



Ambassadors for Racial Justice 2021

The Program

Sponsored by the Georgetown Juvenile Justice Initiative and the National Juvenile Defender Center, the Ambassadors for Racial Justice program is for defenders who are committed to challenging racial injustice in the juvenile legal system.

The Goal

To grow the number of juvenile defenders and juvenile justice advocates equipped to develop strategies to combat racial inequities in their jurisdictions and to facilitate difficult conversations on race. We recognize that combatting systemic racial inequities within the juvenile legal system requires efforts outside of litigation and requires advocates in various spaces. We believe that supporting a cohort of defenders to engage in work that transcends beyond legal advocacy will allow for long-term sustainable results within the juvenile legal system.

The Outcome

group of well-trained, diverse juvenile defenders and juvenile justice advocates who may go on to become policy advocates, judges, and legislators, to represent minority viewpoints, empower communities of color, and systemically reform our juvenile legal system.



"Together, we can radically reduce the footprint of police in the lives of black and brown children. That work starts by decriminalizing normal adolescent behaviors and treating all children like children!"

Kristin Henning Washington, DC

Kristin Henning is the Blume Professor of Law and Director of the Juvenile Justice Clinic and Initiative at Georgetown Law, where she supervises law students and represents youth accused of delinquency in the District of Columbia. Kris was previously the Lead Attorney for the Juvenile Unit of the D.C. Public Defender Service and is currently the Director of the Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center. Kris writes extensively about race, adolescence, and policing and has a book forthcoming with Penguin Random House about the criminalization of Black adolescence. Kris worked closely with the McArthur Foundation's Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network to develop the Juvenile Training Immersion Program (JTIP) and has trained state actors across the country to address bias and racial trauma in the juvenile and criminal legal systems she now co-hosts week-long JTIP summer academy for defenders and partnered with NJDC to develop a Racial Justice Toolkit and launch the Ambassadors for Racial Justice program, a year-long program for juvenile defenders committed to challenging racial injustice in the juvenile legal system. Kris serves on the Board of Directors for the Center for Children's Law and Policy, is an Adviser to ALI's Restatement on Children and the Law, and serves on the ABA Task Force on Youth Standards. She is the recipient of several honors, including the Robert E. Shepherd, Jr. Award for Excellence in Juvenile Defense. Kris received her B.A. from Duke University, a J.D. from Yale Law School, and an LL.M. from Georgetown Law.

Mary Ann Scali Washington, DC

Mary Ann Scali serves as the executive director of the National Juvenile Defender Center (NJDC) where she works with juvenile defenders and advocates dedicated to promoting justice for all children by ensuring excellence in juvenile defense. After working as a summer law clerk for NJDC in 1996, Mary Ann became the deputy director in 2000 and the executive director in 2017. In partnership with the NJDC team and juvenile defense leaders, Mary Ann delivers juvenile defense training and technical assistance, conducts state-level juvenile defense assessments, and facilitates cross-disciplinary reform efforts aimed at developing resources and policies to strengthen juvenile defense and access to justice for all youth.

Prior to joining NJDC, Mary Ann defended youth in the juvenile division of the Office of the Public Defender in Baltimore City, MD; spent two years teaching high school in Pohnpei, Micronesia; served in the Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome, Italy; and taught Baltimore City boys at the Baraka School in Nanyuki, Kenya. Mary Ann holds a JD and MSW from Loyola University Chicago where she was a CIVITAS Childlaw Fellow.



“Addressing racial disparities has long been a part of our work as juvenile defenders. We now have the mandate and the tools to create the change needed to establish racial justice for all youth!”



"There is no better time to combat the racism that has paralyzed our youth legal system for countless years. I am excited to work alongside a powerful team of Attorneys from across the county who are ready to transform the system. These are our Racial Justice Ambassadors and we are confident they will make real changes in our world."

Ayisha Scales-Bruce Washington, DC

Ayisha Scales-Bruce is the Racial Justice and Juvenile Defense Fellow. She is a proud alumna of Livingstone College where she earned her B.A. in social work, Fordham University where she earned her M.A. in social work, and Rutgers Law School where she received her J.D.

Prior to law school, Ayisha worked as a forensic social worker in New York City. Ayisha served as a fearless advocate for youth in foster care, the youth legal system, and public schools. Ayisha witnessed firsthand the intersections of race, inequality, and the law. During law school, Ayisha served as a student attorney in the Children's Justice Clinic, representing youth charged with delinquent acts. She also served as a judicial extern for the supervising Administrative Juvenile Judge and as a summer associate for the Center for Law and Social Justice. Her work inspired her to become a lawyer.

Ayisha was the regional vice chairwoman of the Black Law Students Association and coordinated the law school's first high school pipeline program for youth of color in Camden County, NJ. As a racial justice advocate, she raised awareness of police racially profiling students, which led to reform efforts in Windsor County. For her outstanding achievement in pursuit of social justice and equality, her academic excellence, and her advocacy for Black law students, Ayisha was honored with the 2020 Mary Philbrook Public Interest Award, the 2020 Justice Garibaldi Award, the 2020 David Dologenos Memorial Graduation Award, the 2020 Barristers Award, the 2019 Garden State Bar Association Diversity Award, the 2018 Heart of Black Law Students Award, and the 2018 Equal Justice Award. Ayisha sits on the board of the Rutgers Law Radical Diversity Committee.

Ebony Howard Washington, DC

Ebony is the Deputy Director for NJDC. In this role, she works to serve youth defenders and advocates so that they may seek justice for children and adolescents and provide excellence in juvenile defense.

Prior to joining NJDC, Ebony was a Senior Supervising Attorney at the Southern Poverty Law Center where she developed, implemented, and managed litigation and policy campaigns to combat injustice and systemic racism in the criminal and youth justice systems. Ebony also defended individuals charged with federal crimes in District Court as an Assistant Federal Public Defender in the Northern District of Alabama. Currently, Ebony serves on the boards for the National Juvenile Justice Network and Youth Towers – a Birmingham, Alabama-based organization dedicated to supporting homeless youth ages 19 to 26.

Ebony graduated from Howard University Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude with a B.A. in Political Science, and attended the Georgetown University Law Center. While at Georgetown Law, Ebony was a student attorney in the Juvenile Justice Clinic where she represented young people before the District of Columbia Superior Court.



“Black and Brown children, like all children, are entitled to a healthy and happy childhood without the interference of racism and biases from the adults who are supposed to be protecting them. It is our responsibility to safeguard their opportunity for positive life outcomes by defending their rights vigorously and standing guard against harms that flow from involvement in the system.”



"I'm thrilled to support the 2021 Ambassadors for Racial Justice as we work together to abolish the white supremacy embedded in our legal system and create a world where Black and Brown youth are free to fully enjoy their rights as children! "

Rebba Omer Washington, DC

Rebba Omer serves as Staff Attorney and Program Manager for the Georgetown Juvenile Justice Initiative. Rebba joined the Juvenile Justice Initiative after serving for four years as an Assistant Public Defender at the Community Law Office in Knoxville, TN where she specialized in advocating for children accused of delinquent offenses. Rebba has been trained in holistic, client-centered criminal defense representation and juvenile defense specialization through the Gideon's Promise Core 101 three-year training program and the National Juvenile Defender Center's Juvenile Training Immersion Program Summer Academy. Rebba came to the Community Law Office through Northwestern University School of Law's Pritzker Fellowship.

While a student attorney in the Northwestern Bluhm Legal Clinic's Children and Family Justice Center, Rebba represented individual clients impacted by the juvenile justice system and collaborated with professors on policy advocacy.

In her final year of law school, Rebba completed a senior research project in Bangladesh where she assisted an NGO with a country-requested audit of the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Prior to law school, Rebba was an AmeriCorps volunteer at an Oakland, CA homeless shelter where she taught job search and retention skills to clients with barriers to employment. She graduated summa cum laude from DePaul University in 2010 with a B.A. in English literature and a minor in public policy.

Sherika Shnider Washington, DC

Sherika Shnider is a staff attorney at NJDC where she works on legal and policy initiatives related to juvenile defense, including reducing and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile legal system. She is also a certified Juvenile Training Immersion Program (JTIP) trainer. During law school, she was a student attorney in the Youth, Education and Justice Clinic, earning the Clinical Legal Education Association Outstanding Team Award for her representation of youth who were sentenced to life without the possibility of parole and students in school disciplinary proceedings. She also served as Managing Editor of the Journal of Race, Religion, Gender, and Class.

Prior to law school, Sherika worked at a national nonprofit where she managed a network of grassroots organizers focused on ensuring youth in underserved communities have access to safe places to play. She also worked in donor development at a D.C. based non-profit and served as a rape crisis counselor. Sherika graduated with a B.A. from George Washington University in 2012 and received her J.D. from the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law where she was the recipient of the William P. Cunningham Award for exceptional achievement and service to the law school.



"I love doing racial justice work because it gives me hope for a better future in which we as defenders and advocates will eradicate systemic racism and allow Black and brown children to have the childhoods they deserve."

Tim Curry Washington, DC

Tim joined the National Juvenile Defender Center in 2012. In his capacity as NJDC's Special Counsel, Tim regularly works with front-line defenders, policymakers, and justice system stakeholders across the country to help support and develop specialized juvenile defense practice that is developmentally appropriate draws from national best practices, and provides youth with the highest-quality representation available. Prior to joining NJDC, Tim was the Supervising Attorney at D.C. Law Students in Court and an E. Barrett Prettyman Post Graduate Fellow at Georgetown University Law Center. In both of these positions, he defended youth and adults accused of crimes in Washington, D.C. while also supervising the practice of third-year clinical students and teaching law school seminars on juvenile defense and trial skills. Before earning his law degree, Tim worked with various humanitarian relief and refugee organizations in Africa and had a career in journalism. Tim holds an LL.M. in Advocacy from Georgetown University Law Center, a J.D. from American University Washington College of Law, and a B.S. in Broadcast Journalism from Syracuse University.



"The entire youth legal system is affected by issues of race, disparity, and inequity at all levels. I'm thrilled to be working with Ambassadors willing to push themselves and others to confront these issues head on and build a dialogue about meaningful change."

Angeles Zaragoza Los Angeles, California

"I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because I want to gain the tools and courage to shine a light on systemic racism in Los Angeles and the greater field of juvenile justice. I look forward to being part of a community of inspiring defenders who seek to affect change in their own practice and communities."



Angeles Zaragoza is a juvenile defense attorney with the Los Angeles County Alternate Public Defender's Office. In this capacity, she represents youth incarcerated in the Division of Juvenile Justice, while also providing educational advocacy for system-involved youth throughout Los Angeles County.

Previously, she worked as a public defender in Sacramento County, California and as a federal defender for the Eastern District of California. Angeles earned her B.A. from U.C. Berkeley and a law degree from UCLA School of Law. In law school, she specialized in the Public Interest Law and Policy Program and the Critical Race Studies Program, focusing on the intersectionality of race and law. A proud Chicana, Angeles was raised by farmworker immigrants in the Napa Valley. She resides in East Los Angeles where she and her husband are raising two young boys, ages 1 and 3.

Ashley Morse Janesville, Wisconsin

"I'm excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because racial justice should be an experience not just a dialogue."



Ashley Morse is a staff attorney with the Wisconsin State Public Defender's Office (WI SPD). She currently works in the Janesville trial division, also serving as a training coordinator for the Agency. She received her B.A. in History and African American Studies from the

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2006, and her J.D. from the University of Wisconsin in 2009.

Ashley has been working for the WI SPD since 2010, beginning her career in the Hudson trial office. In the last year, Ashley has transitioned to having a full time juvenile caseload.

During her time at WI SPD, Ashley has presented at annual trainings to certify private bar attorneys to take conflict and overflow juvenile cases. In 2015, she completed the NJDC Juvenile Training Immersion Program held at Georgetown Law.

In addition to presenting as a speaker at the State Public Defender New Lawyer Training, Ashley is also a Certified JTIP Trainer, earning the certification in 2019. Ashley is a member of the Rock County Trauma Task Force and also serves on a local committee focused on reducing racial disparity among youth entering the juvenile justice system.

Brittany Mobley Washington, D.C.

"I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because I want to help defenders and advocates in defense-focused offices to tackle the inherent anti-Black and -Brown racism that exists in the juvenile legal system. I look forward to working to dismantle this dehumanizing system that refuses to treat children of color as children!"



Brittany Mobley is the Juvenile Services Program Deputy Chief within the Community Defender Division of the Public Defender Service (PDS). She first joined the Juvenile Services Program for PDS in July 2015 as a staff attorney.

Prior to PDS, Brittany was a senior attorney at the Children's Law Center within their Guardian ad Litem Program representing children in the abuse and neglect system for about four years. Brittany joined the Children's Law Center immediately after graduating from Howard University School of Law.

While at Howard Law, she worked as a student attorney in the Criminal Justice Clinic representing adults in misdemeanor cases and as a law clerk for PDS in both the Juvenile Services Program and the former Community Reentry Program.

Currently, Brittany sits on the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) Advisory Council, is the Vice-Chair of the Juvenile Justice Committee of the American Bar Association, is an advisory board member for the Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center, and is a founding member and National Secretary of the Black Public Defender Association.

Diego J. Padro Cincinnati, Ohio

"I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because the time has come to aggressively push for systemic change in the criminal legal system in the area of race and I want to be a part of that necessary effort."



Diego J. Padro was born in the South Bronx in New York City and had his primary education in the NYC public school system. He attended LaGuardia High School of Performing Arts and was trained as a classical singer. His interest in social justice was inspired

by his father, who was an anti-war activist, and his experiences growing up in NYC seeing the negative impacts of biased policing in his community.

After his stint in the Army, he earned a B.A. from Adelphi University in 1995 and then graduated from the University of Cincinnati College of Law in 1999. Diego has practiced criminal defense, delinquency, and traffic defense in Cincinnati, Ohio for twenty-one years with nine of those years spent exclusively in juvenile delinquency. He is currently the Senior Trial Counsel/Team Lead with the Hamilton County Public Defender's Office, Juvenile Division. He has been with the office since 2013.

Erin Swinney Fayetteville, North Carolina

"I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because of the opportunity to bring much-needed resources to not just the court system of Robeson County, but the actual school systems to develop more alternatives to criminal prosecutions and stop the school to prison pipeline."



Erin Swinney has been an Assistant Public Defender in Robeson County since 2017. She is the primary attorney assigned to represent children charged with felonies and misdemeanors in juvenile court in addition to handling misdemeanors, traffic, and non-compliance

cases for adults. She believes that while the criminal justice system often focuses on reducing recidivism for adult defendants, there are not enough resources being allocated to prevent children from being introduced to the criminal system at early ages.

Erin received her B.A. in English (summa cum laude) in 2011 from Claflin University and then her J.D. (cum laude) in 2014 from North Carolina Central University School of Law. She is also a member of Gideon's Promise Class of 2018 and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.. In her free time, she assists her educator family and friends with creating and maintaining virtual classrooms.

Latasha Prempeh Athens, Georgia

"I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because I want to empower and provide my clients with the best possibility of a successful outcome to not only their cases but also their lives. By challenging and changing the racial biases within the juvenile justice system I will be able to provide my clients with a fair and objective chance at success."



Latasha Prempeh is an Assistant Public Defender in Georgia's Western Judicial Circuit which is comprised of Clarke and Oconee County. Since 2013 she has represented indigent juvenile and adult clients in delinquency, child in need of services, and dependency proceedings.

Latasha has served in many of the Court's roles including child's attorney, parent's attorney, and Guardian Ad Litem. Latasha earned her B.A. magna cum laude in Public Service from Macon State College. She received her J.D. from the University of Georgia School of Law where she served as Public Service Fellow after graduation.

Latasha participates in numerous specialized trainings and programs on juvenile justice reform and improvement initiatives. In order to better serve her clientele, Latasha has participated in the JDAI Council on Juvenile Justice System Improvement, county implicit bias trainings, and statewide court improvement initiatives. After law school, Latasha decided to stay local to UGA after seeing the wide disparity between the college community and the community of Athens as a whole. She currently resides in Oconee County with her husband and three children.

Michael Parson Edinburg, Texas

"I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because I can participate in effecting change in our justice system in both meaningful and positive ways."



Michael Parson practices law as an Assistant Public Defender in Hidalgo County, Texas supervising its juvenile division. He believes that the youth population is extremely vulnerable to abuses in the legal system and fights vigorously to ensure that they are able to

exercise their legal rights.

Michael diligently works, with the cooperation of his clients, to empower his clients with dignity, to give a voice to his clients in court, and to aid in addressing his clients' legal issues in a tailored, individual manner geared toward promoting success rather than merely punishment.

He has presented to civic groups, attorneys, law enforcement, and juvenile probation officers on legal topics such as an overview of juvenile law, the detention of youth, and youth with mental health issues in the juvenile system. Additionally, Michael has been on a task force to draft and implement court procedures to be used during the COVID-19 pandemic which is currently being used in Hidalgo County and served as a model procedure for other counties in Texas.

Michael has been selected to participate in the Juvenile Training Immersion Program for the State of Texas and serves on the Juvenile Law Committee for the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association.

Nicole Duncan Denver, Colorado

"I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because I want to continue learning how to fight a system that thrives on the insidious corroding thread of dehumanizing and caging children of color. I want to use my skills to disrupt and challenge everything that says that because of race, our kids' lives don't matter."



Nicole is a 2016 graduate from Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, California. She currently works in the Juvenile Division at the Denver Regional Office of the Colorado State Public Defender's Office.

After working with Gideon's Promise her 1L year, it became clear to Nicole that she wanted to work in youth public defense. She has worked with Gideon's Promise, the ACLU of Los Angeles, Connie Rice's Advancement Project, and the NAACP National Headquarters. Nicole is an active member of the Sam Cary Bar Association, Colorado Attorneys Against Police Violence, and the Colorado Juvenile Defender Center.

Nicole worked to convince the Sam Cary Bar Association's membership to support the removal of Student Resource Officers from schools and Denver Public Schools subsequently unanimously voted to have SROs removed.

When the State charges or threatens to charge her clients as adults, Nicole actively uses her knowledge of adolescent brain development to fight to keep her clients in the juvenile system and to make sure the court hears their story and experience. Nicole cares deeply about the youth she represents and is particularly passionate about ending the overrepresentation of youth of color in the criminal legal system.

Nicole is the sole African-American juvenile public defender in the Colorado State Public Defender System, and works with several of her colleagues to help increase the number of public defenders of color in the system. She mentors and encourages aspiring lawyers of color to not succumb to the narrative that they "aren't good enough" to be lawyers.

Mykisha Atisele Fort Myers, Florida

"I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because race is a social construct, but racism is 100% real and needs to be challenged wherever it hides."



Mykisha Atisele has been an attorney with the Office of the Public Defender for the 20th Judicial Circuit in Lee County, Florida for over 15 years. She was educated at Wingate University and Florida State University School

of Law. While working in the Lee county branch of the Office of the Public Defender for the 20th Judicial Circuit, Mykisha has specialized in Juvenile Delinquency almost exclusively for the past 14 years.

Yvonnda Summers Omaha, Nebraska

"I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because the smallest voices in our communities deserve to have the loudest voices."



Yvonnda Summers is an Omaha native. She decided at the age of six years old when her biological father was sentenced to a prison term, that she wanted to be a public defender to help other families avoid the pain of separation.

She chose to stay close to her mom, step-dad, and younger sister and attend the community service focused Jesuit school, Creighton University. During her time at Creighton, she joined the historically Black sorority of Delta Sigma Theta Inc., became the President of the African American Student Association and graduated with her B.S.. She continued to Creighton School of Law where she won top awards in Juvenile Offender Law, traveled nationally with the Mock Trial Team, represented her class as the commencement speaker for graduation, and was awarded for her outstanding service to the community.

As she grew into a young attorney, she became even more impassioned to serve the indigent community, her Black community, and to better the criminal justice system as a whole. After law school, she moved to Virginia where she became a public defender in the city of Portsmouth. There, she was entrusted with high profile cases after only 2 years of practice. Yvonnda was integral in establishing the Mental Health Court for the City of Portsmouth and served the youth of the city when the Commonwealth was seeking to enhance punishment to adult terms. Always wanting to serve her hometown, she moved back to Omaha where she joined the public defender's office. She continues to use her skills from her life experiences to serve low income, under-represented youth and adults. Every day she is an activist in the courtroom arguing for fair treatment, upholding the Constitution and giving a voice to those who need to be heard in the criminal justice process.

Ambassadors for Racial Justice

For more information about the Ambassadors for Racial Justice Program and the Juvenile Justice Initiative at Georgetown Law, please visit www.law.georgetown.edu/experiential-learning/clinics/juvenile-justice-clinic/juvenile-justice-initiative/ or email lawjjc@georgetown.edu. You can find a toolkit for juvenile defenders at defendracialjustice.org.

