

Racial Justice Institute

2020 Application Information

Shriver
Center on
Poverty
Law



The Racial Justice Institute is a groundbreaking national leadership program, grounded in a commitment to race-equity as an integral and essential part of anti-poverty advocacy. Following six months of intensive training, RJI Fellows join a national network of alumni who are advancing race equity throughout the country.

Shriver
Center on
Poverty
Law

For economic and racial justice

Why the Racial Justice Institute?

Advocacy is at the center of the Shriver Center on Poverty Law's mission to end poverty and racial injustice.

We recognize that effective anti-poverty advocacy must not only address people's basic needs, but also advance equity of opportunity and build movement toward systemic change.

The Racial Justice Institute is grounded in a commitment to race equity as an integral and essential part of anti-poverty advocacy and recognizes that legal aid and public interest lawyers and advocates are key to achieving important systemic changes in their clients' communities. Through a combination of online and onsite learning activities over a seven-month period, the Racial Justice Institute assists civil legal aid and public interest lawyers and advocates in developing or fine-tuning their capacities to engage successfully in racial justice advocacy within their daily practices, organizations and communities.

Following completion of the program, Racial Justice Institute Fellows join a growing network of over 240 advocates working on race equity issues across the country.

New This Year: The RJI Senior Management Track

The RJI Senior Management Track will position leaders in RJI Fellows' organizations to support internal culture change and innovative solutions to race justice issues. See below for more.



Our Vision



We envision:

- A nation where the walls that separate us along racial and ethnic lines have fallen and community has the space to thrive, free from barriers.
- A nation where advocates and community stakeholders work collaboratively and successfully to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for all people, and race is not an impediment to self-determination.
- A cadre of “woke” leaders in the legal community, coordinated to end structural racism alongside the larger racial justice movement.
- An equity and justice movement that takes race into account at every step with a vision of a country in which racially oppressive systems cease to exist.



“For me, being part of the Racial Justice Institute is a very hopeful space.”

–Marika Dias, Legal Services of NYC

What You Will Learn

The Racial Justice Institute is built around a set of core competencies and learning objectives and organized through a seven-month schedule of activities. Through an action learning model, participants apply race equity concepts, skills, and tools to a race equity team project to hone their strategic advocacy approach.

Structural Racialization

“Structural racialization” refers to a framework for understanding the institutional and public policies that, whether intentionally or not, create and perpetuate fundamental barriers to economic and social equality for persons and communities of color and opportunities to white individuals and communities.

Social Cognition and Implicit Bias

Social cognition theory refers to the ways in which the brain takes the things it perceives, maps those perceptions against mental schemas, which in turn affect attitudes and beliefs. When applied to the concept of race, social cognition and implicit bias theory helps undermine the central assumption of the color-blind paradigm: that racial discrimination is always the result of conscious bias.

Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is the analysis of underlying structures, cause and effect relationships, and interdependencies among various parts of a whole with the goal of developing effective, feasible solutions that address underlying causes of problems. In the context of racial justice advocacy, systems thinking is a powerful tool for examining how historical legacies, individuals, institutions, and structures work interactively to distribute advantages and disadvantages along racial lines.



What You Will Learn

Community Lawyering

“Community Lawyering” is a process through which advocates contribute their legal knowledge and skills to support initiatives identified by directly impacted people and community groups that enhance their power. The ability to work across differences and bring together diverse perspectives and interests is the cornerstone of successful racial justice advocacy. In working with communities, advocates must be able to create environments that encourage participation, respect differences and demonstrate a commitment to group initiatives.

Framing and Communication

Framing refers to the subtle selection of certain aspects of an issue in order to cue a specific response. It includes and communicates underlying values, and constructs a lens that shapes the parameters of what listeners hear and feel. Communications includes a broad range of strategies and activities. In the racial justice context, we use communications to further issues, big ideas, specific policies, organizations, fundraising, etc.

Multi-Forum Advocacy

Racial justice advocates utilize a full range of legal and non-legal advocacy tools—including legislative and policy advocacy, litigation, community education, public relations, among others -- to achieve racial equity goals.

Organizational Alignment and Leadership Development

To successfully advance a racial justice advocacy agenda, advocates must be able to articulate a compelling race equity vision and build alignment with this vision and associated action steps within their organizations and communities.

Program Benefits

Participants in the Racial Justice Institute program develop capacity in each of the core competencies. Specifically, they learn how to:

- Utilize systems analysis tools to identify root causes of and proposed solutions to race-equity issues.
- Construct and carry out a litigation strategy in order to identify, obtain, analyze and present evidence of racial disparities.
- Identify multiple advocacy approaches and apply these in complementary ways in order to achieve race-equity goals.
- Utilize a range of skills to counteract implicit bias.
- Craft and communicate an effective race-equity message that successfully reaches diverse audiences.
- Work with their organizations to assess their internal capacities to successfully carry out race-equity work.
- Identify and propose race-equity practices to strengthen their organizations' race-equity work across all substantive practice areas.
- Design and implement a plan for addressing race-equity issues in their communities.



Program Schedule



The Racial Justice Institute takes place over seven months, from April through October 2020. Programming is delivered in person and online through the Shriver Center's online campus. Fellows will be expected to devote approximately 10 hours per week to learning activities.

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| February 28 | Application deadline |
| April 6 | Selected Fellows notified |
| April 13 | Registration fee, bios, and headshots due |
| April 22 | Orientation of 2020 RJI Fellows |
| April 28 | RJI Senior Management Track Orientation |
| Weeks of
May 13,
20, 27 | Online activities to introduce RJI Fellows to the core competencies of race equity work |
| June 10-11 | Senior Management Track onsite in Chicago |
| June 23-26 | RJI Fellows onsite training in Chicago |
| July 9,
August 6,
October 8 | Two-hour online sessions for Senior Management Track |
| July 23,
August 20,
September 24,
October 22 | Two-hour sessions for RJI 2020, plus discussion forums, facilitated peer support groups, and coaching from seasoned racial justice advocates to help each race equity team develop its project. |



Applications are due on February 28, 2020
Visit povertylaw.org/rji to apply

Who Should Apply



Applications to the Racial Justice Institute are invited from racial equity teams that include at least one legal aid or other public interest lawyer serving low-income people or communities of color.

Teams can be organized as:

- a minimum of 2-3 individuals working in a single organization, including at least 1 managerial and 1 front-line advocacy staff person; or
- individuals from more than one organization, including representatives from 2 or more organizations within a state or region.



Team members should apply individually but indicate in the application that they want to be considered as a team. We do not accept applications from individual advocates. There is no application fee.



“The Racial Justice Institute gave me the confidence and framework to more clearly understand and boldly speak on issues through a racial justice lens.”

–Candace Moore, Chief Equity Officer, City of Chicago

Selection Process



Fellows will be selected based on a variety of factors, including experience, proposed equity team project, racial and geographic diversity and capacity. Priority will be given to applicants who meet the following criteria:

- Significant opportunities for individual and team learning and success with race-equity initiatives as demonstrated by strong support from sponsoring organizations and community partners.
- Demonstrated commitment and capacity to fully participate in the six-month peer-learning and collaborative action process.

The registration fee for selected fellows is \$2,500 per person.

Hotel and travel for the onsite portion of the training is not included in this fee.



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New This Year: The RJI Senior Management Track

Organizational support of RJI Fellows is a critical component to the development of successful race equity initiatives.

To increase the likelihood of sustained race equity advocacy and the support of organizational leadership beyond the seven-month training program, the Racial Justice Institute introduces the new RJI Senior Management Track, a focused intensive for organizational leadership that will run concurrent to RJI 2020.

The RJI Senior Management track will position organizational leaders to support both internal culture change and innovative solutions to race justice issues faced by the unique communities RJI Fellows and their programs serve.

If you are selected as a 2020 RJI Fellow, two members of your organizational leadership will be eligible to participate in the RJI 2020 Senior Management Track.

Your leadership can expect:

- A two-day leadership training intensive with a more in-depth focus on our seven core competencies, taking place onsite in Chicago, Illinois, on June 10-11, 2020.
- Case examples from RJI Fellows successfully applying race equity concepts and skills in their communities.
- Three monthly skill-building online workshops facilitated by the RJI faculty and coaches.
- Peer-to-peer conversations with other legal aid leaders facing similar challenges.

The RJI Senior Management Track is ideal for Executive Directors, Advocacy and Litigation Directors, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officers. Following the program, your leadership will have access to the supports and resources offered through the RJI Network, including our listservs, online repository featuring webinar recordings and files, as well as ongoing learning webinars and subject matter groups.

The registration fee for the RJI Senior Management Track is \$1,200.