



Racial Justice Advocacy Fund

The Problem.

Black and Brown Americans are incarcerated, policed, and sentenced to death at significantly higher rates than white Americans. They face too many instances of unequal treatment, and even death. Also, racial disparities in our institutions limit voting rights and deny equal access to employment, housing, lending, and education. We must address systemic inequality now.

What We Are Already Doing.

FSU Law has a long-standing commitment to public interest and criminal law. Our Public Interest Law Center as well as our criminal law and civil rights focused programs already serve as a pipeline for students to fight for racial justice.

How We Can Do More.

With private financial support, we can expand the number of students in these programs. This would provide hands-on learning experience for the students, and also provide much needed legal human capital to the organizations that work exclusively on racial justice issues.

How You Can Help.

Contribute to our Racial Justice Advocacy Fund so more of our law students can use their legal skills to fight for racial justice. Selected students will receive stipends to offset the cost of what is usually unpaid work in areas of the law that are crucial to racial justice.

3L Daynica Harley speaks during an August 2020 FSU Law community vigil held by students to honor victims of racial injustice and to commit to a renewed purpose to pursue equal justice under the law.





FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

Recent killings of Black and Brown Americans and subsequent protests have reminded Americans of the unequal and unevenly distributed justice that still pervades our country. Since the 13th and 14th Amendments were passed, we have achieved many milestones in our quest for true equality. Yet, deep-seated systemic racism is still found in many of our institutions. The grotesque images and videos of Black and Brown Americans being killed are the sharpest examples of racial inequality in the criminal justice system. The words of George Floyd — “I can’t breathe” — define the moment and evoke the unquestionable sense of urgency needed to remedy the injustice that remains in our legal system. The inequities are a legacy of our history of racial injustice and can be fought most acutely by those of us in the legal profession. The change agents are our students at the FSU College of Law. Through the establishment of the Racial Justice Advocacy Fund, we wish to help them stem the tide of systemic racism.

FSU Law’s commitment to serving the public interest is long standing. Our work in our Public Interest Law Center, as well as our decades-long externship program with the various Public Defender and State Attorney Offices are examples of how we lead from the front. Our various clinics and hands-on learning programs enable our students to effect change in the courtroom, legislature, and the multitude of state and federal agencies that enforce policy. An example of our expertise in advocating for the marginalized is our Children in Prison Project where our students and faculty are representing the 256 juveniles in adult prisons who received life without parole sentences in Florida. The faculty and students in our programs are well positioned to apply their skills to the racial justice issues Black and Brown Americans still face.

In addition to our own programs, FSU Law has joined the other 11 law schools in the state to form a Consortium for Racial Justice and Social Reform (“Consortium”). Each law school designates at least one student fellow each year to collaborate with other fellows and the Consortium’s partners to work on anti-racist initiatives. Possible initiatives include, but are not limited to, attempts to end disparate criminal sentences on the basis of race, attempts to equalize funding across public school districts, to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, and ensuring businesses owned by people of color have access to loans and state contracts.

We ask for your financial support of our Racial Justice Advocacy Fund. The Racial Justice Advocacy Fund will provide much needed assistance to students at the FSU College of Law who choose to use their legal skills to fight for racial justice. Students will participate in externships, internships and programs in areas where racial injustice have been most prevalent. Examples include the Public Defender’s Office and racial equality focused work with organizations like the NAACP, Color of Change, The Innocence Project, and the National Urban League, among others to effect change through our courts, trial work, and advocacy. The Racial Justice Advocacy Fund will also support our student fellows participating in the Consortium’s efforts throughout the state. Students interested in receiving financial assistance from the Racial Justice Advocacy Fund will apply via internal application and will be selected by a committee led by Nancy Benavides, Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Advancement. The committee will also include other faculty members whose areas of concentration intersect with civil rights, criminal law, and public interest law and up to two attorneys from the private sector.

There is much work to be done to have equity in our institutions. We at the FSU College of Law know we can do our part by leveraging our legal skills and applying them directly to the issues at hand. With your support, we can make positive change.

For more information or to make a gift, contact
Director of Development Hovik Arakelian at
850.644.6357 or harakeli@law.fsu.edu



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425 W. Jefferson St., Tallahassee, FL
32306-1601 | law.fsu.edu