

Amanda Oren, Esq. - Amanda's legal career has been dedicated to assisting traditionally underserved populations either through direct client services or through policy reform. After graduating from CUNY Law School in 2001, and being admitted into the bar in 2002, Amanda began her professional trajectory advocating for children with autism who had been denied a meaningful education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). After relocating to Rochester, New York, she represented clients in civil rights matters and employment law including litigating racial discrimination, gender discrimination and false imprisonment cases. Amanda served as a Monroe County public defender representing indigent clients in criminal and family court. She then undertook policy work in Albany implementing reforms of New York's public defense system. In April 2020, Amanda returned to Monroe County and began as the supervising attorney of the Children's Services Unit for the Monroe County Law Department, which provides legal representation to Monroe County's Department of Human Services, Child and Family Services Division.

Angela Olivia Burton, Esq. - Prior to joining the Office of Justice Initiatives as Special Counsel for Interdisciplinary Matters, Angela served as the first Director for Quality Enhancement, Parent Representation, at the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services. She received her B.S. from Cornell University in 1981 and her J.D. from New York University School of Law in 1991. Admitted to the NYS bar in 1992, Angela has taught courses in lawyering, constitutional law, family law, and children's rights, with a focus on the child welfare/child protection system at New York University School of Law, Syracuse University College of Law, and the City University of New York (CUNY) school of Law. She works with numerous national and local organizations, with a particular emphasis on supporting the leadership of people with lived experience.

Angeline Montauban – Ms. Montauban has been an anti-family regulation activist for the last ten years. Through her experiences and activism, she has come to the conclusion that abolition is the answer to solving the current carceral state of the child welfare system. She has recently published an article in the Columbia University Law School, Journal of Race and Law in 2020 and participated as a panelist with Dorothy Roberts at the Toll Symposium at the University of Pennsylvania in 2019. She was recently a consultant for the American Academy of Pediatrics, impacting their recent racial equity initiatives. She holds a Bachelor's of Arts degree from Hunter College and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts degree in American History from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History at Gettysburg College. To her, children's well-being translates into children being afforded the opportunity to be nurtured, raised, and supported by their parents, family members and community. She is hopeful that one day the government will limit its interventions into the lives of families.

Blessins Brown – Blessins was born on December 2, 2003. She is the youngest child of five. She entered the foster care system at the age of two with two of her siblings. At the age of five her and two of her siblings were adopted together. At the age of 14, Blessins entered the foster care system due to neglect. Growing up although Blessins never truly felt she belonged or saw what family really was, she got a glimpse of what family was supposed to be like. She felt welcome in every foster home, she felt safe, she felt loved, free, happy, satisfied and motivated enough to be the best version of herself.

Christine Bruno - Christine Bruno is a Litigation and Training Supervisor at the Center for Family Representation (CFR). She started at CFR in 2007 as a staff attorney, became a Litigation Supervisor in 2012, and the Litigation and Training Supervisor in 2016. At CFR, she coordinates and conducts internal and external Family Defense training on interdisciplinary parent representation. She was active in the development of self-care routines for the staff. She also participates in the DEIB Training Committee and the Hiring Committee. Before CFR, she worked as a law clerk in the Bergen County Justice Center in New Jersey to the Hon. Laura Koblitz. She graduated from the CUNY School of Law in 2006, where she participated in the Battered Women's Rights Clinic and several internships at non-profit organizations, including at the Welfare Law Center, NYLAG and CONNECT. She holds a BA and MA from Montclair State University in Practical Anthropology.

Christine Sabino Kiesel - is an Attorney and Independent Contractor and works as a Child Welfare Specialist for JBS International, where she provides support to the Federal Children's Bureau supporting legal and judicial integration into child welfare policy. Previously, Ms. Kiesel was the Coordinator of the New York State Child Welfare Court Improvement Project. Christine came to that position after presiding over a best practice permanency part in Oneida County Family Court as a Court Attorney Referee; and serving as a Principal Court Attorney to Hon. Frank S. Cook, Oneida County Family Court Judge and Hon. W. Dennis Duggan, Albany County Family Court Judge. Prior to her government service, Ms. Kiesel's practice focused primarily as a Family Law Attorney serving as the First Assistant Public Defender for the Oneida County Public Defender's Office - Civil Division, as well as representing many Oneida County children. She provides training on child welfare topics and supports child welfare system change work across the country.

Coral Mrozik is a Houghton College graduate; she studied Psychology, Education, and Literature to support trauma-impacted youth. She is currently serving in many different roles through OCFS and NY Courts. Coral is involved in the Professional Development Program, on the OCFS Youth Advisory Board, and just finished her work on the Chafee Data Project. Coral also works as a direct support staff and has collaborated with those working on the Child Welfare Court Improvement Project. Her passion to advocate for youth in foster care is a result of her own lived experience. She hopes to contribute to the improvement of the foster system for those who follow behind her. She spends her spare time volunteering at a local community center, being in nature, and furthering her knowledge about how trauma manifests and impacts different populations.

Dorothy E. Roberts - Dorothy Roberts is the 14th Penn Integrates Knowledge Professor and George A. Weiss University Professor of Law & Sociology at University of Pennsylvania, with joint appointments in the Departments of Africana Studies and Sociology and the Law School, where she is the inaugural Raymond Pace and Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander Professor of Civil Rights. She is also Founding Director of the Penn Program on Race, Science & Society. An internationally acclaimed scholar, public intellectual, and social justice activist, Roberts has written and lectured extensively on the interplay of race, gender, and class inequities in U.S. institutions and has been a leader in transforming thinking on reproductive justice, child welfare, and bioethics. She is author of the award-winning *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (1997); *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (2001); and *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-First Century* (2011), as well as more than 100 articles and book chapters, including “Race” in the *1619 Project*. Her latest book, *Torn Apart: How the Child Welfare System Destroys Black Families—And How Abolition Can Build a Safer World* (2022), culminates more than two decades of investigating racism in family policing and calls for a radically reimagined way to support children and their families. *Torn Apart* was selected as a finalist for an LA Times Book Prize and the Society for the Study of Social Problems C. Wright Mills Award. Other recent recognitions of her work include elections to the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the National Academy of Medicine; Rutgers University-Newark Honorary Doctor of Law Degree; Juvenile Law Center Leadership Prize; Society of Family Planning Lifetime Achievement Award; and American Psychiatric Association Solomon Carter Fuller Award.

Dr. Tricia Stephens - Dr. Tricia Stephens is a scholar, educator, and social work direct practitioner. She is an associate professor at the Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work where she joined the faculty after completing her doctoral education at New York University. Her work forefronts the strengths and resilience of Black people of the African Diaspora who have survived trauma and examines the ways in which they have also thrived. Focusing on poverty-impacted, parents of color who have been affected by the American child welfare system, Dr. Stephens interrogates the effects of parents' interactions with the institutions built to serve them and their children. She has published and presented extensively in this area. Her work with community-based, grass-roots organizations has identified the need for disruption in policies and practices that strictly regulate families.

Honorable Jacqueline Deane - Judge Deane was appointed to the Family Court bench by Mayor DeBlasio in February of 2015 and she currently presides over a combined juvenile delinquency and child abuse and neglect part in Kings County Family Court. In that capacity, Judge Deane has Co-Chaired the Kings County Family Court LGBTQ Pride Event Committee, the Teen Day Committee and the Gender Fairness Committee.

Prior to her appointment, Judge Deane had been a legal advocate for young people in the NYC juvenile and criminal justice systems for 30 years. During that time Judge Deane held various positions within the Juvenile Rights Practice of the Legal Aid Society ("JRP") including Deputy Attorney in Charge of the Practice. JRP represents young people charged with juvenile delinquency petitions in all of the NYC Family Courts as well as children who are the subjects of abuse and neglect proceedings. Judge Deane's last position at JRP was as the Director of Delinquency Training and Practice where she oversaw supervision, training and policy development in the area of juvenile delinquency. Judge Deane was also an Adjunct Clinical Professor at New York University School of Law for almost 20 years. Beginning in 2006, Judge Deane developed and taught the Children's Rights Clinic which focused in part on the representation of LGBTQ youth and she previously taught and supervised students in the year-long Juvenile Defender Clinic. Judge Deane was the first Director of the Northeast Regional Juvenile Defender Center for NY, NJ, PA and DE when the Center was housed at JRP. Judge Deane has also trained and supervised new attorneys for the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem and was a staff attorney with the Criminal Defense Division of Legal Aid.

HON. JOAN S. KOHOUT, Acting Supreme Court Justice and Monroe County Family Court Judge, Ret. A graduate of Albany Law School and Skidmore College, Judge Joan S. Kohout was appointed to Monroe County Family Court by Governor Mario Cuomo 1988. After 30 years on the bench, Judge Kohout retired in December 2018.

Prior to becoming a judge, Judge Kohout was in private practice and then represented indigent defendants and parties in the Monroe County Public Defender's Office for twelve years. While in the Public Defenders Office, Judge Kohout handled felony and misdemeanor cases and later served as the supervising attorney for the Family Court section.

In addition to her primary assignment as a Family Court Judge, Judge Kohout had long term assignments in County Court handling felony cases and as a Multi-Bench Judge in Supreme, County and Surrogate Courts. She established the Monroe County Youth Part as part of the Raise the Age legislation and was concurrently assigned to the Juvenile Delinquency Part.

As a Family Court Judge for over 30 years, Judge Kohout handled thousands of cases involving abused and neglected children, adoption, child custody, domestic violence and juvenile matters.

As a member of the NYS Finger Lakes Youth Justice Team, Judge Kohout continues to provide local leadership on juvenile justice issues. She also serves on the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee of the Office of Court Administration's the Family Court Advisory and Rules Committee where she actively advocated for passage of Raise the Age legislation and other criminal justice reform impacting youth.

Judge Kohout is a Past Dean of the Monroe County Bar Association Academy of Law and a current member of the Monroe County Bar President's Commission on Access to Justice, the Assigned County Advisory Board, the Health and Wellness Committee and the Criminal Law Section. She is also a member of the New York State Bar Association and the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys. She is the current Chair of the Educational Loan Fund of the Greater Rochester Branch of the American Association of University Women. Judge Kohout continues to train judges through the NYS Judicial Institute and to mentor attorneys and assist clients through Just Cause.

Judge Kohout is a recipient of the NYSBA Ruth Shapiro Award, the Albany Law School Kate Stoneman Award, the Monroe County Bar Association Pauley Award for leadership in CLE programming for attorneys, the Hanna Cohn Mentoring Award and the Distinguished Jurist Award from the Center for Dispute Settlement.

Jennie Stansfield - My name is Jennie Lea Stansfield. I am a NYS Licensed Esthetician of 24 years and a mother to my beautiful 11-year-old son, Skyler James Bezek, and a trained parent advocate through Justice for Families. I am employed by Lowes in Niskauyna as a PRO Sales Specialist and reside in Rotterdam, NY, where my son and I share our apartment. My enjoyments and hobbies include working out, cooking, hiking, going to and speaking at 12 step meetings both inside the rooms and other institutions. My life experiences that once hindered me have become my greatest superpower and I find so much joy in helping others overcome similar challenges that I once faced.

Joshua Corbo - Josh Corbo's involvement with the child welfare system and courts started at the age of three due to neglect. Although Josh entered the foster care system at the age of eleven, he remembers random individuals always coming into his home to check on his family due to allegations of sexual abuse and neglect. Josh's mother was the steadfast presence in his life while his father was in and out of prison. At the age of eleven, Josh and two of his three siblings entered the foster care system and were placed separately. Josh remained in care until he aged out at 21. Josh joined the military and has gone on to become a NYS court officer. He currently has a relationship with his mother and his sisters.

Joyce McMillan - Joyce McMillan is the Founder and Executive Director of Just Making and Change for Families (JMAC or JMACforFamilies). Her mission is to remove systemic barriers in communities of color by bringing awareness to the racial disparities in systems where people of color are disproportionately affected. Joyce's goal is to dismantle systems of harm – especially the child welfare system (also known as the family policing system) – while creating concrete community resources.

Larry Malcom Smith Jr. - Also known as IAMQUEENS, is an Activist, Organizer, Movement Strategist, Social Justice Leader, and Youth Public Advocate for the Child Welfare System.

IAMQUEENS is also a survivor of the Administration for Children's Services NYC child welfare foster care system, having spent the majority of his life moving between **23 different foster homes** where he endured countless physical, psychological, sexual, and emotional abuses.

Today, IAMQUEENS works to advocate for foster kids and youth, so that **no other child has to go through this deeply flawed and destructive system.**

IAMQUEENS attended his **first protest at age 8** and has not stopped since. By sharing his story and helping to mobilize the community, Larry plans to **impact tangible change for foster youth** and be a voice for this voiceless community.

IAMQUEENS' activist work has been recognized and covered in numerous publications including *The New York Times* and among many highlights, the march for Black foster youth which he helped to co-organize was attended by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Larry's Purpose : To bring attention to the harm caused by foster care, so that no child is abused or neglected by a system that should facilitate homes in which children are **protected, loved and nurtured.**

IAMQUEENS is an award-winning Social Justice Activist and Foster Youth Advocate who has been recognized for his dedication to fighting for marginalized people everywhere.

He has received a Congressional Achievement Award from Congressman Gregory Meeks, a **Certificate of Appreciation** from iRock Charities, two **Citations** from New York State Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman, and was named **Honorable Man of 2020** at the 2nd Annual NY Hustle Awards.

Miriam Mack, Esq. – **Miriam Mack** is Policy Director of The Bronx Defenders' Family Defense Practice. She received her J.D. from Boston University School of Law. Prior to joining The Bronx Defenders, Miriam was a legal fellow at the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, focusing on issues of racial and reproductive justice. Thereafter, she clerked for the Honorable Solomon Oliver, Jr., in the Northern District of Ohio, and then the Honorable Justice Geraldine S. Hines of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts. Miriam holds a B.A. in History from Columbia University.

Shereen A. White, Esq. - Shereen A. White joined Children's Rights in 2019 as a Senior Staff Attorney. In 2021, she took on the role as CR's first Director of Advocacy & Policy. Her work focuses on expanding community and organizational partnerships to collectively reimagine systems impacting youth and families. Prior to joining CR, she represented The School District of Philadelphia in special education matters as an Assistant General Counsel. Shereen also represented children involved in the child welfare system as a Child Advocate Attorney at the Defender Association of Philadelphia. Early in her career, she was a Commercial Litigation and Family Law Associate at Fox Rothschild, LLP.

Shereen earned a J.D. from Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law in 2009. She was actively involved in the school's Inclusiveness Commission and Black Law Students Association and volunteered at local nonprofits, including the SeniorLAW Center and Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania. She received her B.A. in Political Science with a minor in History from Duke University. She is a Board Member and Co-Chair of the Governance Committee for her community library, The Free Library of New Hope & Solebury. Outside of work, Shereen enjoys weekend walks and family movies with her husband and two sons.

Stephen Weisbeck, Esq. - Stephen Weisbeck is a Director, Juvenile Justice Division at The Legal Aid Society of Rochester based in Rochester, New York.

Thalia Wright – Ms. Wright is the Commissioner at Monroe County's Department of Health and Human Services. As the first Afro-Latina Commissioner in Monroe County history, Thalia takes pride in her culture and heritage. Thalia was born to parents who migrated to the United States from Panama, Central America. Raised in Brooklyn NY her mother instilled the values of education and hard work, always reminding her that the sacrifices that her family made to migrate to the US for better opportunities and that this was not to be taken for granted.

Thalia has more than 20 years of experience in child welfare and social services, with an expertise in strategic planning and regulatory oversight. Before becoming DHS Commissioner, Thalia served as the Regional Director for Westchester and Long Island Regional Offices at the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Ironically, after relocating to Rochester from Brooklyn, she was employed as a Child Protective Investigator for Monroe County.

Thalia is a certified trainer in the Safe and Together Model, assisting practitioners with safety planning for survivors of domestic violence. She also facilitates Racial Equity Learning Exchange Sessions and data-driven discussions with local and statewide organizations that are designed to improve outcomes for children and families of color involved with juvenile justice and the welfare system. She also provided sessions on the intersectionality of the work of leadership development, managing difficult conversations, cultural competence, and unconscious bias for stakeholders.

Thalia has a bachelor's degree in human services from SUNY Brockport and a master's degree in organizational management and strategic leadership from Roberts Wesleyan College. She is a recipient of Robert's Wesleyan's distinguished Christian service award and is an alum to several different state and national fellowships. Thalia is the proud mother of Tailah who seeks a career in nursing. In her present role, Thalia works diligently to address the community needs and alternative approaches that will have a sustaining and positive outcome for children and families in Monroe County.
