

Racial Justice Institute

2021 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 seven 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 client 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 nearly 300 advocates working on race equity issues across the country.

“Our fellowship with the Racial Justice Institute during this critical time has encouraged us to be bold. It has given me hope that we could do something transformative.”
–Aisha Edwards, MacArthur Foundation



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 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.



Watch our video at povertylaw.org/rji



**“RJI was amazing. It gave us tools to have conversations with people about race and anti-racism work.”
–Whitney Knox Lee, Georgia Legal Services Program**

What You Will Learn

The Racial Justice Institute is built around a set of core competencies and learning objectives 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



RJI 2021 takes place over seven months, from April through October. Because of COVID-19, RJI 2021 programming will be delivered through the Shriver Center's online campus with no onsite, in-person sessions. Fellows will be expected to devote approximately 10 hours per week to learning activities.

January 20

RJI Open House webinar

February 26

Application deadline

March 23

Selected Fellows notified

April 2

Registration fee, bios, and headshots due

April 21

Orientation of 2021 RJI Fellows

May 12, 19, 26

Part 1: Online weekly activities to introduce RJI Fellows to the core competencies of race equity work

**June 16, 30
& July 14**

Part 2: Continuation of online activities every other week to dive deeper into the concepts and introduce additional skills and tools

**July 22,
August 26,
September 23,
October 21**

Part 3: Ongoing two-hour online sessions, plus discussion forums, facilitated peer groups, and coaching from seasoned racial justice advocates to help each race equity team develop its project.



Applications are due on February 26, 2021
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 and/or one representative from a partner or community-based organization; 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 seven-month peer-learning and collaborative action process.

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



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