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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact:
Michelle Nicolet
312.368.2675

Groundbreaking Program Prepares Advocates to Advance Racial Justice

Commitment to race equity is essential to anti-poverty advocacy

Chicago, IL (May 28, 2014)—With generous support from the Ford Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law (Shriver Center) has announced the launch of a groundbreaking new training program that will establish a network of advocates committed to advancing a coordinated racial justice agenda. Through the Racial Justice Training Institute, groups of legal aid and public interest advocates will develop the skills necessary to engage in creative race-based legal advocacy on behalf of low-income people.

“We cannot hope to advance justice and opportunity for low-income people without recognizing the role that race plays in perpetuating poverty,” said John Bouman, President of the Shriver Center. “The Racial Justice Training Institute will give legal advocates the tools to identify race-based inequities and to effect broad-based change on behalf of low-income people of color.”

The inaugural class of trainees, selected from a pool of nationwide applicants, serves a diverse population of clients and includes 38 attorneys from 19 organizations in 11 states. Utilizing a team approach to learning activities, trainees will participate in a six-month program that will include interactive webinars and small group meetings conducted through the Shriver Center’s online campus, as well as a four-day in-person session hosted by Loyola University Chicago School of Law. An opening reception in Chicago will feature remarks from Professor John Powell, Executive Director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at the University of California-Berkeley, and Thomas Saenz, President and General Counsel of MALDEF, the nation’s leading Latino legal civil rights organization.

“The goal of the Racial Justice Training Institute is to move legal services and equal justice advocates nationally to adopt explicitly race-conscious affirmative advocacy,” said Ellen Hemley, Vice President of Training Programs at the Shriver Center. “As we reflect on the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, it is clear that there is still work to do. Legal aid and public interest lawyers have an important role to play in moving racial justice forward, and the Racial Justice Training Institute will galvanize that effort.”
2014 Racial Justice Training Institute Fellows
Daryl Atkinson, Southern Coalition for Social Justice, NC
Sheila Burton, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation, IL
Marqus Cole, Prairie State Legal Services, IL
Melanie DeRousse, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, MO
Antionette Dozier, Western Center on Law & Poverty, CA
Anita Earls, Southern Coalition for Social Justice, NC
Paul Estuar, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, CA
Cassie Fleming, DNA People’s Legal Services, NM
Sienna Fontaine, Legal Services NYC, NY
Debra Gardner, Public Justice Center, MD
Navneet Grewal, Western Center on Law & Poverty, CA
Nena Gutierrez, New Mexico Legal Aid, NM
Holly Handler, Alaska Legal Services Corporation, AK
Pavita Krishnaswamy, Legal Services NYC, NY
Jacki Langum, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, MO
Carla Lee, King County Prosecuting Attorneys Office, WA
Maribel Martinez-Gunter, Legal Services NYC, NY
Maria Martinez-Sanchez, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, NM
Kimberly Merchant, Mississippi Center for Justice, MS
Candace Moore, Loyola Law Fellows Program, IL
Maurice Muir, Legal Services NYC, NY
John Nethercut, Public Justice Center, MD
Beth Orlansky, Mississippi Center for Justice, MS
Bethany Palmer, DNA People’s Legal Services, AZ
Nicole Perez, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, CA
Charles Petrof, LAF, IL
Jeanne Philips-Roth, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, MO
Camilla Roberson, Public Justice Center, MD
Jessica Schneider, Chicago Lawyers Committee, IL
Johane Severin, Legal Services NYC, NY
Gillian Sonnad, Central California Legal Services, CA
Gail Stone, King County Executive Office, WA
Sydney Tarzwell, Alaska Legal Services Corporation, AK
Amy Taylor, Legal Services NYC, NY
Stephen Teague, Mississippi Center for Justice, MS
Ericka Turley, King County Department of Public Defense, WA
Kyanna Williams, Legal Services of Northern California, CA
Lauren Winkler, DNA People’s Legal Services, AZ
The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law provides national leadership in advancing laws and policies that secure justice to improve the lives and opportunities of people living in poverty. We specialize in practical solutions. Through policy development, advocacy, litigation, consulting, training, and communications, we are building the national capacity of people living in poverty by representing them directly and by supporting and enhancing the capacity of other public interest lawyers who serve them. For more information, visit http://povertylaw.org.