

SANTA CLARA LAW

RACIAL JUSTICE SYMPOSIUM

SPEAKER BIOS



Karina Alvarez

Racial Justice Attorney, Santa Clara County Public Defender's Office

Karina Alvarez is the Racial Justice Attorney for the Santa Clara County Public Defender's Office. She graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara and Golden Gate University, School of Law. She is passionate about public interest work and has worked with various organizations including the Homeless Advocacy Project, La Raza Centro Legal, and Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Currently, she handles RJA data collection, data analysis, expert collaboration, and case preparation including writs and motions. She has been a public defender for almost eight years.



Maitreya Badami

Professor, Cal State University Chico

Maitreya Badami joined the faculty at Chico State in 2017 after a 23-year career practicing criminal law at the trial, appellate, and post-conviction levels. From 2010-2017, she taught and practiced with the Northern California Innocence Project (NCIP) at Santa Clara University School of Law. Prior to joining the Santa Clara Law faculty, she practiced in the Bay Area, serving as a Deputy Public Defender in Contra Costa County, and as a member of the Indigent Defense Panels for San Francisco Superior Court, the First District Appellate Project, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Maitreya obtained her B.A. in Political Science from the University of Georgia and her J.D. from U.C. Berkeley.



David Ball

Professor of Law, Santa Clara University School of Law

Professor W. David Ball works primarily in the field of criminal justice, writing and teaching in the areas of criminal law, criminal procedure, sentencing and corrections. Prior to becoming a member of the Santa Clara Law faculty, Ball served as a Social Justice Teaching Fellow at Santa Clara, a Research Fellow at the Stanford Criminal Justice Center, and a law clerk for the Honorable John T. Noonan, Jr., of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. He graduated with highest distinction from the University of North Carolina, where he was a Morehead-Cain Scholar, and got a second BA from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. Ball is currently Co-Chair of the Corrections Committee of the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Section.



Lara Bazelon

Professor of Law, University of San Francisco School of Law

Lara Bazelon is a professor at the University of San Francisco, where she holds the Barnett Chair in Trial Advocacy and directs the criminal and racial justice clinics. Her scholarship focuses on reforms to the criminal legal system and alternatives to that system that include restorative justice. Previously, she was a visiting clinical professor at Loyola Law School where she directed the Loyola Project for the Innocent. Before that, she was a deputy federal public defender in Los Angeles. She is the author of three books, and her long-form journalism and op-eds have been published in The Atlantic, The New York Times, The Washington Post, New York Magazine, and The San Francisco Chronicle.

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Mia Bird

Assistant Research Professor, UC Berkeley

Mia Bird is a Assistant Adjunct Professor at the Goldman School of Public Policy. Her research focuses on criminal justice reform and the intersections of criminal justice, health, and social safety net policies. Prior to joining the Berkeley faculty, she spent seven years at the Public Policy Institute of California as a research fellow. She consults widely with research centers and organizations working on criminal justice issues in California. Bird holds a PhD in public policy, an MA in demography, and an MPP from the University of California, Berkeley.



Judge Shelyna Brown

Judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court

Judge Shelyna is a former public defender, who since 2012 held the office of Superior Court Judge at the Superior Court of California in Santa Clara County. Prior to joining the bench, Brown was an attorney in the Santa Clara County Public Defender's Office from 1997 to 2011. Judge Brown's expertise resides in social justice advocacy, public policy development, process improvement, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) development. She is a reputed thought leader and has gained unique perspectives as a Superior Court Judge, a Senior Litigator, a Certified Mediator, and as an Executive Coach. Judge Brown is a graduate of the University of California, Davis, and holds a Juris Doctorate from the Santa Clara University School of Law.



Elsa Chen

Professor, Santa Clara University

Professor Elsa Chen teaches public policy, criminal justice policy, housing and homeless policy, research methods, and American politics. Dr. Chen's published work focuses on criminal justice reform, reentry from incarceration, criminal record expungement, analyses of the implementation and effects of sentencing policies, including mandatory minimums like "Three Strikes and You're Out," and racial and ethnic disparities in sentencing outcomes. Her current research studies policies associated with the de-escalation of mass incarceration and prisoner reintegration into society. Dr. Chen earned a Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles, a M.P.P. from Harvard University and a B.A. from Princeton University.



Judge Ram Fletcher

Judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court

Judge Fletcher brings with him a wealth of legal experience, having served as a trial attorney representing seriously injured plaintiffs from intake to verdict in state and federal courts. Before his appointment to the bench, Judge Fletcher was a Partner at Bohn & Fletcher, LLP, where he played a pivotal role in managing all aspects of the law practice. Fletcher's dedication to his clients' well-being and commitment to excellence have earned him several awards including the Unsung Heroes Award for his stewardship of the Bay Area Minority Summer Clerkship Program and recognition on the Northern California Super Lawyers list. A distinguished alumnus of Santa Clara University, Fletcher obtained his Juris Doctor in 2005 and a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2001.

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Catherine Grosso

Professor of Law, Michigan State University College of Law

Professor Grosso's interdisciplinary scholarship examines the role of race and other extralegal factors in criminal investigations, trials, and the administration of capital punishment. Her National Science Foundation-sponsored project with Prof. Barbara O'Brien analyzed the ways stereotypes influence voir dire in capital cases. A third line of work empirically evaluates the success of death penalty statutes in fulfilling the Eighth Amendment narrowing requirements. Professor Grosso was elected to the American Law Institute in 2022. She also has taught at Birzeit University in Palestine; and the University of Illinois College of Law. She studied at Earlham College and the University of Iowa College of Law.



Arcelia Hurtado

Director of Policy and Training, Prosecutors Alliance of California

Arcelia Hurtado is the former Chief of Ethics, Professional Responsibility, Training, Culture, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Post Conviction Unit/Innocence Commission at the San Francisco District Attorney's Office. She has served as Executive Director of Equal Rights Advocates, Deputy Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Assistant General Counsel and civil prosecutor with the Agricultural Labor Relations Board, and has taught at various Bay Area law schools.



Sujung Kim

Deputy Public Defender, San Francisco Public Defender's Office

Sujung Kim is a first-generation Korean-American and a graduate of Barnard College and the University of San Francisco School of Law. Sujung began her public defender career at the San Diego County Public Defender's Office where she tried over 25 misdemeanor trials in 2 years. In 1997, Sujung joined the San Francisco Public Defender's Office where she has tried over 50 misdemeanor, felony and juvenile cases and handled numerous writs and appeals. In 2019, she joined the office's Research Unit where she is currently serving as the managing attorney. Sujung is a member of the Amicus Committee of the California Public Defender's Association and the Public Defenders for Racial Justice.



Evan Kuluk

Deputy Public Defender, Contra Costa County Public Defender's Office

Evan Kuluk is a felony trial attorney with the Contra Costa Alternate Defender Office and has been a deputy public defender for 16 years. He currently serves as the chair of the California Public Defender Association's Racial Justice Committee. In October 2022, Evan won a post-conviction Racial Justice Act challenge for his client Gary Bryant based on the use of rap lyrics and racially coded language at trial, securing a new trial order vacating his client's murder conviction and life sentence. In May 2023, Evan won a pre-trial Racial Justice Act challenge for his client Eric Windom based on racially disparate over-charging of Black defendants with gang murder special circumstances carrying life without parole.

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Elizabeth Lashley-Haynes

Deputy Public Defender, Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office

Elizabeth Lashley-Haynes is a Deputy Public Defender at the Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office. She leads her office's Racial Justice Unit, which litigates claims of racism and bias on behalf of clients throughout L.A. County. She graduated from Syracuse University with degrees in Sociology and African American Studies, where she did a comparative study of colonialism, oppression, and emancipation in the southern region of Africa. She graduated from Case Western Reserve University School of Law but spent her last year at City University of New York. She is the Co-Founder and Past-President of her office's Women Defenders Association, has served on the Racial Justice Committee and is a Board Member on the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association's Defender Council.



Kerri J. Malloy

Assistant Professor, San Jose State University

Kerri J. Malloy (Yurok/Karuk) is an Assistant Professor of Native American and Indigenous Studies at San Jose State University. His research focuses on the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the ongoing healing and reconciliation in North America. He has over fifteen years of experience working with federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations. He chairs the Indigenous Caucus and serves on the Advisory Board of the International Association of Genocide Scholars. He holds a Master of Jurisprudence in Indian Law from The University of Tulsa and a doctoral degree in Holocaust and Genocide Studies from Gratz College.



Derick Morgan

Law Student, University of San Francisco School of Law

Derick Morgan is a 2L at the University of San Francisco (USF) School of Law. Currently a student in USF's Racial Justice Clinic, he investigates potential claims under California's Racial Justice Act to ensure that people bringing claims under the law have a greater chance to confront racism in their criminal-legal proceedings. Previously, he was the Senior Policy Associate for the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. There, he led the work behind several new laws to bring dignity and opportunity to people in prison, including the Racial Justice Act (RJA) and Racial Justice Act for All. To help empower folks with the law he also developed the Ella Baker Center's RJA Guide.



Judge Risë Pichon

Judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court (Ret.)

Judge Risë Pichon was a superior court judge in Santa Clara County for more than 20 years and was elected to serve as presiding judge of the Santa Clara County Superior Court in 2015 and 2016. Prior to this, she served as a municipal court judge from 1984 to 1998 and as a court commissioner from 1983 to 1984. Judge Pichon has a well-earned reputation for fairness, credibility and consistency, as evidenced by the many honors and awards she has received during her career, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Santa Clara County Trial Lawyers Association in 2019 and the Legendary Champions of Justice Award from the California Association of Black Lawyers in 2018. She earned her B.S. in mathematics and J.D. from Santa Clara University School of Law.

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Deepak Premkumar

Research Fellow, Public Policy Institute of California

Deepak Premkumar is a research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, where he specializes in the intersection of race, criminal justice, and health. Through the lens and tools of an economist, his recent work examines the broader effects of police use-of-force and social costs of policing. He aims to provide an empirical guide to understand the determinants of disparities in the legal and health systems, while investigating policies to alleviate them. His research has received support from Horowitz Foundation, and the Center for the Study of Law and Society, where he was a Berkeley Empirical Legal Studies Fellow from 2018–2019. He received his PhD in agricultural and resource economics from University of California, Berkeley.



Lisa Romo

Senior Deputy Public Defender, Office of the State Public Defender

Lisa Romo first joined the Office of the State Public Defender (OSPD) in 1989. She was a staff attorney at the California Appellate Project (CAP) from 1995-1999. Lisa was in private practice between 1999 and 2013, representing capital clients in post-conviction litigation at the state and federal levels, as well as juveniles in their delinquency appeals. Lisa rejoined OSPD in 2013 and from 2020-2022 was the Director of Systemic Issues Litigation. In May 2022, Lisa moved to OSPD's IDID (Indigent Defense Improvement Division), where she primarily works on issues relating to the California Racial Justice Act (AB 2542). She received her J.D. from Berkeley Law.



Margaret Russell

Associate Professor of Law, Santa Clara University School of Law

Professor Russell has been a member of the Santa Clara University School of Law faculty since 1990. She has been honored for her contributions to student life at Santa Clara by the Asian Pacific Law Students Association and the Black Law Students Association. Prior to joining the Santa Clara Law faculty, Professor Russell was a fellow at the public interest firm Public Advocates, Inc., a law firm in San Francisco. She served as the director of Public Interest Programs and as the acting assistant dean of student affairs at Stanford University, and also clerked for the Honorable James E. Doyle of the U.S. District Court in Madison, Wisconsin.



Linda Starr

Clinical Professor of Law, Santa Clara University School of Law

Linda Starr is the Co-founder and former Executive and Legal Director of the Northern California Innocence Project (NCIP) and a clinical professor of law at Santa Clara University School of Law. For 22 years she oversaw all of NCIP's advocacy efforts, including litigation and legislative efforts, as well as taught the NCIP clinical course. Before co-founding NCIP, Linda had her own indigent post-conviction practice and worked as a staff attorney at the Sixth District Appellate Program. She clerked for the California Court of Appeal and worked as an assistant district attorney in the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office handling post-conviction matters and as a supervising attorney in the Sex Crimes and Special Victims Bureau. Linda received her J.D. from USC.

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Mikah K. Thompson

Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, University of Missouri-Kansas City

Mikah Thompson is the Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and a Professor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law. Dean Thompson's research centers on the intersection of evidentiary law and race. She also writes on the pedagogy of legal education with an emphasis on techniques for infusing cultural self-awareness into the law school curriculum. Dean Thompson is an affiliate faculty member at the UMKC School of Medicine where she directs a program that educates future physicians and other medical professionals on anti-racism and cultural bias in medicine. Since 2019, she has served as a Tri-Chair of the Missouri Supreme Court's Commission on Racial and Ethnic Fairness. She earned her law degree from Washington University in St. Louis.



Judge Benjamin Williams

Judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court

Judge Williams was appointed to serve as a Judge in Santa Clara County Superior Court in April of 2023. Previously, he served as a Superior Court Commissioner from September 2018 until his appointment in 2023. As an attorney, he worked as an associate at Manchester Williams and Seibert from 2003 to 2009 and then as a sole practitioner from 2009 to 2018. He also served as appointed counsel in criminal cases for both the Northern District of California and Santa Clara County Superior Court. Judge Williams earned his Juris Doctor degree from the Santa Clara University School of Law in 2003. He currently presides in the Criminal Division on a post conviction motion assignment.