



ENVISIONING A TRANSFORMED JUSTICE SYSTEM

A symposium organized by Justice Works student leaders

On May 4, 2019, graduate student leaders of *Justice Works*, a student organization at The University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration (SSA), organized and hosted *Envisioning a Transformed Justice System*, a justice symposium attracting more than 150 participants, including elected officials, clinicians, researchers, community organizers, students, and formerly incarcerated individuals. More than 30 speakers shared their professional and personal experiences with smart decarceration and criminal justice transformation in the realms of policy, restorative justice practice, and prisoners' rights.

The conference featured eight panel presentations and discussions, including a main stage event where SSA Associate Professor **Matt Epperson** moderated a lively discussion on “envisioning a transformed justice system” with panelists **Maya Schenwar**, Editor-in-Chief of Truth Out Magazine; **Colette Payne** of Cabrini Green Legal Aid; **Celia Colon**, a public speaker for the Department of Justice; and **Dr. Joseph Strickland**, Associate Director and Senior Researcher of Social Policy and Research at University of Illinois. Panelists shared perspectives on aging while incarcerated, gender responsive intervention approaches, behavioral health and racial disproportionality, as well as ways professionals and community members could enact the vision of a transformed justice system.

At the panel, *Transforming Justice through Art: Reading with Contextos Authors*, guest authors from Contextos, a nonprofit organization that engages in literacy work in El Salvador and Chicago shared their insights, aspirations, and the ways Contextos has helped them process life-changing experiences. Joining the authors were **Debra Gittler**, Contextos Executive Director and **Johnny Page**, Contextos Co-Director of Programming & Outreach.

In the panel, *Pozen: Long Term Prison Sentences and Prisoners' Rights*, the Pozen Family Center for Human Rights led a discussion on the impact of long-term prison sentences on individuals, their families, and our communities. Pozen Family Center speakers included **Alice Kim**, Director of Human Rights Practice, and **Michael Fisher** and **Noelle Petrowski**. Additional panelists included **Raul Dorado**, Parole Illinois and **Kilroy Watkins**, Survivor and Family Advisory Board, Chicago Torture Justice Center.

During the *Restorative Justice Practice in the Community* session, practitioners **Catherine Jackson** and **Elissa Romell** explored ways to engage with restorative justice work as a way to achieve interpersonal and community healing.

The *Aging While Incarcerated* workshop, facilitated by **Edith Crigler**, a member of the State of Illinois Prisoner Review Board, explored issues related to aging while in prison such as accessibility, chronic illness, physical vulnerability, and aging being a natural deterrent for reoffending. She also raised the deleterious effects of long-term sentencing and the underutilization of compassionate release programs across the nation.

Pictured at top: Quinn Rallins, Director of the Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative and *Sharlyn Grace*, Chicago Community Bond Fund at the *Advocacy through Policy and Litigation* session; SSA Associate Professor **Matt Epperson**, **Maya Schenwar**, Editor-in-Chief of Truth Out Magazine, **Colette Payne**, Community Organizer at Cabrini Green Legal Aid, **Dr. Joseph Strickland**, Associate Director and Senior Researcher of Social Policy and Research at University of Illinois, and **Celia Colon**, Professional Speaker for the U.S. Department of Justice and Founder of G.O.D. (Giving Others Dreams) discuss ways to transform the justice system; **Anthony Brown**, AM '20, energizes the audience



Audience members at the opening session; Panelists at the *Police and Government Accountability* session: **Briana Payton**, AM '20 candidate, **Sharon Fairley**, Former Head of the Civilian Office of Policy Accountability; **Trina Reynolds-Tyler**, Harris School of Public Policy master's student; **Joe Ferguson**, City of Chicago Inspector General; and **Yanilda María González**, SSA Assistant Professor; Organizers of the symposium, Justice Works student leaders **Briana Payton**, AM '20 candidate, **Mario McHarris**, AM '20 candidate, **Ameenah Rashid**, AM '19, **Chelsea Hopson**, AM '19

Panelists at the *Police and Government Accountability* session, including **Sharon Fairley**, Former Head of the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA); **Joe Ferguson**, City of Chicago Inspector General; **Yanilda María González**, Assistant Professor, University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration; and **Trina Reynolds-Tyler**, Harris School of Public Policy Master's Student, discussed the need for police and government accountability, the trajectory of their careers, and resources on coalition building, policy advocacy, and research.

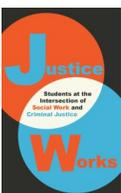
The *Citizenship and Reentry* session focused on the restrictions and collateral consequences felt by returning citizens and the impact of electronic monitoring and lack of housing, job, and social supports. Panelists included **Esther Franco-Payne**, AM '99, Executive Director, Cabrini Green Legal Aid; **Reuben Miller**, Assistant Professor, University of

Chicago School of Social Service Administration; **Earl A. Parks**, St. Leonard's; and **Mark Sanders**, North Lawndale Employment Network.

In one of the most popular panels, *Advocacy through Policy and Litigation*, government professionals, advocacy organizations, and members of the Illinois legislative branch discussed criminal justice advocacy, including strategies to achieve transformation and resources for social workers and community members to support criminal justice transformation in policy and law. Speakers included **Marshan Allen**, Program Manager, Restore Justice; **Sharlyn Grace**, Executive Director, Chicago Community Bond Fund; **Michelle Mbkeani**, Policy Advisor, Cook County State's Attorney's Office; Illinois State Senator **Robert Peters** (D-13); and **Quinn Rallins**, Director of the Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative at Illinois Lieutenant Governor's office.



Carceral Citizenship and Reentry panelists SSA Assistant Professor **Reuben Miller**; **Esther Franco-Payne**, AM '99, Executive Director, Cabrini Green Legal Aid; **Earl A. Parks**, St. Leonard's; and **Mark Sanders**, North Lawndale Employment Network; **Marshan Allen**, Program Manager of Restore Justice speaking at the *Advocacy through Policy and Litigation* panel discussion; **Edith Crigler** at the *Aging While Incarcerated* session



The student leaders of Justice Works thank these generous UChicago sponsors for their support: Pozen Family Center for Human Rights Lab; Charlotte Towle Memorial Fund; Office of Multicultural Student Affairs; Smart Decarceration Project; Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture; SSA Student Association on Aging; SSA Dean of Students Office; SSA Without Borders; UChicago Graduate Council