

# Clearinghouse REVIEW

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## PURSUING RACIAL JUSTICE

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21ST CENTURY

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A Legal Services Imperative  
Structural Racialization  
Racial Impact Statements  
Racial Equity Impact Analysis  
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Immigrant Rights as Civil Rights  
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Voting Rights  
Racial Justice Training Institute



Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

## From Knowledge to Action: Building Our Capacity as Racial Justice Advocates

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As the authors of many articles in this issue reflect, our society is far from being one where race is not a major determinant of one's life chances and experiences. Glaring racial disparities continue in access to quality education, health care, employment, environmental protection, transportation, and other indicators. Through impressive documentation of the depth and scope of these disparities, the authors show the inextricable link between structural racialization and persistent poverty. The news, however, is not all grim; through success stories and case examples, the authors also offer a wide range of concrete strategies and tools to help advocates promote racial equity and dismantle systems that result in disparate outcomes.

This CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW special issue also poses a challenge: how do we apply race equity concepts and tools to our day-to-day work? How do we develop new and unfamiliar skills—use of racial impact statements and de-biasing tools; data collection, analysis and mapping; framing and communication? And equally challenging, How do we garner support for race equity work in organizations in which there is a “lack of conceptual clarity ... about the interdependence of race, racism, and poverty”?<sup>1</sup>

Working in conjunction with civil rights advocates and practitioners, the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law's new Racial Justice Training Institute is designed to take on these and other challenges.<sup>2</sup> The institute is grounded in a commitment to race equity as an integral and essential part of antipoverty advocacy and assumes that legal aid and public interest lawyers are key to achieving real change.

But the institute also assumes that race equity work, like all advocacy, is more effective when done in partnership with and in support of the people most affected. Drawing from community lawyering principles, the institute emphasizes both the critical legal skills that lawyers bring to race equity work—research, legislative and policy advocacy, litigation, and transactional work—and equally essential advocacy and community building skills: framing and communication, leadership development, community education, and coalition building.

Through a combination of online and in-person learning over seven months, the institute will help legal aid lawyers and other equal justice advocates gain knowledge, skills, and tools to advance racial justice advocacy within their daily practices, organizations, and communities. The institute's goals are to

- increase advocates' capacity to implement strategies to promote racial equity and dismantle systems that result in racial disparities;

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<sup>1</sup>Francisca D. Fajana & Camille D. Holmes, *Advancing Racial Equity—a Legal Services Imperative*, in this issue.

<sup>2</sup>Racial Justice Training Institute Advisory Committee members are Dorcas Gilmore, NAACP Legal Department; Justin Hansford, St. Louis University School of Law; Terry Keleher, Applied Research Center; William Kennedy, Legal Services of Northern California; Maria Martinez Sanchez, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty; Reilly Morse, Mississippi Center for Justice; John A. Powell, University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, and UC Berkeley Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society; Ada Shen-Jaffe, Seattle University School of Law; Camille D. Holmes, National Legal Aid and Defender Association; Todd Belcore and John Bouman, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.

- build networks of advocates committed to and skilled in racial justice work;
- develop a cadre of experienced advocates who will serve as faculty for racial justice training programs and as mentors for others committed to racial justice;
- create a racial justice advocacy resource center that will respond to regional aspects of racial justice work;
- increase individual organizations' and groups of organizations' capacity to support their advocates' racial justice work; and
- move legal services and equal justice advocates nationally to adopt an explicitly race-conscious affirmative advocacy approach.

Briefly these are the Racial Justice Training Institute's core components and structure:

- **Introductory online activities:** over two to three weeks, through the Shriver Center's online campus, participants will be introduced to the institute, to one another, and to core competencies underlying the curriculum and training design: (a) structural racialization; (b) systems thinking; (c) social cognition and implicit bias; (d) framing and communication; (e) community engagement and coalition building; (f) advocacy approaches; and (g) leadership and management practices. Estimated time commitment: 10 per hours per week.
- **Three-and-a-half-day on-site training:** participants will begin to apply—through case scenarios and their own advocacy experiences—concepts and tools introduced in the earlier online segment, with ample time to begin building ongoing advocacy learning and peer-support networks that will characterize the months following the on-site portion of the training.
- **Race-equity teams and initiatives:** participants will use knowledge and skills in daily work and in the advocacy initiatives that teams will pursue throughout the institute. By working in cross-program regional teams, participants will have further opportunities to build networks through which their focus on racial justice advocacy will continue after formal institute activities are completed.
- **Online activities in months 3 to 6:** monthly online sessions, discussion forums, facilitated peer support groups, and other activities to meet participants' needs as they arise will be conducted through the Shriver Center's online campus. These online activities—including presentations and discussions on discrete areas of practice—will enable advocates to apply new concepts and skills to their work and chosen advocacy initiatives. Estimated time commitment: 15 hours per month.
- **Strategic coaching:** on an individual basis, seasoned civil rights attorneys, including Shriver Center staff and institute faculty, will help participating advocates develop their racial justice advocacy agendas, coordinate with their peers, and access the broader community of experienced racial justice advocates.
- **Evaluation and documentation:** participants will share progress and successes achieved through the institute; disseminate stories, experiences, and lessons; help evaluate institute structure and content; and recommend any changes that would strengthen the experience for future cohorts.

With generous support from the Ford Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Shriver Center will officially launch the Racial Justice Training Institute in late spring 2014 with an introductory class of up to forty advocates. More information about the institute, the application process, and selection criteria will be posted soon at <http://povertylaw.org/training/racial-justice-institute>.



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