

**2005 SOROS JUSTICE FELLOWS
Project Descriptions**

Advocacy Fellows

Kenavon Carter **ACLU of Texas** **Austin, TX**

Mr. Carter, a lawyer, teacher and community organizer, will launch a project to reduce racial profiling by law enforcement agencies in Texas. The project seeks to enforce the Racial Profiling Statute of Texas through public education, grassroots mobilization, and selective impact litigation, and by targeting law enforcement agencies that engage in racial profiling or otherwise fail to abide by the racial profiling statute.

Kristi Couvillon **Texas Defender Service** **Austin, TX**

Ms. Couvillon, a lawyer and social worker, will conduct a multi-faceted effort to implement the American Bar Association Guidelines regarding defense representation in death penalty cases in Texas and the surrounding states. These guidelines represent a consensus regarding the minimum defense effort required in every stage of a capital case, including jurisdictional obligations and counsel performance, to ensure the delivery of high quality legal representation to all. The goals of the project are to improve the quality and availability of competent legal representation for indigent defendants through grassroots efforts, direct casework, coalition building, and communications strategies.

Shaena Fazal **John Howard Association** **Chicago, IL**

Ms. Fazal, an appellate defender in Chicago, seeks to change Illinois' mindset about the treatment of long-term prisoners. With the support of the John Howard Association and an experienced advisory board, Ms. Fazal will conduct research, litigation and coalition building that will result in increased opportunities for this population without compromising public safety, and to reduce recidivism as well as corrections spending.

Norris Henderson **Innocence Project of New Orleans** **New Orleans, LA**

Mr. Henderson, an organizer and advocate, will launch a project that seeks to remove barriers that prevent formerly incarcerated people from participating fully in the economic, social and political life of the community. Through community engagement, public and policymaker education, and coalition building, Mr. Henderson will advocate on behalf of and empower this important constituency to demand access to political rights.

Dana Kaplan **Center for Constitutional Rights** **New York, NY**

Ms. Kaplan, an organizer and activist, will launch a project that addresses the expansion of local jails which has accelerated considerably even as prison growth has slowed. By providing technical assistance with organizing and policy formulation and disseminating research, Ms. Kaplan will highlight the role of jail construction in the continued incarceration of low-income and immigrant communities. The project will offer a mechanism for challenging this expansion in New York State as well as assist with similar efforts nation wide.

Alexander Ndaula

National Immigration Project

Boston, MA

Mr. Ndaula, an organizer and advocate, will work with non-profit organizations, universities and other groups to provide support to immigrants who are detained in the rural South. Mr. Ndaula will assist detainees and their families in investigating, documenting and combating abuses perpetrated by guards, develop alliances with others working on immigration detention and deportation issues, and raise public awareness about the plight of immigrants in the criminal justice system.

Vivian Nixon

First Episcopal District AME Church

Queens, NY

Ms. Nixon, an advocate and ordained minister, will launch a project to educate ministers and lay leaders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in five northeastern states about the disproportionate number of people of color in prison and the need for community supports and policy change. The project, Re-Enter-Grace, will develop tools to educate and empower faith-based communities in their efforts to assist people returning from prison and advocate for change. By educating the leadership of African American churches – institutions deeply connected to the communities most affected by criminal justice policy – this project takes a step toward assuring that formerly incarcerated people and their families have the necessary tools to overcome barriers to economic security, social development, and political participation.

Emmett Solomon

Texas Criminal Justice Network

Huntsville, TX

Mr. Solomon, a minister and former prison chaplain will develop a coordinated network of mainstream and conservative religious leaders to advocate for and educate the public about the need for alternatives to incarceration. Having worked for four decades with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and with religious communities seeking to serve criminal justice ministries, Mr. Solomon has developed relationships with a range of religious leaders, as well as policy leaders throughout the state. Over the next two years, Mr. Solomon will use speaking engagements, outreach, trainings, and a targeted media and public education campaign to educate these audiences about the need for change and to build the capacity of religious leaders and lay volunteers to advocate for reforms that protect victims and families but also promote compassion for those convicted of offenses and their loved ones.

Senior Fellows

Michelle Alexander

Stanford University Law School

Mountain View, CA

Ms. Alexander will write a book for a mainstream audience that persuasively argues that the war on drugs and mass incarceration is “The New Jim Crow.” While the book will be provocative and undoubtedly controversial, the goal is not to polarize the debate on criminal justice issues, but rather to inspire a new public dialogue regarding the role of the criminal justice system in our society – a dialogue that is premised on the understanding that mass incarceration is the most important racial justice issue of our time. Ms. Alexander will strive to reframe the public debate on issues of race and criminal justice by providing a new lens through which the experiences of people of color in the criminal justice system can be interpreted and understood. The book will be aimed at two distinct but overlapping audiences: the civil rights community and the public at-large, especially people of color. The book will challenge readers, and all those who learn of its thesis, to reconceptualize mass incarceration as the defining racial justice issue of the modern era,

just as Jim Crow segregation and slavery were once the defining racial justice issues at earlier points in history.

Michele Deitch

Austin, TX

When the Abu Ghraib scandal drove home the need for the outside world to keep tabs on what happens to prisoners behind closed doors, many observers were surprised to learn that the United States is the only western country that does not have a formal mechanism for the routine, external review of its prison facilities. Others have long recognized that independent prison oversight is critical to the enforcement of human rights. Ms. Deitch will examine several of these international prison oversight models, as well as the few examples of non-judicial oversight that already exist domestically, with a view towards broader application (and adaptation) of these models in the United States. Through her research and writing, she seeks to build consensus about the need for accountability and transparency in prison operations, to promote support for the concept of independent oversight and routine external prison reviews, and to provide reformers with detailed knowledge about these oversight mechanisms in order to help them argue more effectively for specific changes in law and practice. She will also organize a symposium that brings together internationally-respected experts on prison oversight, and will edit a volume of essays arising from this event.

Jeffrey Fagan

Columbia School of Law

New York, NY

Mr. Fagan, a Columbia Law and Public Health professor, will critically examine new research evidence or “propaganda” on the deterrent effects of capital punishment. His analysis will identify the potentially fatal technical and conceptual mistakes made by public policy researchers, and show how this new evidence falls short of the demanding standards of policy and science for strong causal claims. His analysis will clarify how such claims have skewed the public’s perception and understanding of the death penalty. Mr. Fagan will write articles for popular publications and policy journals and policy briefs for legislators, policy makers and the media.

Gregory Hooks

Washington State University

Pullman, WA

Mr Hooks, Chair of the Sociology Department at Washington State University, will challenge the widely-held assumption that prisons can contribute to economic growth, especially in hard-pressed local areas. Building on prior research showing that prisons in fact slow economic growth in their host communities, Professor Hooks will probe the factors that cause prisons to drain local economies. He will also test his hypothesis that investments in educational facilities provide a positive boost to local economies by conducting a comparative analysis of the impact of prisons and educational institutions. In addition to pursuing this research, Professor Hooks will travel to communities confronting prison construction and expansion to share his research on local economic impacts.

Abubakr Muhammad Karim

Milton Eisenhower Foundation

Washington DC

Karim will undertake an effort to replicate a model re-entry program in D.C. run for and by men and women who were previously incarcerated, former substance abusers or diversion sanctioned probationers. Karim, a seasoned community economic development practitioner, activist and academician, will spearhead the organizing and implementation process for a set of innovative reintegration strategies that provide sustainability through self-supporting businesses, intensive

life-skills training, higher educational achievements and long-term residential accommodation. He seeks to network this project with similar replication projects now being developed in other U.S. cities, in an effort to provide affordable and practical reentry solutions to policymakers and to change the way average Americans think about previously incarcerated people.

Harmon Wray

Vanderbilt Divinity School

Nashville, TN

The Southern region of the United States – also known as the “Bible Belt” - has long been the home of the nation’s most retributive, ineffective, and biased criminal justice systems and attitudes, shaped largely by the region’s religious institutions. Mr. Wray, a lay minister and advocate rooted in the South and its religious culture as well as in the national network of organizations seeking deep changes in our society’s response to crime and violence, will begin a Program in Faith and Criminal Justice through Vanderbilt Divinity School. He will open a dialogue with leaders of national and Southern regional faith communities to enlist their partnership in developing and implementing an alternative model for what faithful, responsible, and progressive ministry would look like in the context of crime and the criminal justice system. His focus will be on training, enabling, and resourcing them to better lead their constituencies into personal and prophetic engagement designed to elevate the public debate on these issues and gradually help lead to a transformation of the criminal justice system. First-year efforts will also include developing an effective strategy for ensuring long-range continuation funding.

Media Fellows

Fredric Dannen

Austin, TX

Mr. Dannen is completing a nonfiction book on David Wayne Spence, an innocent man executed by the state of Texas. The Spence case is a paradigm of virtually everything that is wrong with the American system of capital punishment: Spence received all the due process to which he was entitled, yet never once came close to getting a new trial. Like so many other capital cases that resulted in wrongful convictions, the Spence prosecution relied heavily on jailhouse snitch testimony and junk science. Mr. Dannen will use the Spence case to tell a revealing story about the realities of the post-conviction phase of a death penalty case, and to highlight the collective failure of the courts to prevent Spence’s state-sanctioned murder.

Dan Hunt and Janet Baus

Monson, MA

Mr. Hunt and Ms. Baus will complete and distribute the documentary film, “Cruel and Unusual” which tells the stories of transgender women – biological males who have lived as women on the outside - incarcerated in state and federal prisons for men. Although corrections officials are reluctant to place anyone who is biologically male in a women’s facility, placement in a men’s facility puts transgender women at risk for excessive harassment, humiliation, and sexual violence. It is estimated that at any one time that 500 to 600 transgender women are incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons, where they are forced to live as men, among men, and without the hormone therapy those who have begun transitioning physically rely on. Though some advocates have argued successfully that these conditions add up to excessive punishment for the crime committed – a violation of the 8th amendment protection from cruel and unusual punishment – the voices of the vast majority of transgender women in prison are not heard. “Cruel and Unusual” will take us into the lives of this much marginalized and misunderstood population, in order to better understand their experiences and struggles.

Joe Loya**Oakland, CA**

Mr. Loya will author *The Parole of Buddha Lobo*, a memoir of his first five years out of prison. The book will include correspondence and conversations between Mr. Loya and incarcerated men over the past eight years, revealing the struggles prisoners have with conceiving new beginnings, with rage, and with feelings of helplessness. Mr. Loya will not only write about the external obstacles and dramas associated with release from prison—job hunts, housing, reestablishing ties with family—but will also discuss his personal struggle to live a legal, morally upright life and the resistance he encountered within his own imagination. The memoir will end with him picking up a friend from prison and the conversation they shared about freedom over breakfast.

Annie Sundberg and Rickie Stern**New York, NY**

Ms. Sundberg and Ms. Stern will complete and distribute the documentary film, "The Trials of Darryl Hunt" is the culmination of ten years of research and filming. In 1993, inspired by claims of injustice and police conspiracy, filmmakers Sundberg and Stern traveled to North Carolina to begin documenting this haunting case. The film melds the visceral reality of a murder case with first-person accounts and cinematic imagery, challenging the assumption that all Americans have the right to unbiased justice. Hunt's story - while one man's personal journey - reflects systemic issues of national concern: cross-racial eyewitness identification, prosecutorial misconduct, inexperienced defense attorneys assigned to capital cases, racial bias in death penalty cases and errors in police procedure. By bringing Hunt's harrowing experience to a wide national audience, the film has the potential to encourage social and policy changes across the U.S., as evidenced by the Supreme Court of North Carolina's 2002 establishment of the Actual Innocence Commission in response to highly publicized wrongful convictions, becoming the first state to do so.