Fellow. Rebba Omer, our Juvenile Defense & Policy fellow, continues to coordinate our regional initiatives, particularly the efforts of the MidAtlantic Juvenile Defender Center, and Jennifer Ubiera, our Organizing & Advocacy Fellow, leads our local organizing and policy efforts.

Kris has stepped down as the Associate Dean for Clinics and Experiential Learning but is now Special Advisor to the Dean for Community and Justice and continues writing and creating new projects at her incredible pace. Eduardo continues as a Visiting Professor of Law and persists in his work as the Initiative's Policy Director while supervising Clinic students with incredible skill and sensitivity. He continues to enjoy the mix of teaching and policy work that his position affords, and is optimistic that 2021 will bring a number of important youth justice reforms that have been in the pipeline for a while. Wally has returned from London, and while he is still working with CTLS staff to plan for its life under COVID, he has taken on supervision duties in New Referrals Court and is teaching some of the Clinic and Fellowship classes. Katrecia, our Executive Assistant and Program Specialist, remains the steadfast supporter and emotional sounding board for us all, a need that has grown even greater in this complicated time.

As we mentioned earlier, the D.C. Superior Court now conducts most of its hearings on WebEx and will continue to do so for some time. While we have learned to navigate WebEx, the logistics continue to pose some difficulties. Students and supervisors are in separate abodes. We prepare on Zoom but switch to WebEx when court convenes and begin communicating with each other by text. Clients who are detained communicate with their student attorneys by telephone from the Youth Services Center, while released clients and parents may appear "in court" either by telephone or computer. We exchange Court documents and letters by email. All of this occurs simultaneously, making your and our previous Clinic experiences seem pretty simple.

Although youth arrests and petitions in the District continue to be low, Clinic students still have much to do. Interestingly, the Office of the Attorney General seems to be focusing only on the most serious offenses, meaning that our caseload is rich and compelling. Students have conducted several probable cause hearings and secured the release of most of our clients this semester.

Although we have not tried cases yet, a number of students are currently preparing for trials scheduled in December and after the New Year. The Clinic has also taken on a few new projects—including policy projects aimed at reforming the manner in which youth are policed in the District of Columbia and a few resentencing cases for individuals who received long adult sentences for actions committed while they were still children.

Our client-centered, zealous advocacy on behalf of the nation's youth remains at the heart of our work and influences every project we undertake at the Initiative. Our work at the national level remains focused on the fight for racial justice. When the killing of George Floyd sparked protests across the country and forced systemic racism back into the national conversation, our "Racial Justice for Youth: A Toolkit for Defenders" (<https://defendracialjustice.org/>) attracted more attention than ever, with over 3,000 visits in the month of June 2020 alone. Launched in partnership with the National Juvenile Defender Center (NJDC) in October 2019, the Toolkit empowers defenders with regularly updated resources to fight the over-policing, criminalization, and school exclusion of youth of color.

Although the pandemic has complicated our national training agenda this year, we actually managed to increase our contact with defenders through the virtual space. Kris has been training adult and juvenile defenders to challenge racial injustice throughout the country. California, Colorado, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, and West Virginia are just a few of the states she "visited" by Zoom. In partnership with NJDC, Kris has also been leading a series of monthly trainings on how to litigate racial bias and the traumatic effects of policing on communities of color.

In January 2020, the Initiative launched a year-long Ambassadors for Racial Justice program, again in partnership with NJDC, to provide a core group of defenders with resources, training, and support they need to raise race in their individual advocacy and broader systemic reform. Our inaugural class of Ambassadors hail from ten states - Nevada, Illinois, California, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, New Jersey, Michigan, Louisiana, and Massachusetts! Throughout the year, the Ambassadors have participated in training webinars that explore topics such as civil rights litigation, data collection, policing as trauma, criminalizing normal adolescence, the school-to-prison pipeline, policy reform, and more. Each Ambassador has been assigned a state-based and a national mentor, and will complete a capstone project of their own design. Our New Jersey Ambassador, for example, led an interactive statewide training to introduce defenders to the Racial Justice Toolkit and teach them how to raise race in their legal advocacy. She is also working to introduce legislation to the New Jersey Senate requiring youth to consult with attorneys before waiving their Miranda rights. Every Ambassador is taking a lead to promote systemic reform through legislative advocacy, training programs, coalition building, litigation strategies, or peaceful demonstrations.

Regionally, the Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center (MAJDC), which is still housed in our Initiative, continues to train and support attorneys across DC, Maryland, Puerto Rico, Virginia, and West Virginia to ensure access to highly-specialized defenders for all youth. In 2020, we added

new and diverse voices to our MAJDC board of directors, allowing us to grow the juvenile defense leadership in the region and expand our geographic reach to more defenders across each state. We focused much of our regional attention on West Virginia, where we recently supported a statewide juvenile defender summit, featuring trainings on adolescent development, the role of counsel, and litigating racial trauma and bias. Additionally, we are assisting West Virginia defenders in their fight against school-based referrals to the juvenile court. To support this effort, MAJDC and the Initiative hosted a summer intern who researched the effect of school-based arrests on young people's mental health and educational outcomes. We were thrilled to work with Andre Tulloch, a college student and D.C. native who met Kris at a youth activism forum last fall! We remain committed to investing in the next generation of youth defenders!

Locally, Jenn and Eduardo have been hard at work seeking to mitigate the impact of the twin pandemics – the coronavirus and over-policing – plaguing our country. In the wake of the outbreak, our team worked closely with other advocates and DYRS to reduce the incarcerated youth population by 72% and the detained awaiting placement population by 83%. Additionally, our team worked in coalition with other community-based advocates to convince the D.C. Council to remove the police department's control over the school security contract and return it to the public-school system. We were also able to reduce the overall cost of the contract, and direct those funds instead to socio-emotional learning, and to support in our schools. Over the next 12 to 18 months, we hope to see further reform to reduce the over-policing of youth in the District as well as other changes that will continue to make the city's juvenile legal system smaller, better, and fairer.

As our 50th anniversary approaches, the Clinic continues to expand its work and is now recognized as a major powerful advocate for children rights throughout the city and the nation. Nevertheless, our needs have increased. While Georgetown Law and a number of local foundations continue to support the Clinic and some of the Initiative's projects, much of our work could not be done without your support. Moreover, as we continue to grow our reach, your support becomes even more important.

The need this year, however, is even greater than usual. The expenses related to protecting our students and staff from COVID and from redesigning our methods of instruction have significantly affected on institutional finances. Although the Law Center has avoided staff cuts and forced furloughs, it reduced individual program operating budgets, especially those that do not directly relate to our teaching mission. As a result, the JJC budget is lower now than in previous years. In addition, foundations are receiving more requests for assistance than they have in the past, reducing our ability to tap into those resources. Thus, your help is especially crucial for us to continue our work.

We appreciate the gifts from those of you who made and continue to fulfill your multi-year pledges. We are incredibly grateful for that level of support and welcome new multi-year gifts. We realize that COVID may make it difficult for some of you to contribute this year. However, if you can, please know we will cherish any level of support we receive.

As another year draws to a close, we reflect again on our work, but are also cognizant of the unprecedented suffering that people in America and those all over the world have endured this year. We recognize the strain on our students as they try to do our important work while worrying about their own health and that of their families and friends. We are thankful for the opportunity to serve the youth of the District and the nation and appreciate that this important work brought us all together as a JJC family. The enduring concern that you show for us and for our work is more important to us than ever before. Tragedies often bring us closer and although it has been a difficult time, with perhaps more difficulty to come, the concern we share for each other and for the rest of humanity holds us together. The experiences we shared in Clinic, with their emotional highs and lows, have made us strong and united us across graduating classes, across decades, and across generations. We hope that those experiences will help us all get through this difficult era.

We wish you the best for the holidays and for the future and look forward to seeing you when we emerge from this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Kris

Wally

Eduardo

Katrecia

P.S. – In an effort to keep in greater touch in an increasingly technological age, we have expanded our web and our social media presence. We would love to connect. You can find us at @GeorgetownJJI on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and view us on our newly redesigned website.