



The Ohio State Bar Foundation (OSBF) is proud to host our 2023 Symposium, The Color of Justice: Racial Inequities in the Justice System. Attorneys from the 2022 OSBF Fellows class focused on race-based disparate treatment in the justice system. The Color of Justice will provide panel discussions building understanding around barriers in the justice system, the populations being affected, and opportunities for change on an individual and systemic level.

12:00 Introduction and Welcome by Supreme Court of Ohio Justice Melody Stewart

12:15 Introductory Session with Laura Coates, New York Times best-selling author of *Just Pursuit: A Black Prosecutors Fight for Fairness* and CNN Host and Senior Legal Analyst

Moderator: Karhlton Moore, Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, US Dept. of Justice, Washington, DC

1:00 Panel 1: Bettering the Justice System—Opportunities for Reform

Hear from national policy experts about topics at the intersection of race and justice, how race is particularly impacted by criminal law reform proposals, and how courts can actively reduce implicit bias and other barriers to justice.

Moderator: Michele Worobiec, Founder/CEO Silta Strategy, LLC and '22 OSBF Fellow

Panelists: Brandon Buskey, Director of Criminal Law Reform Project, ACLU, New York; Kyle Strickland, Senior Legal Analyst at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity at The Ohio State University; and Paula Hannaford-Agor, Director of the Center for Jury Studies, National Center for State Courts, Williamsburg, VA

2:00 Grantee Presentation and Break

2:15 Panel 2: Criminal Sentencing—Mass Incarceration and Sentencing Alternatives

This panel will explore how Ohio Courts are implementing science and best practices to reduce over-incarceration and provide access to justice for all who enter into the legal system, while keeping communities safe.

Moderator: Judge Laurel Beatty Blunt, 10th District Court of Appeals

Panelists: Justice Michael Donnelly, Supreme Court of Ohio; Judge Nicole L. Sanders, Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas and '22 OSBF Fellow; Zach Klein, Columbus City Attorney; and Doug Berman, Professor at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law and Executive Director of the Drug Enforcement and Policy Center

3:15 Closing Remarks

As the largest legal foundation in the United States, the **Ohio State Bar Foundation** was founded on the premise that a justice system should work for everyone. As a grantmaking organization, we extend our reach and impact across Ohio by supporting nonprofit programs whose work aligns with our vision. <https://osbf.org/>



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Moderator and Panelist Biographies

Welcoming Remarks

- **Justice Melody Stewart** is the first Black woman elected to the Supreme Court of Ohio. Prior to joining the Supreme Court, Justice Stewart served on the Eighth District Court of Appeals and served as the court's Administrative Judge in 2013. Before being elected to the Court of Appeals, she was an administrator for a healthcare management company, a music teacher, a civil defense litigator, and a law school administrator and professor. Among the many boards and committees on which she sits, Justice Stewart has served on the Ohio Criminal Justice Recodification Committee and was the chair of the Ohio Capital Case Attorney Fee Council. Justice Stewart is an incredible leader and trailblazer with more than 30 years of combined administrative, legal, and academic experience.

Introductory Session

- **Laura Coates** is a CNN Anchor and Senior Legal Analyst, SiriusXM Talk Show Host, and author who defines success on her own terms. A native of Saint Paul, Minnesota, Laura graduated from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the University of Minnesota Law School before beginning her legal career in private practice. She practiced law in Minnesota and New York, handling cases ranging from intellectual property litigation and First Amendment issues to Defamation and Media law. Called to public service, she transitioned from private practice to the United States Department of Justice, thriving as a federal prosecutor. She served as a Trial Attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice during the Bush and Obama administrations, specializing in the enforcement of voting rights throughout the country. She also served as an Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, prosecuting a myriad of violent felony offenses, including drug trafficking, armed offenses, domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault.
- **Karhlton Moore** is the Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the US Dept of Justice who will be introducing and interviewing Laura. Let me tell you a bit about Karhlton. Karhlton was appointed by President Joe Biden to the Bureau of Justice Assistance in February 2022. Prior to joining the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Karhlton served as the Executive Director of Ohio's Office of Criminal Justice Services. He also served as the facilitator for former Ohio Governor John Kasich's Task Force on Community-Police Relations, a precursor of the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board.

Panel 1: Bettering the Justice System - Opportunities for Reform

- **Michele Worobiec** is the Founder/CEO Silta Strategy, LLC and an OSBF Fellow from the class of 2022. Michele is an international author, speaker, and consultant regarding treatment and care for individuals with a substance use disorder as an alternative to



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arrest, conviction, and punishment. Previously, she served as a Magistrate/Acting Judge for Marion Municipal Court and as Policy Counsel and State Drug Court Coordinator for the Supreme Court of Ohio.

- **Brandon Buskey** is the Director of the ACLU's Criminal Law Reform Project in New York. He was previously Deputy Director for Smart Justice Litigation. His work focuses on reforming pretrial justice, reimagining community safety and policing, and expanding the right to counsel and access to quality public defense.
- **Kyle Strickland** is the Senior Legal Analyst at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity at The Ohio State University, where his research focuses on equitable civic engagement practices, criminal justice reform, and racial equity initiatives. In addition, Kyle serves as the Director of My Brother's Keeper Ohio, a statewide network that provides educational and community opportunities for youth of color.
- **Paula Hannaford-Agor** is the Director of the Center for Jury Studies in Williamsburg, Virginia, where she joined the Research Division of the National Center in May 1993. In this capacity, she regularly conducts research and provides technical assistance and education to courts and court personnel on the topics of jury system management and trial procedure; civil litigation; and complex and mass tort litigation.

Panel 2: Criminal Sentencing - Mass Incarceration and Sentencing Alternatives

- **Hon. Laurel Beatty Blunt** was elected in 2018 as judge of the Tenth District Court of Appeals in Columbus, Ohio, the first Black woman to serve on that court. Prior to joining the Tenth District, Judge Beatty Blunt served for nearly 10 years as a judge on the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, General Division. Passionate about civic education, Judge Beatty Blunt has used her judicial experience to educate the public about the justice system and the importance of voting.
- **Justice Michael P. Donnelly** is the 160th justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio. He took office in January 2019, following his statewide election in November 2018 to a full term on the Court. Prior to joining the Supreme Court, Justice Donnelly served as a judge on the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, General Division for 14 years. Before serving as a member of the judiciary, Justice Donnelly was an assistant Cuyahoga County Prosecutor. He then went on to practice civil litigation for seven years.
- **Hon. Nicole L. Sanders** was elected in 2020 as judge of the Hamilton County Drug Recovery and Treatment Court, the first drug court in Ohio and currently the only full-time drug court in the state. Judge Sanders, working together with treatment providers, probation professionals, prosecutors, and defense attorneys, oversees innovative, evidence-based treatment consistent with best practices for those defendants whose substance use results in criminal penalties.



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- **Zach Klein** is the Columbus City Attorney. He previously served as a member of Columbus City Council, including two years as Council President. As City Attorney, Zach is focused on how the law can be applied to promote public safety, encourage economic progress for all, defend the civil rights of all Columbus residents, and protect the most vulnerable among us.
- **Professor Douglas A. Berman** is the Newton D. Baker-Baker & Hostetler Chair in Law and Executive Director of the Drug Enforcement and Policy Center, housed in the Moritz College of Law. Berman's principal teaching and research focus is in the area of criminal law and criminal sentencing. Professor Berman is a member of the Council on Criminal Justice and frequently is consulted by national and state policymakers, sentencing commissioners, and public policy groups concerning sentencing law and policy reforms.

Relevant Links

- [Laura Coates Joined the DOJ to Help People. Instead, She Found Injustice](#), Rolling Stone Magazine
- [Purchase Just Pursuit: A Black Prosecutor's Fight for Fairness by Laura Coates](#), Simon and Schuster
- [When Prosecutors Decide Who Keeps Their Public Defender, Injustice Is Certain](#), ACLU
- [A New Paradigm for Justice and Democracy: Moving beyond the Twin Failures of Neoliberalism and Racial Liberalism](#), Roosevelt Institute report by Kyle Strickland and Felicia Wong
- [Dealing in Lives: Imposition of Federal Life Sentences for Drugs from 1990–2020](#), Drug Enforcement and Policy Center, February 2022
- [Alternatives to Incarceration: Specialized Courts and Dockets](#), Judge Nicole Sanders, Hamilton County Drug Recovery and Treatment Court
- [How a Spreadsheet Could Change the Criminal-Justice System](#), Pierre H. Bergeron and Michael P. Donnelly, The Atlantic