

FELLOWSHIP
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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
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ABOUT US

The Black Public Defender Association (BPDA) aims to improve the quality of defense provided to low-income communities across the United States by creating and maintaining a national network of skilled Black public defenders who identify with and are committed to the populations that they serve.

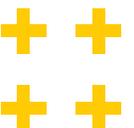
ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

BPDA is dedicated to creating a pipeline for law school students passionate about public defense. We define public defenders as not just attorneys, but also paralegals, social workers, mitigation specialists, investigators, client advocates, and policy advocates. The BPDA Community Engagement Fellowship is an 8 to 10 week summer program designed to connect students passionate about advancing community defense with public defender offices. Fellows play a vital role during this summer internship in fostering connections between the public defender's office and the communities they serve, contributing to trust-building and meaningful outreach efforts.

The program provides hands-on experiences that address systemic inequities in the legal system while empowering fellows and inspiring them to achieve their educational and professional aspirations. Fellows will design and implement impactful projects or programs aimed at expanding the office's community outreach efforts. Examples include "Know Your Rights" training, expungement clinics, and community conversations on public safety. This fellowship is open to ALL undergraduate and graduate students interested in pursuing careers across all areas of public defense, emphasizing the importance of holistic community collaboration.

Host sites:

1. Brooklyn Defender Services
2. Contra Costa Public Defenders
3. The Cuyahoga County Office of the Public Defender
4. The Defender Association of Philadelphia
5. The Legal Aid Society





BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES

BROOKLYN, NY

Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS) is a public defense office representing low-income New Yorkers in criminal, family, immigration, and civil legal matters. For nearly 30 years, BDS has worked, in and out of court, to protect and uphold the rights of individuals and to change laws and systems that perpetuate injustice and inequality. Our legal work with clients is focused on the intersections of these legal systems that disproportionately impact Black and Brown communities living in poverty.

BDS represents thousands of people each year who have diverse, complex, and multi-faceted legal needs. In addition to a zealous legal defense, our interdisciplinary teams of attorneys, social workers and advocates provide a wide range of legal and advocacy services, including for housing, public benefits, education, and employment. BDS staff work collaboratively and across disciplines to deliver high-quality legal services that serve the people we represent, their families and communities.

Applicants should be organized, creative, and compassionate team players. Undergraduate students will have the opportunity to work collaboratively with attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and administrative staff to ensure clients receive the highest quality of interdisciplinary representation.

Candidates whose own background and experience reflect the diversity of Brooklyn's communities are particularly encouraged to apply. Students entering their Senior year are preferred.

The point of contact for this fellowship is Shari Stein, Supervising Attorney and Internship Coordinator, Criminal Defense Practice. She can be reached at sstein@bds.org or visit our website at <https://bds.org>.





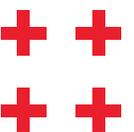
CONTRA COSTA PUBLIC DEFENDERS MARTINEZ, CA

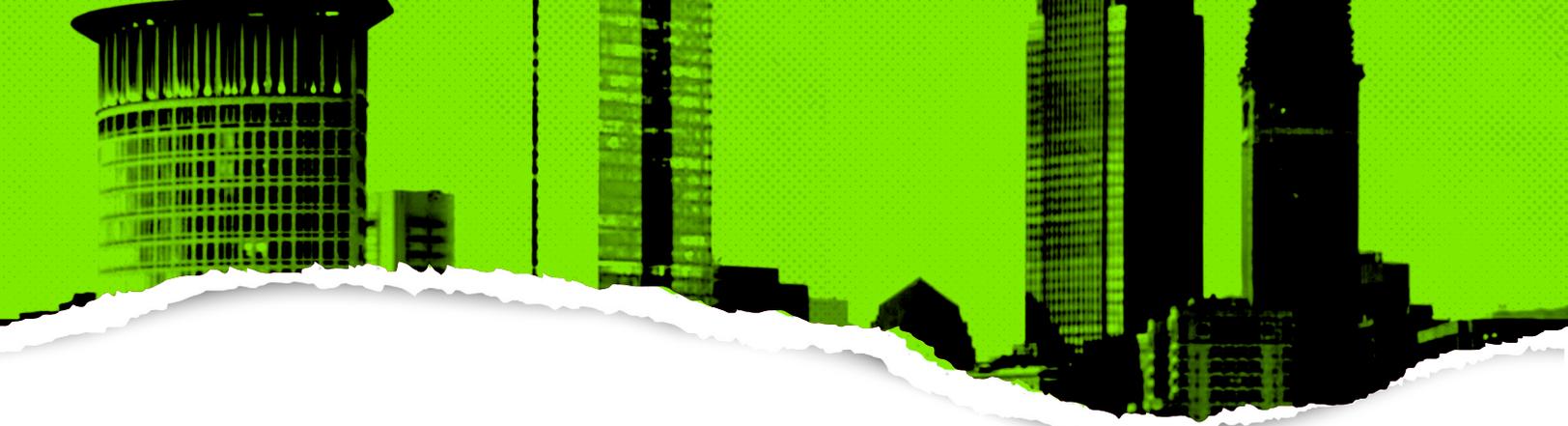
At Contra Costa Public Defenders (CCPD), we are committed to delivering vigorous, client-centered advocacy for indigent individuals accused of crimes in Contra Costa County. Our mission is grounded in the belief that justice is best served when all individuals, regardless of their status, receive the same level of attention, dignity, and respect. Located in the diverse San Francisco Bay Area, our practice spans urban, suburban, and rural communities, making it a unique and dynamic place to practice. We confront the dramatic racial disparities that exist in our local criminal legal process by zealously and successfully pursuing trials over pleas. CCPD brings a far higher percentage of cases to trial than other California counties. Our holistic approach includes a dedicated social work team, immigration specialist, mental health and post-conviction units, and an in-house forensics specialist, among others. We also focus on strategic litigation, police accountability, and racial justice, supported by our Racial Justice Unit and our Racial Justice and Diversity Committee.

Fellows interested in exploring a career in criminal defense will find the program enriching. Our 10-week Law Clerk Program allows BPDA Fellows to assist with case preparation tasks, providing support to attorneys, interviewing clients, assisting our Clean Slate Unit, and gaining insight into the daily workings of a public defender's office. This hands-on experience is complemented by a comprehensive orientation covering key areas of public defense law, and each BPDA Fellow is paired with a mentor attorney to guide their professional development.

Interested fellows should email Ms. Jermel Thomas at CCPDInternships@pd.cccounty.us to apply. We look forward to welcoming dedicated students who share our commitment to justice and advocacy.

Learn more at www.cocopublicdefenders.org.





CUYAHOGA COUNTY OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

CLEVELAND, OH



The Cuyahoga County Office of the Public Defender launched a new Community Engagement Division in 2024 and is excited to expand its work with a 2026 Community Engagement Fellow. This role will support the rollout of community-based initiatives such as expungement fairs, office hours at local recreation centers, informational sessions, and reentry support events. Fellows will collaborate with the office’s new Community Engagement Attorney and Deputy Chief Public Defender to develop outreach strategies, create flyers and handouts, coordinate schedules, and represent the office at community events. Fellows will also help plan and publicize new community office hour programs and contribute to reentry donation coordination and communications.

This fellowship offers the opportunity to engage directly with residents in Cleveland’s neighborhoods, help the office build trust in underserved communities, and support the office’s broader efforts to connect legal services with public education. Fellows will also collaborate with the office’s social media specialist to expand messaging for community events and “Know Your Rights” campaigns.

Our fellow will be paid at an hourly rate of \$15/hour and will report hours weekly to the payroll supervisor. For more information about this fellowship, please contact Leah Winsberg at lwinsberg@cuyahogacounty.us or visit <https://publicdefender.cuyahogacounty.gov>.





THE DEFENDER ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA, PA

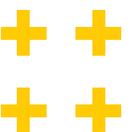
The Defender Association of Philadelphia is seeking a Fellow to support the 2026 session of our Junior Defenders program, a youth-centered initiative designed for middle and high school students from neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system. The program introduces young people to their legal rights, the juvenile justice system, and roles within the court system, while encouraging them to become advocates for justice within their communities. Junior Defenders includes a 6-week school-based series and an 8-10 week paid summer fellowship.

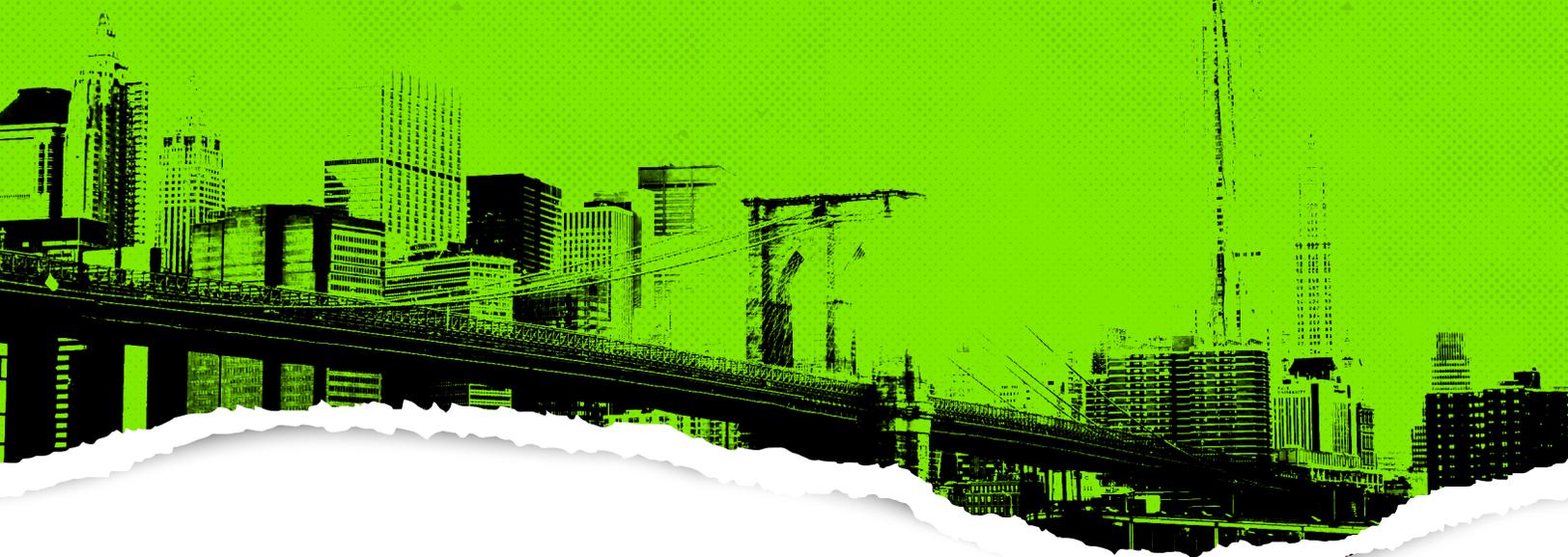
During the summer, the Fellow will help coordinate the Junior Defenders program, working closely with the program coordinator to accompany students during court-watching sessions, co-facilitate debrief discussions, and guide the development of supplemental legal materials. The Fellow will also help coordinate community events such as our Shop Talk Barber Shop series, support social media promotion, and contribute to attorney training designed to improve youth engagement and understanding.

The Fellow will play an important role in helping students explore the various professions that support public defense, improve community trust, and support the long-term sustainability of the program.

Our fellow will receive a stipend; exact details are to be determined. For more information about this fellowship, please contact Guy Lang at glang@philadefender.org

or visit <https://philadefender.org>.





THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

NEW YORK, NY

Direct impact and community engagement drives change and elevates people and communities, and there is no better place to witness and engage in this type of advocacy than The Legal Aid Society (LAS).

The BPDA Community Engagement Fellow will engage in a dynamic, holistic experience that combines an intensive overview and deep understanding of the trial office experience of all three practice areas: Criminal Defense, Juvenile Rights Practice, and the Harlem Community Law Office. The Fellow will shadow staff attorneys from each of the practices for one week at the start of the LAS experience. This is a critical component to understanding what drives arrests, prosecution, and incarceration.

Using that knowledge they obtain in training and shadowing, the BPDA Community Engagement Fellow, in partnership with our interdisciplinary Community Justice Unit, will work to develop and implement a Know Your Rights clinic in one of the five boroughs towards the end of the fellowship.

For additional information, please contact Kawan Clinton at KClinton@legal-aid.org or visit legalaidnyc.org.



MEET THE TEAM

BPDA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP



Mrs. Alaina Bloodworth is a fierce advocate for BPDA's mission. She attended Southern University A&M College where she received both her B.S. in Elementary Education and her Juris Doctorate. Previously, she served as a public defender and the Director of Students, managing the training and hiring of student law clerks and investigators.



Eboni Anthony has spent most of her career working in social impact, supporting local and national nonprofits. Her work centers on closing gaps in our communities and building programs that lead to real, lasting change. She's currently supporting BPDA's efforts to grow fellowships that strengthen community defense.





THANK YOU

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

[BLACKDEFENDER.ORG/COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT-FELLOWSHIP](https://blackdefender.org/community-engagement-fellowship)

CONTACT: PROGRAMS@BLACKDEFENDER.ORG

