



**GEORGETOWN LAW
JUVENILE JUSTICE
CLINIC & INITIATIVE**

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**Not barred in the District of Columbia*

December 1, 2021

Dear Family,

The last time we wrote to you, COVID was ravaging the nation and we at Georgetown were adapting to classes on Zoom and court hearings on WebEx. We overcame the logistical headaches for us and our clients and learned a great deal from the experience. Those experiences and the knowledge we gained from national leaders and scientists and from our own experts at our O'Neil Center and the Georgetown Medical school, we were able to develop plans for reopening the campus in August. While the nation continues to be ravaged by COVID and the mindless resistance to the best medical science has to offer, the Law Center has opened safely with more than 99% of our students and staff vaccinated. We adhere to masking in classrooms, but students are happy to be back and eager to learn the integration of theory and practice as the Juvenile Justice Clinic and Georgetown Juvenile Justice Initiative continue our efforts to improve the lives of children in the District of Columbia, the Mid-Atlantic region, and the nation.

Because of diligent planning throughout the Law Center and the Clinic and because of our earlier experiences with WebEx, we started the new year better prepared to work with our students, the court, and our clients. Orientation and Fall classes were back to normal and we redesigned our offices to resemble, to the greatest extent possible, an actual courtroom experience. We now conduct WebEx court hearings in our office suite via a large screen TV while students stand behind a lectern with faculty and fellows sitting beside them as they would in court. While our clients and other parties participate from their own locale, students from the Clinic sit in a

“courtroom gallery” watching their colleagues litigate their cases. The courtroom setting and the ability to hang out in the Clinic office, even with masks on, has brought back the joy of personal contact that we missed last year. The Law Center has also erected an outdoor tent that has been the scene of some happy hours and happy faces.

We continue to be blessed with incredible talent in the Clinic and the Initiative. This year brought some changes in personnel and some reassignment of duties. Nate Mensah, a former Prettyman JJC Fellow and attorney at PDS, joins us as a Visiting Professor of Law for the semester. Quiana Harris, last year’s 2nd year Prettyman Fellow, has completed her fellowship and is now working with the D.C. Public Defender. Jennifer Ubiera, our Organizing & Advocacy Fellow who led our local organizing and policy efforts, has completed her Master’s Degree studies and is moving on to new challenges. Ayisha Scales-Bruce, our Racial Justice & Juvenile Defense Fellow, continues her work with the Ambassadors for Racial Justice while Rebba Omer, our Senior Staff Attorney and Lead Program Manager, continues to coordinate our regional initiatives, particularly the efforts of the MidAtlantic Juvenile Defender Center. Efosa Akenzua, our 2nd year Prettyman Fellow, is now supervising students along with the faculty, and Marquise Findley Smith is the new 1st year Prettyman Fellow.

Kris is on sabbatical for the Fall semester and has been on a speaking tour concerning her fabulous new book, The Rage of Innocence: How America Criminalizes Black Youth. Through conversations with leaders like James Forman Jr., Michael Eric Dyson, Angela J. Davis, and Congressman Raskin, she is bringing national attention to the critical need to end the over-policing of Black youth. Eduardo continues as a Visiting Professor of Law and continues his work as the Initiative’s Policy Director while supervising Clinic students with incredible skill and sensitivity. He is currently working with a number of coalitions of youth advocates to ensure that our juvenile legal system is developmentally appropriate, trauma-responsive, and racially just. Wally spent much of last year working with the staff of the Center for Transnational Legal Studies (CTLS) to plan for its life under COVID. Although travel restrictions and the rules of our partner law schools reduced the scope of the program and its London presence, CTLS survived and has students on site this year for a full academic program in London. Although he continues to supervise JJC students in New Referrals Court and teaches Clinic and Fellowship classes, he is again the Academic Co-Director of CTLS although he performs those duties from Washington. Katrechia, 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. **Although youth arrests and petitions in the District continue to be low, Clinic students still have much to do.** The Office of the Attorney General continues to focus on the most serious offenses, meaning that our caseload is lower but nonetheless complicated 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, several students are currently preparing for trials and motions.

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. At the national level, we continue to expand our efforts in the fight for racial justice. We began the year by co-hosting with Georgetown’s Psychology Department a webinar titled “The Dehumanization of Children of Color: Rethinking Policing and Policy,” which featured a conversation between Kris and Dr. Phillip Atiba Goff, Director of the Center for Policing Equity, Professor of African American Studies and Psychology at Yale, and preeminent researcher at the intersection of racial bias and policing. Attended by almost 1,000 people, this virtual event included a subsequent panel discussion on how such research can best shape reform.

We continue to expand our training efforts, taking advantage of the virtual space. In the past year, Kris has reached over 3,000 juvenile legal system stakeholders (in states such as Arizona, California, Nevada, Virginia, and Texas) with trainings on racial bias and the traumatic effects of policing on youth of color. In partnership with NJDC, Kris spoke with Prof. Geoff Ward to judges in a training titled “Reconsidering Decision-Making in the Juvenile Court System Through the Lens of Our Racial History.” Additionally, she was the featured trainer at NJDC’s racial justice training series for youth defenders and facilitated monthly workshops designed to give defenders the skills needed to successfully litigate racial justice issues in oral arguments. These monthly trainings will continue in 2022, along with discussion groups for NJDC’s youth defender community focused on utilizing the research in Kris’s book in case and policy advocacy.

Beyond trainings, we continued to empower defenders with resources to fight the criminalization of youth of color through our "Racial Justice for Youth: A Toolkit for Defenders" (<https://defendracialjustice.org/>), which now has over 1550 registered members. Launched in partnership with NJDC in October 2019, we regularly update its offerings and recently added legislative testimony from Kris and Eduardo, which can be used as a sample by policy advocates who seek to incorporate racial justice arguments.

In January 2021, the Initiative welcomed our second cohort of our year-long Ambassadors for Racial Justice program, again in partnership with NJDC. Through the Ambassadors program, a core group of defenders receive resources, training, and support they need to raise race in their individual advocacy and broader systemic reform. Each month Ambassadors participate in a training webinar covering topics such as incorporating data in advocacy, strategies to end the criminalization of normal adolescent behavior, ending the school-to-prison pipeline, and probation reform. Many Ambassadors from our inaugural cohort continue to attend these monthly webinars. Our 2021 Ambassadors—hailing from California, Colorado, DC, Florida, Georgia, Ohio,

Texas, and Wisconsin—are hard at work on their self-designed capstone projects. For example, our Ambassador in Wisconsin is designing and implementing a training program to assist system stakeholders in identifying the signs of racial trauma in the youth they serve.

Regionally, racial justice is threaded through the work of the Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center (MAJDC), housed in our Initiative. **We remain committed to investing in the future of youth defense leadership by creating internship opportunities for law students from diverse backgrounds and working to diversify our defender community, which supports attorneys from DC, Maryland, Puerto Rico, Virginia, and West Virginia.** In 2021, our Maryland partners requested resources to enhance their advocacy on behalf of youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). MAJDC responded by collaborating with national FASD expert Dr. Larry Burd to draft an affidavit for defenders to use in their advocacy and to host a training on FASD, which was attended by over 140 advocates from across the region. In West Virginia, we created a poster on the harms of school-based arrests and juvenile court referrals to raise awareness among teachers and administrators throughout the state.

Locally, Jenn and Eduardo have worked hard to realize the dream of making DC’s juvenile legal system the smallest, best, and most just system in the country. In collaboration with a host of allies across a number of coalitions, the last year has brought a number of additional key wins, including the passage of legislation ensuring the phase out of school resource officers in the District and the introduction of a number of bills that would require that all cases involving youth alleged to have committed a crime begin in juvenile, require the appointment of counsel before a youth could waive their Miranda rights; and limit the use of consent searches of youth. We will continue advocating for our youth on the individual and systemic levels in hopes of moving even closer to a world where all our children are treated as our children.

As our 50th anniversary approaches, the Clinic continues to expand its work and is now recognized as a major powerful advocate for children’s rights throughout the District and the nation. Kris’ book is bringing us even greater recognition.

With new opportunities and needs before us, we invite you to partner with us. *By making a gift to JJC, you can help to further our mission of defending DC’s youth, training law students and attorneys, and fighting for racial justice in the juvenile and criminal legal systems.*

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.** As we continue to grow our reach, your support becomes even more important. *The expenses related to protecting our students and staff from COVID and from redesigning our methods of instruction continue to affect our institutional finances, especially those areas of the institution that do not directly relate to our teaching mission.* In addition, foundations are receiving more requests for

assistance than they have in the past, reducing our ability to tap into those resources. Although our first-ever Giving Day event helped immensely, and thank you to those of you who were able to provide extra help, **we still came up short of funds to fully staff a position in the Initiative. 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 2021 draws to a close, we reflect again on our work and realize that we gained many important lessons from the pandemic. We are even more acutely aware of the unprecedented suffering that people in America and others all over the world have endured again this year. But it served to redouble our resolve to fight on, even in the face of the rise of right-wing terrorism, some occurring in our own Nation's Capitol -- just down the street from the Law Center. We recognized and better understood 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. But we learned new strategies to help them face those challenges with resilience and hope. We hope you and your family and friends fared well too.

We are thankful for the opportunity to serve the youth of the District and the nation and appreciate that this important work is what binds together the JJC family, a family now approaching its 50th anniversary. The enduring concern that you show for us and for our work is the pillar that supports that family. The concern we share for each other and for the rest of humanity holds us together in a sacred pledge to leave the world a better place than we found it. 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 our current difficult health and political morass.

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

Sincerely,

Kris
Wally
Eduardo
Katrechia

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.