



## 2023 Application Ambassadors for Racial Justice in Youth Defense

"When we love children, we acknowledge by our every action that they are not property, that they have rights—that we respect and uphold their rights." -bell hooks

### Ambassadors for Racial Justice Program

The Ambassadors for Racial Justice (ARJ) program is a nationally recognized, one-of-a-kind program for youth defenders who strive to challenge racial injustice in the juvenile legal system. The selection process for the 2023 Ambassadors Cohort is underway!

The [Georgetown Juvenile Justice Initiative](#) (GJJI) and [The Gault Center](#) seek to inspire and prepare dedicated frontline youth defenders throughout the nation to assume leadership roles and develop strategies to combat racial inequities in their respective jurisdictions, and throughout the country. The 12-month-program will (1) encourage and support defenders and advocates to challenge racial injustices through legal advocacy, (2) engage defenders and advocates in systemic and policy reform, and (3) equip defenders and advocates with the tools to initiate and lead difficult conversations about race. By creating a robust community of youth defenders and advocates who will share their challenges and successes, the program also seeks to (4) grow and retain a cadre of attorneys of color in the fight for youth justice.

The ARJ program is highly competitive. For 2023, GJJI and The Gault Center will select up to ten attorneys to participate. All applicants must be willing and able to commit to the full-year and all components of the program, including a capstone project, monthly (virtual) webinars, a leadership retreat weekend in **January 2023**, and a training weekend in **July 2023**.



## The Ambassador's Experience

The Ambassadors program is an interactive and supportive learning environment. Ambassadors will remain in practice in their own jurisdictions, but participate in the following program components:

- Complete a capstone project that advances racial justice. The capstone is a hallmark of the ARJ program. This component gives Ambassadors an opportunity to collaborate with national and local mentors to create a dynamic project that drives change and moves the arc toward racial justice in their respective jurisdictions;
- Actively participate in all monthly webinars. Participants will be required to turn on their videos during the webinar sessions and engage in the topic discussion. Webinars are usually two hours and generally held on Thursday afternoons once a month. Past webinar topics have included:
  - Raising Race
  - Strategies for Policy Reform
  - Data Collection 101
  - Applying for Grants
  - Race and Appellate Advocacy
  - Civil Rights Claims for Racial Justice
  - Coalition Building
  - Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline
  - Defenders & Implicit Racial Bias
  - The Reasonable Black Child: Race, Adolescence, and the Fourth Amendment
  - Decriminalizing Normal Adolescent Behaviors
  - Probation Reform
- Leadership retreat weekend in Washington, DC (**January 13th- January 15th, 2023**) (*We expect to convene this retreat in person and travel expenses will be provided. However, this training may be virtual depending on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic. January 12th and 16th may be needed as travel days.*);
- Train the Trainer weekend in Washington, DC (**July TBD, 2023**) (*We expect to convene this retreat in person and travel expenses will be provided. However, this training may be virtual depending on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic.*);
- Mentoring by policy advocates, litigators, and trainers;
- Membership in a dedicated Ambassadors for Racial Justice listserv; and
- Development and exchange of resources.



### **Applicants Must:**

- Carry a significant youth defense caseload in their jurisdiction **or** otherwise demonstrate current experience, commitment, and engagement in juvenile legal system reform, and strong partnership with youth defenders (e.g., appellate defenders, policy experts in defender offices);
- Demonstrate a commitment to expressed-interest advocacy on behalf of all youth;
- Commit to completing one capstone project of their own design. Past projects have included:
  - Hosting and/or leading a training related to racial justice for youth defenders in their local jurisdiction;
  - Spearheading legislative reform in their local jurisdiction;
  - Preparing a social media campaign related to racial equity and youth rights; and
  - Creating an internship program that encourages college/law students of color to pursue careers in youth defense work. Internship programs may be paid, pro bono, or for school credit. Ambassadors may partner with any regional defender center to launch an internship program; and
- Agree that they will actively participate in all components of the program, including the virtual monthly webinars and retreat weekends.

*Finalists will have a brief thirty-minute interview with members of the ARJ leadership team in November 2022.*

### **Expected Outcomes:**

We expect that the Ambassadors for Racial Justice Program will:

- Empower youth defenders and youth justice advocates with the training, resources, and information they need to fight the over-policing, criminalization, and school exclusion of youth of color through case litigation and systemic reform;
- Grow the number of youth defenders and youth justice advocates equipped to train other defenders on raising race and facilitating difficult conversations about race;
- Raise the level of practice among youth defenders and youth justice advocates committed to racial justice across the country and improve outcomes for youth of color nationally
- Embolden a group of well-trained, diverse youth defenders and youth justice advocates who may collaborate with or go on to become policy advocates, judges, and legislators, to help elevate minority viewpoints, empower communities of color and systemically reform our juvenile legal system.



## Timeline for 2023 Class

Application deadline—**November 11, 2022, at 11:59 PM/EST**

Decisions made—**no later than November 30, 2022**

Orientation and Leadership Retreat—**January 13-January 15, 2023** (**\*every applicant should hold this weekend in their calendars now! Please also account for travel time on January 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.**)

Train the Trainer Leadership Weekend- **July 2023**



## Ambassadors for Racial Justice Application

The Ambassadors for Racial Justice Program will select up to ten attorneys. Please return your completed application along with a letter of recommendation and résumé as one pdf to [inquiries@defendracialjustice.org](mailto:inquiries@defendracialjustice.org) by 11:59 PM EST on **November 11, 2022**, with the subject line: [Last Name] Ambassadors for Racial Justice Application. *Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and decisions will be released by November 30, 2022.*

### **Part I: Applicant Information**

Name:

Preferred Pronouns:

Mailing Address:

Cell-Phone Number:

Email Address:

Gender:

Race/Ethnicity:

### **Part II: Youth and Criminal Defense Practice Information**

a. Type of Legal Practice (Public Defender/Court Appointed/Private Practice/Non-Profit/Solo Practitioner):

b. Employer (if not solo practitioner):

c. Jurisdiction[s] in which you practice:

d. How many years overall have you practiced as an attorney?

e. How many years have you practiced criminal defense?



- f. How many years have you practiced youth defense?
- g. What percentage of your caseload is youth defense?
- h. What percentage of your youth cases involve youth of color? (And what racial/ethnic demographics do you serve?):
- i. What youth defense trainings have you attended and what year/s, (if any)?
- j. What racial justice/racial bias trainings have you attended and when (if any)?

### Part III: Short Essay Questions

- a. Please complete this sentence: “The role of youth defense counsel is \_\_\_\_\_”  
**(250 words or less)**
- b. Why do you want to participate in the Ambassadors for Racial Justice in Youth Defense Program?  
**(750 words or less) Within this essay, please address the following questions:**
- i. In what ways can a youth defender or youth justice advocate implement racial justice arguments in their legal advocacy? What kind of training does an attorney need to effectively address race in their cases?
  - ii. In what ways have you already engaged in racial justice reform efforts in your community or state (e.g., committee work, legislative advocacy, impact litigation, etc.)? If you have not already engaged in this work, how do you anticipate that you will plug into existing efforts or initiate new efforts in racial justice reform?
- c. Diversity: *If applicable*, please describe how your race, age, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other characteristics will add to the diversity of the Ambassadors program. **(150 words or less)**



- d. **Please include a short biography and racial justice quote for a later publication if selected.**<sup>1</sup>  
Please review [our previous Ambassadors](#) bios and quotes for examples. **(300 words or less)**

#### **Part IV: Applicant Attestation**

**Please acknowledge and attest to the following (electronic signatures are acceptable):**

- I. If accepted, I agree to actively participate in all components of the program, including monthly webinars, two-weekend retreats, and completion of the capstone project;
- II. I have reviewed all the components of the program with my organization and supervisor and they support my participation in the program;
- III. I will coordinate with my local supervising attorney, colleagues, and staff to make sure other attorneys are available to cover court and client-related obligations during the monthly ARJ webinars and other ARJ events; and
- IV. I will notify the ARJ program leadership if I encounter any unforeseen personal emergency beyond my control that conflicts with an ARJ event.

Applicant Signature and Date

<sup>1</sup>A headshot and t-shirt size will be requested at a later date.