



Ambassadors for Racial Justice 2024

Georgetown Law Juvenile Justice Initiative
The Gault Center: Defenders of Youth Rights



Ambassadors for Racial Justice 2024

The Program

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

The Goal

We seek to inspire and prepare dedicated frontline youth defenders and youth justice advocates throughout the nation to assume leadership roles and develop strategies to combat racial inequities in their respective jurisdictions, and throughout the country.

The Outcome

The 12-month-program will (1) encourage and support defenders and advocates as they 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.

Oluremi Abiodun New Orleans, LA



Oluremi (Remi) Abiodun is a staff attorney at the Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights. She is a proud, native New Orleanian who practices law where she grew up and where many in her family have been incarcerated.

Remi joined LCCR in September of 2021 as an Equal Justice Works Fellow. She graduated Magna Cum Laude with a BA in Psychology and a minor in Spanish from Spelman College and a joint Juris Doctor and Master of Social Work from Florida State University (FSU) College of Law.

While at FSU Law, Remi worked as a student practitioner in the Public Interest Law Center’s Child Advocacy Clinic, the Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program, and as the Florida Department of Children and Families’ Gubernatorial Fellow.

Prior to law school, Remi spent three years teaching sixth-grade math at a Title One school in New Orleans.

“Until the lion tells the story, the hunter will always be the hero.” It is truly an honor to represent my clients and tell their stories to provide context and to challenge and change the narratives about them as we navigate this awful system. Our children are beautiful, smart, loving, hilarious, fun, and so much more than the worst thing they have ever been accused of doing.”



“When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else’s oppression, we’ll find our opportunities to make real change.”

– Ijeoma Oluo

Rachel Antonuccio Waterloo, IA

Rachel Antonuccio is a graduate of Cornell College and the University of Iowa College of Law. She spent the first five years of her career in private practice in Iowa City, with a focus on juvenile law, indigent criminal defense, immigration law, and mediation. Rachel then served as the juvenile attorney in the Iowa City Public Defender’s Office for seven years, primarily representing parents in Child in Need of Assistance and termination actions and juveniles criminally charged as adults.

At the beginning of 2021, Rachel became the supervising attorney of the Waterloo Juvenile Public Defender's Office. The office represents children in delinquencies, children and parents in Child in Need of Assistance and termination actions, and adult criminal defendants.

Rachel currently serves on the ISBA Juvenile Law committee and the Constance Cohen Juvenile Practice Series committee. She is a member of the Iowa Supreme Court Rules of Juvenile Procedure Advisory Committee and served as co-chair of the Mental Health/Substance Abuse Subcommittee for the Iowa Supreme Court's Juvenile Justice Task Force.

Rachel created and operates the Black Hawk County Drug Diversion Program, a program for people charged with drug possession offenses that gives participants an opportunity to get treatment and get their charges dismissed and expunged.

She is a proud resident of Waterloo, IA, where she lives with her husband, their four-year-old daughter, and their three-year-old son.

Jamie Bennett Worcester, MA



“A democracy cannot thrive where power remains unchecked and justice is reserved for a select few. Ignoring these cries and failing to respond to this movement is simply not an option — for peace cannot exist where justice is not served.”

— John Lewis

Jamie Anne Bennett is the Attorney in Charge of the Youth Advocacy Division in Worcester County, Massachusetts. She has been a public defender for 17 years, beginning with adult representation moving to youth representation in 2014.

Jamie currently supervises three attorneys and a social service advocate in her office. The Youth Advocacy Division believes in great legal *and* life outcomes for its clients. Thus, YAD utilizes its social service advocate to assist in building trusting relationships and making referrals ranging from therapy treatment providers to gym memberships. Youth Advocacy Division attorneys are also trained in education advocacy for their clients.

She is the co-chair of the Worcester County JDAI Committee and the Worcester Bar Association Juvenile Law Section. She is also a Community-Based Interventions (CBI) Subcommittee Member on the Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board. She was a founding member of the Youth Defenders Dismantling Racism committee within the Youth Advocacy Division. Jamie loves to assist with new lawyer training and provides Know the Law training within the community.

Jamie is a friend of the board for the Massachusetts Society for a World Free of Sexual Harm by Youth (MASOC), whose mission is to ensure that children and adolescents with problematic or abusive sexual behaviors live healthy, safe, and productive lives. Jamie graduated from Bowdoin College and received her J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law.

For fun, Jamie loves to travel with her family. She is the proud mom of a 5th grade son, and she coaches him in basketball. She loves March Madness basketball and binge-watching a good show.

Yasmin Davis

New York, NY



“You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world and you have to do it all the time.”

– Angela Davis

Yasmin Davis is an Adolescent Intervention and Diversion Attorney at The Legal Aid Society where she specializes in the representation of juvenile and adolescent offenders in Supreme Court in the Bronx, where she was born and raised.

She joined The Legal Aid Society’s Criminal Defense Practice in 2011 and has worked in multiple boroughs in NYC representing youth and adults in court proceedings in criminal and supreme court.

In 2014, she took a sabbatical and joined the New York State Defenders Association (NYSDA) as the Director of the Public Defense Investigation Support Project because of her passion for investigations. While at NYSDA she worked to increase the quality and quantity of investigations completed in defender offices across the state.

She returned to The Legal Aid Society in their newly formed training unit as the Trainer of Investigator and Paralegal Staff, where she did training for new attorneys, investigators and paralegals.

Prior to practicing in New York, Yasmin was a Staff Attorney at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia where she represented clients in juvenile proceedings in D.C. Superior Court. She is a graduate of CUNY School of Law, where she was on the *City University of New York Law Review*.

Her commitment and dedication to criminal defense started long before law school when she interned at the Montgomery County Public Defender’s Office as an investigative intern while in college, leading her to work as an investigator at The Bronx Defenders for three years prior to attending law school.

Alaina Fahley Appleton, WI



“I am excited to be an Ambassador for Racial Justice because we cannot ignore the cries of the children of color and leave power and disparity unchecked. I want to empower youth defenders and their clients to wield the power of truth and humanity against the power of injustice.”

Alaina Fahley is a staff attorney with the Wisconsin State Public Defender’s office (WISPD). She works in the Appleton trial office, serving youth in counties throughout Northeastern Wisconsin. She received her B.A. in Social Welfare and Justice from Marquette University in 2010 and her J.D. from Marquette University in 2013.

Alaina has been working with the WISPD office since 2013. She has specialized her practice in youth and family defense, representing youth involved in the child protection, juvenile justice, and adult criminal justice systems.

During her time at WISPD, she has presented at annual trainings to certify staff and private bar attorneys to take youth defense and family defense cases. In 2018, she completed the NJDC (now Gault Center) Juvenile Training Immersion Program Summer Academy in Washington, D.C. In 2021, she became a Certified YDAP Trainer. She serves on the State Bar of Wisconsin’s Children and the Law Board, serving as its chair from 2021-2022 and chair elect from 2023-2024.

She views youth defense as a vocation and racial justice as a necessary component of that role.

Melanie Lister

Austin, TX



"It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have."

– James Baldwin

Melanie Lister is an Assistant Public Defender with the Juvenile Division of the Travis County Public Defender's Office in Austin, TX. She received her B.S. from Cornell University in 2008 and her J.D. from Harvard Law School in 2013.

Melanie held a variety of other positions related to children and families before she transitioned to juvenile defense. Prior to law school she was a teacher at an alternative school outside of New Orleans, LA.

Once she graduated law school, Melanie represented parents and children in abuse and neglect proceedings and Child in Need of Services cases. Melanie has also worked as a guardian ad litem in abuse and neglect proceedings.

Since joining what was then known as the Travis County Juvenile Public Defender Office, Melanie has served as an Adjunct Professor in the Juvenile Justice Clinic at the University of Texas School of Law. She is also a certified trainer with the Gault Center's Youth Defender and Advocacy Program and is an alum of their JTIP (now known as YDAP) Summer Academy.

Melanie is passionate about ensuring that her representation is not only driven by her clients, but also empowers her clients. She is always searching for creative ways to bridge the gaps between community organizations, schools, and courtroom advocates in hopes that one day she may work herself out of a job.

Myshell Lyday Missoula, MT



“This hand is not the color of yours, but if I pierce it, I shall feel pain. If you pierce your hand, you also feel pain. The blood that will flow from mine will be of the same color as yours, I am a man. The same God made us both.”

– Chief Standing Bear

Myshell Lyday specializes in the representation of children and emerging adults in the Youth Justice system.

A 2006 graduate of the University of Montana Law School, Myshell along with a fellow group of law and journalism students were awarded the Vern Klingman Meritorious Act Award for their work securing clemency for 78 men and women convicted, imprisoned, and fined under the Sedition Act during World War I. This project was the spark that lit the fire that continues to smolder within and drives her work.

She joined the Montana Office of the Public Defender upon graduating and has worked directly for the OPD or contracted with them throughout her career. Today her work takes her all over the State of Montana defending children and emerging adults charged with criminal offenses.

Myshell has also worked to change the system through successful legislative campaigns including eliminating all fines and fees in the Youth Court, significantly restricting restitution, and eliminating shackling for youth while in court proceedings.

Myshell continues to challenge herself by exploring creative and sustainable solutions for justice involved by examining the connection between the justice system, indigenous cultural responses, and how nature does it within our ecosystem.

Alexandra Narvaez Seattle, WA



“Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.”

– Dolores Huerta

Alexandra (Alex) Narvaez is a Chicana/Latina who was born and raised in Seattle, Washington where she still lives today with her children and husband. She obtained her BA from the University of Washington and her JD from Seattle University. She has been a staff attorney at the Legal Counsel for Youth and Children (LCYC) for the past 9 years.

Prior to that, she was a public defender for 7 years. She provides holistic representation to youth who face criminal charges in juvenile court and youth who find themselves in the child welfare system. She also represents youth in at-risk youth, child in need of services, and truancy cases.

Throughout her time with LCYC, she has advocated as the attorney for youth applying for special immigrant juvenile status and provided civil legal aid to youth who are experiencing homelessness. She now serves as the lead attorney for LCYC’s Youth Access to Counsel team, part of a larger team with the Office of Public Defense. These attorneys provide 24/7 response to youth who are being interrogated by police in the field.

Alex was a participant in the 2023 Youth Defender Advocacy Program’s Summer Academy with the Gault Center and Georgetown Law Center. She was also a 2021 fellow for the Shriver Center Racial Justice Institute.

She is a strong advocate for youth in a variety of system settings and routinely works with community programs to build stable support systems for youth as they work through and exit these systems.

Emma Otterpohl Sioux Falls, SD



Emma Otterpohl is a Senior Deputy Public Defender for the Minnehaha County Public Defender's Office in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

She graduated from Dakota Wesleyan University in 2015 with her bachelor's degree in criminal justice and leadership and public service.

Emma's first real experience with youth in the criminal legal system came while in college when she volunteered with CASA, the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program in South Dakota's First Judicial Circuit.

Emma then went on to earn her J.D. from the University of South Dakota in 2018 and started her legal career later that year at the Public Defender's Office. She has been representing juvenile clients for four years.

"Struggle is a never-ending process. Freedom is never really won, you earn it and win it in every generation."

– Coretta Scott King



“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

Georgetown Juvenile Justice Clinic & Initiative

Kristin Henning is a nationally recognized advocate, author, trainer, and consultant on the intersection of race, adolescence, and the policing of Black youth. She is the Blume Professor of Law and Director of the Juvenile Justice Clinic and Initiative at Georgetown Law and was previously the Lead Attorney of the Juvenile Unit at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia.

Kris has been representing children accused of crime for more than twenty-six years and is the co-founder of a number of initiatives to combat racial injustice in the juvenile and criminal legal systems, including the Ambassadors for Racial Justice program and a Racial Justice Toolkit for youth defenders. Kris also trains state actors across the country on the impact of racial bias on youth in the courts and the traumatic effects of over-policing and hyper-surveillance.

She has received several awards, including the 2021 Leadership Prize from the Juvenile Law Center and the 2022 Women of Distinction Award from the American Association of University Women. Kris has written many articles and other publications advocating for reform in the juvenile legal system. Her recent book, *The Rage of Innocence: How America Criminalizes Black Youth* (Penguin Random House), was featured on the front page of the *New York Times* Book Review and was awarded a 2022 Media for a Just Society Award by Evident Change and the 2022 Social Justice Advocacy Award from the In the Margins Book Awards Committee.



“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.”

Mary Ann Scali

The Gault Center: Defenders of Youth Rights

Mary Ann Scali serves as the executive director of The Gault Center where she works with youth defenders and advocates dedicated to promoting justice for all children by ensuring excellence in youth defense. After working as a summer law clerk for The Gault Center in 1996, Mary Ann became the Deputy Director in 2000 and the Executive Director in 2017.

In partnership with The Gault Center team and youth defense leaders, Mary Ann delivers youth defense training and technical assistance, conducts state-level youth defense assessments, and facilitates cross-disciplinary reform efforts aimed at developing resources and policies to strengthen youth defense and access to justice for all youth.

Prior to joining The Gault Center, 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.



“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.”

Ebony Howard

The Gault Center: Defenders of Youth Rights

Ebony is the Deputy Director for The Gault Center. 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 The Gault Center, 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.



“I’m thrilled to support the 2024 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

Georgetown Juvenile Justice Clinic & Initiative

Rebba Omer serves as Senior Staff Attorney and Lead Program Manager for the Georgetown Juvenile Justice Clinic & Initiative (JJCI). Rebba joined JJCI 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 youth defense specialization through the Gideon’s Promise Core 101 three-year training program and The Gault Center’s Youth Defender Advocacy Program (formerly JTIP) 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.



“I am excited about the Ambassadors for Racial Justice program because youth of color deserve zealous and competent representation!”

María Bardo-Colón

The Gault Center: Defenders of Youth Rights

María Bardo-Colón is the Youth Defense Fellow for the Gault Center.

Prior to joining The Gault Center, María was an Assistant Public Defender in the Juvenile Division of the Public Defender’s Office (Jacksonville, FL). She handled cases in delinquency and crossover (youth who have both open delinquency and dependency cases).

During her time at the PD’s office she was also assigned to Girls Court and Mental Health Court. She also served on Disability Rights Florida’s PAIMI Advisory Council. She participated in the 2019 Summer Academy and is a 2023 Ambassador for Racial Justice.

María graduated from Boston College and The University of Alabama School of Law. While at Bama Law, she worked at Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP) and was a student in the Children’s Rights and Criminal Defense Clinics.

María lives in Colorado, but was born and raised in Florida.



"Black and Brown youth deserve a childhood free from racism and full of opportunity. Passionate, effective advocates like the Ambassadors for Racial Justice help make the vision of a just future, rooted in dignity and love, a reality."

Alina Tulloch

Georgetown Juvenile Justice Clinic & Initiative

Alina Tulloch is the Racial Justice and Youth Defense fellow at Georgetown Law's Juvenile Justice Clinic & Initiative. The promise of true equality, especially for those impacted by race-based discrimination, motivates her work. She received her J.D. from New York University School of Law (NYU).

In law school, Alina participated in the Racial Equity Strategies Clinic and the Racial Justice Clinic, which allowed her to work alongside attorneys from the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund and the American Civil Liberties Union, respectively. Her clinical experiences centered on school desegregation and advancing voting rights. She was a member of the Black Allied Law Students Association's public interest committee, a Diversity & Outreach Co-chair of the Public Interest Law Students Association, and a Staff Development Editor for the *Review of Law and Social Change*. In 2020, Alina was selected as a Paul-Weiss fellow with NYU's Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law. She spent her summers at the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights and the Texas Civil Rights Project.

Originally from South Florida, Alina served in various student-facing and administrative roles at Broward College. She also worked as a research assistant at the University of Miami. While there, she was part of a team focused on delivering evidence-based, culturally-informed therapy to minority youth and their families. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a major in Psychology and a minor in Hispanic Studies.

Ambassadors for Racial Justice

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

