



**GEORGETOWN LAW  
JUVENILE JUSTICE  
CLINIC & INITIATIVE**

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*\*Not yet barred in the District of Columbia*

November 18, 2022

Dear

Greetings from the almost normal Juvenile Justice Clinic and Initiative. **This year, we welcomed the 50<sup>th</sup> class of students to join the JJC family. As Covid cases began to recede among the vaccinated, the Law Center opened its doors to fully in-person classes and the District of Columbia Family Court returned to more frequent in-person hearings.** Working through the pandemic to maintain a first-class education for our students and first-rate representation for our clients was not always easy. Nonetheless, we managed to accomplish both. Moreover, the Court's experiences with WebEx convinced the judges that not all hearings need to disrupt the lives of our clients and their parents. This year, critical hearings like initial and detention hearings, trials, and dispositions will occur with all people appearing in-person at the Superior Court. Less significant hearings like status hearings take place on WebEx, allowing children to connect without missing school and parents to remain at their jobs and avoid the inconvenience and expense of travelling to court for proceedings that mostly involve just the lawyers. The virtual-courtroom that we created in the JJC office during the pandemic permits our students and supervisors to conduct status hearings from the Law Center and allows other JJC students to more easily observe proceedings, thus enhancing our teaching and learning.

Learning and innovating has always been a hallmark of the clinic. What remains constant, however, is the energy, passion, and commitment each new class brings to the JJC. Our students continue the good work you did while you were here, and their clients continue to benefit from their zealously and competence.

**Good News! We have set the date for the 50th anniversary celebration. Please mark June 1, 2024 as the date you will join us in-person in DC to celebrate the extraordinary accomplishments you have helped us achieve during the half-century of our existence and to gain insights about where we hope to go in the next half-century.**

We continue to be blessed with an incredibly talented team that guides our students as they learn their trade and that supports and trains lawyers from around the DMV and the country. **This year brought some changes in personnel and some reassignment of duties.** Efosa Akenzua, last year's 2nd year Prettyman Fellow, has completed his fellowship and is now working with the Colorado Public Defender's Office. Ayisha Scales-Bruce, our Racial Justice & Juvenile Defense Fellow, has finished her fellowship and has moved on to the Federal Defender's Office in Alabama. Alina Tullock, who will be working with our Ambassadors for Racial Justice Program and other race equity initiatives, now holds that fellowship. Rebba Omer, our Senior Staff Attorney and Lead Program Manager, continues to coordinate our regional initiatives, particularly the efforts of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the Gault Center (previously called the Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center). Marquise Findley-Smith, our 2nd year Prettyman Fellow, is now supervising students along with the faculty, and Kelsey Robinson is the new 1st year Prettyman Fellow.

**Kris continues to tour the country speaking about her fabulous book, *The Rage of Innocence: How America Criminalizes Black Youth***, which received an amazing review on the front page of [The New York Times Book Review](#) earlier this year. Her conversations with judges, prosecutors, and policymakers are forcing them all to rethink their views and responses to the normal adolescent behaviors of Black youth. Wally spent half of last year working with the staff of the Center for Transnational Legal Studies (CTLS). He is now back in the clinic supervising JJC students in New Referrals Court and teaching Clinic and Fellowship classes. He returned to London in May to meet with the CTLS Executive Board and continues to consult on CTLS issues. His interest in the international aspects of children's rights also remains strong, so he continues to work with a coalition to gain U.S. ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. 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 is currently working with a number of coalitions of youth advocates to reimagine safety in schools, end the school-to-prison pipeline in DC, and ensure that our juvenile legal system is developmentally appropriate, trauma-responsive, and racially just. The first article in his forthcoming series focusing on razing and replacing the delinquency system will be published in the Spring in the Loyola University of Chicago Law Journal. 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 DC Superior Court still conducts many of its hearings on WebEx and will continue to do so for some time. **Although youth arrests and petitions overall in the District continue to be near historic lows, Clinic students still have much to do given our holistic approach to representation and the increased needs of our clients as a result of the pandemic.** Moreover, as the Office of the Attorney General continues to focus on the most serious offenses, our caseload remains as complicated and compelling as ever. Students have

conducted several probable cause hearings and secured the release of most of our clients this semester. Although none of our cases has gone to trial yet, several students are currently preparing for potential motions, trials, and dispositions.

**We continue to expand our training efforts, taking advantage of both the return to in-person events and continued engagement in the virtual space.** In the past year, Kris has reached thousands of juvenile legal system stakeholders (in states such as California, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and West Virginia among others) with trainings on racial bias and the traumatic effects of policing on youth of color. In partnership with the Gault Center (formerly the National Juvenile Defender Center), we host a monthly racial justice training webinar for youth defenders and other advocates. The 2022 series focuses on a different chapter from Kris's book (*The Rage of Innocence*) each month. We have learned so much from the experts who have joined us to talk about how we can use data, history, and social science to develop concrete and actionable strategies to enhance individual client representation, policy advocacy, and systemic reform. For example, at the first session of the series, *Defending Adolescence for Children of Color*, Dr. Laurence Steinberg joined us to discuss his research on adolescent development and race. The second session, *Decriminalizing "Play" & Educating Stakeholders on the Value of Play in Healthy Adolescent Development*, featured Dr. Harrison Pinckney and Dr. Rasul Mowatt, experts at the intersection of recreation, play, race, and youth development. You can watch recordings of the entire series by going to the racial justice page of our website: <https://bit.ly/JJCRacialJustice>.

**Beyond trainings, we continue to provide 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 1900 registered members. Launched in partnership with the Gault Center in October 2019, we regularly update its offerings with sample motions and pleadings, annotated bibliographies of research, legislative testimony, and case law summaries. We have recently added amicus briefs filed by Kris and the Initiative, including one in a Michigan case where a police officer used the "n-word" almost 50 times while interrogating a Black 18-year old.

**In January 2022, the Initiative welcomed the third cohort of our year-long Ambassadors for Racial Justice program, again in partnership with the Gault Center.** Through the Ambassadors program, a select 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, and ending the school-to-prison pipeline. Many Ambassadors from our first two cohorts continue to attend these monthly webinars. Our alumni use what they learned in the program as they have gone on to lead defender organizations, be key advocates in legislative reform, and even join the judicial bench. Our 2022 Ambassadors—hailing from California, DC, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, South Carolina, and Tennessee—are hard at work on their self-designed capstone projects. For example, one Ambassador is developing a comprehensive advocacy strategy

to ensure non-English speaking children have access to therapy provided in their native language at court-mandated treatment programs.

Racial justice is also threaded throughout the work of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the Gault Center, housed in our Initiative and supporting youth defenders engaging in case and policy advocacy in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. **In 2022, we invested in the future of youth defense leadership by creating a new Racial Justice and Youth Defense Internship Program.** Three law student interns completed full-time summer internships at public defender offices in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. They split their time between traditional casework and research projects aimed at advancing racial justice. For example, one intern created a Know Your Rights training curriculum for young people that includes information on how race has been considered in the law. Throughout the summer, the interns participated in professional development webinars where they talked about finding and sustaining a career in youth defense from leaders who reflect the diversity of our defender community.

**Locally, Kris and Eduardo are working 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, we have spent the last year fighting to reaffirm the phase out of school resource officers in the District and to pass a number of bills that would require that all cases involving youth alleged to have committed a crime begin in delinquency court; require the appointment of counsel before a youth could waive their Miranda rights; and limit the use of consent searches with 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 of our children – and particularly those who have been most marginalized – are treated as *our* children.

**Much of our work cannot continue without your support.** Your generosity is even more important as we continue to expand our activities to help more children. While Georgetown Law and a number of local foundations continue to support the Clinic and some of the Initiative's projects, foundations are receiving more requests for assistance than they have in the past, reducing our ability to tap into those resources. Thank you to those of you who were able to provide extra funds during our Giving Day, and 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 continue to use all of those gifts to support a staff position in the Initiative. Your help, especially at this time of year, is crucial for us to continue that work.

**With new opportunities and great needs before us, we invite you to partner with us again. 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. You can donate using the enclosed envelope or by visiting: [give.georgetown.edu/juvenile-justice](https://give.georgetown.edu/juvenile-justice).**

As 2022 draws to a close, we reflect again on our work and realize that we gain many important lessons each year. We are even more acutely aware of the unprecedented suffering that people in America and all over the world have endured again this year. Wars are raging, the planet

is suffering, and the needs of children around the world remain neglected. However, those challenges serve to redouble our resolve to fight on, even in the face of the rise of alt-right terrorism, illegitimate restrictions on voting, racial and ethnic discrimination, and world-wide attacks on democratic principles. We understand that this existential uncertainty places a strain on our students as they try to do our important work. They help their clients face the difficulty of poverty and the crisis that arises with an arrest or expulsion while worrying about their own health and welfare and that of their families and friends and the country. We try to bring new strategies to help our students and their clients face those challenges with resilience and hope. We hope you and your family and friends are finding those strategies as well.

**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 preparing to celebrate 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 continued health crisis and our political morass.

We wish you the best for the holidays and for the future. **We also look forward to seeing you on June 1, 2024 in DC for the JJC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.**

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 website.