

OUR MISSION

We aim to transform the criminal legal system by building a movement of public defenders who provide equal justice for marginalized communities. The 3-year CORE 101 Program is at the center of this effort to create zealous, client-centered change agents.

The CORE 101 program has three distinct goals: to instill a client-centered value system, to provide attorneys with top notch training, and to build a network of public defenders who seek to change the field of public defense.

OUR MODEL

1) Values

The CORE 101 program curriculum teaches a client-centered approach to indigent defense and seeks to promote this vision across the criminal legal system.



2) Skills

Talented and experienced public defenders from around the country serve as faculty to teach CORE 101 students the skills necessary to provide excellent representation.

3) Community

The CORE 101 community provides defenders with a support network of like-minded change-makers. This growing community serves as a catalyst to strengthen the legal system by elevating the quality of representation, amplifying clients' voices, and reducing the harmful impact of mass incarceration.



Class of '24



Class of '23

It was sharing those reasons of why we came to this work with 24 strangers, that inspired me to want to go harder and be better at my job"

-Darren Chester, CORE 101 Class of 2023

ORIENTATION WEEKEND

The CORE 101 Program begins with a three-day orientation weekend in the winter to welcome the new class of public defenders and introduce them to the fundamentals of Gideon's Promise.

SUMMER INSTITUTE

CORE 101 class members return in July for a two-week intensive training. Much of training takes place in workshops with low student-to-faculty ratios and emphasizes hands-on learning. Participants are on their feet practicing in-court simulations and role-playing exercises. Faculty members facilitate discussions about each exercise.

In addition to providing top-notch criminal defense instruction, Summer Institute is intended to instill a sense of public defender pride among attendees, while building community among new public defenders and between new public defenders and their more experienced counterparts.

To this end, each incoming CORE 101 member is assigned a mentor who has graduated from the CORE 101 program.



MENTORSHIP

The CORE 101 mentorship program is a crucial component of the Gideon's Promise community. CORE 101 graduates who sign up to mentor new CORE 101 members receive mentoring and advanced trial skills training. Thus, the mentorship program allows alumni to stay involved in the community while providing incoming members with invaluable support and guidance.

In 2024, 100% of the graduating CORE 101 class expressed an interest in mentoring the incoming class.

“The mentorship gives me someone to speak/vent to outside of my office that knows what I go through as a [public defender]...”

- CORE 101 Class of 2022 Mentee

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



Landon Antelman

Attorney at Gila River Indian Community: Defense Services, Former Volunteer with The Justice Project.



Dehlia Umunna

Deputy Director of Harvard Law School's Criminal Justice Institute (CJI), Former Trial Attorney at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (PDS).

RETURNER WEEKENDS

Following the two-week Summer Institute, CORE 101 members return for four subsequent weekend training and community celebration conferences, held every six months. These weekends provide an opportunity to reconnect with CORE 101 classmates and forge new connections with CORE 101 members from different classes while enhancing critical litigation skills.

ATTORNEYS SELECT FROM A VARIETY OF CLE SESSIONS, SUCH AS:

1

"Our Clients, Their Stories: Preparing Clients to Testify"

2

"Storytelling Through Jury Instructions"

3

"Bargaining: Negotiations in Criminal Court"

4

"Strategies for Establishing Trust and Building Meaningful Relationships with Black Male Clients"

5

"Humanizing Clients While Maintaining Healthy Boundaries"

6

"Litigating a DNA Case"

7

"Public Defender, Zen Optional"

AFTER CORE 101



The most recent graduates of the CORE program included 31 public defenders from 13 states across the country.

Upon graduating from the CORE 101 Program, alumni can maintain involvement in the Gideon's Promise movement through the Trainer Development Program, Leadership Summit Trainings, and Mentorship. These programs convene yearly or bi-yearly, and allow the Gideon's Promise community to maintain connections with each other while bringing the Gideon's Promise model with them.

TRAINER DEVELOPMENT

The Trainer Development Program prepares supervisors in our partner offices to support CORE 101 trainees by providing them with coaching and skill-building techniques grounded in client-centered principles.

LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Partner offices send emerging and established leaders to learn and practice management skills and share strategies for shaping office cultures. These leaders will use their training to promote a client-centered mentality within their offices.

Ultimately, CORE 101 graduates create systemic change as they assume leadership positions at offices across the country, bringing their Gideon's Promise training and philosophy with them:

LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT



ZANELE NGUBENI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GIDEON'S PROMISE



MARTESHA JOHNSON
CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER,
NASHVILLE DEFENDERS



MELANIE FOOTE
MANAGER OF THE EDUCATION AND
STRATEGIC PLANNING BRANCH,
KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC
ADVOCACY

To learn more, visit www.gideonspromise.org or follow us on social media: