“The Inaugural Social Justice Symposium: An In-Depth Conversation About Wrongful Convictions”

Southern University Law Center

Summary:

The Public Defender Newspaper hosted day one of a two-day symposium on October 28, 2019. This is the first time an event has been hosted at the law center involving a panel discussion on wrongful convictions and exonerations. The event was held in rooms 129 and 130 from 12:00-1:00PM. There were one hundred (100) students and faculty in attendance.

Meghan Matt, Managing Editor of SULC’s The Public Defender, moderated the event. Guests on the panel included Robert Jones, who served twenty-three years, seven months, and three days in prison for crimes he did not commit; Kenn Barnes, Jr., who serves as special counsel-criminal justice to the Louisiana Supreme Court; and, Kirschelle McGowan, who works for Innocence Project New Orleans where she assisted in exonerating Robert Jones. Mrs. Matt prompted the panel discussion by asking questions.

This event was in conjunction with the Student Bar Association. Kennedy LeJeune, ABA Representative, tabled outside of the classrooms to encourage students to sign up. Ashley Baker, Editor-In-Chief of The Public Defender also had a table set up, and the staff writers passed out the newly released edition of the publication: “The Social Justice Issue.”

Expenses Incurred:

Southern University Law Center’s The Public Defender Newspaper sponsored the event. $1,120.00 was spent in total on food for eighty (80) attendees. Garden salad, chicken alfredo pasta, green beans, and assorted drinks were served.

No revenue was made at this event.

Feedback:

“What I observed was very impressive. It was beautiful to see this time of exchange taking place. Y’all have set a new standard.” -SULC Professor

“This topic is so important for future, young lawyers to learn about.” -3L, SULC Student
The Public Defender presents
THE INAUGURAL SOCIAL JUSTICE SYMPOSIUM
An In-Depth Conversation about
WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2019

Moderated By: Meghan Matt

Southern University Law Center
Noon-1:00 p.m.
Rooms 129 & 130

This event is sponsored in-part by the American Bar Association Law Student Division.
WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

Welcome
ASHLEY N. BAKER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Q&A Session
MEGHAN MATT
SYMPOSIUM MODERATOR & MANAGING EDITOR

Special Presentations
GABRIELA RODRIGUEZ
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

SPEAKERS

ROBERT JONES

Robert Jones served 23 years, 7 months, and 3 days in prison for crimes he did not commit. He was exonerated on his birthday, January 26, 2017, thanks to the tireless work of Innocence Project New Orleans and Innocence Project. Since that time, he has worked as a motivational speaker, well-known community activist, and co-founder of Free-Dem Foundations, Inc.—a nonprofit organization mentoring and guiding youth in a positive direction. Robert sits on the Board of Directors of Innocence Project New Orleans and the City of New Orleans Safety & Justice Challenge Community Advisory Group Committee. He is a social entrepreneur and currently works as a client advocate and community outreach coordinator with the Orleans Public Defenders Office.

Robert has also been present and influential at meetings with the NFL, politicians, and community stakeholders. He has received numerous awards for his work, including the Martineau Legal Society’s 2019 Earl J. Amidee Award for a Non-Lawyer Advancing Justice, and the Paris Bar Association’s Bronze Medal of Justice. Additionally, Robert has facilitated trainings with hundreds of journalists from around the world at Loyola University through the Poynter Institute and the Marshall Project, co-facilitated a training with the Louisiana Bar Association, held seminars at University of Santa Barbara and UCLA, co-authored the book Unbreakable Resolve, and helped free twenty-eight men under the New Habitual Offender Bill through the Orleans Public Defenders Office.

KENN BARNES, JR.

Kenn Barnes, Jr. serves as Special Counsel—Criminal Justice to the Louisiana Supreme Court. Some of his duties include assisting with the Court’s Reentry Court, Drug Court, Mental Health Court and other specialty court programs across Louisiana, serving as liaison between the Louisiana Supreme Court and the Felony Class System Task Force, Louisiana Public Defender Board, and Louisiana State Law Institute. Additionally, Kenn has recently been appointed by Governor John Bel Edwards to the Justice Reinvestment Oversight Committee on behalf of the Louisiana Supreme Court. This year he became one of three attorneys from Louisiana to ever receive the American Bar Association’s “On the Rise—Top 40 Young Lawyers Award.”

Prior to joining the Louisiana Supreme Court in his current role, Kenn served as special counsel—pretrial services at the court, bond advocate and staff attorney at the Orleans Public Defenders Office, campaign manager to the now Mayor of Baton Rouge, Mayor Sharon Weston Broome, and Civil Rights Attorney for a boutique Baton Rouge firm. Kenn received his bachelor of arts in Political Science from Louisiana State University in 2011 and received both his Juris Doctorate and Diploma of Comparative Law from the Paul M. Hebert Law Center at Louisiana State University where he served as Executive President of the Student Bar Association and Vice-Chair of the Council of Student Body Presidents in 2015.

KIRSCHELLE MCGOWAN

Kirschelle started at Innocence Project New Orleans in February 2013, where she worked primarily as an investigator before transitioning to a staff attorney in 2014. During her time at IPNO, she has assisted in obtaining freedom for one client and exonerating five clients, including Robert Jones. Before joining IPNO’s staff, Kirschelle simultaneously worked part-time as an associate attorney in two different New Orleans based law offices.

Kirschelle McGowan received her Juris Doctor from Southern University Law Center in 2012 and was admitted to practice law in Louisiana in October 2012. While at SULC, Kirschelle was a junior editor in the Journal of Race Gender and Poverty, and subsequently, the Southern University Law Review. She was published in the Southern University Law Review in 2014. Kirschelle also obtained a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice in 2006 as well as a Master of Science in Criminal Investigations in 2007 from Southern University and A&M College.
In Conjunction with the SBA’s Fall Fest Committee
The Public Defender Newspaper presents

THE INAUGURAL TWO-DAY SYMPOSIUM

DAY 1: THE EX-FACTOR
WHEN WE DON'T SEE THEM
AN IN-DEPTH CONVERSATION ABOUT WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

WHEN: Monday, October 28, 2019
noon-1:00p.m.

WHERE: Room 130

WHO: Moderator: Meghan Matt

Guests: Robert Jones- Exoneree
        Kenn Barnes- Louisiana Supreme Court
        Kirschelle McGowan- Attorney with the Innocence Project New Orleans

FUNDING PROVIDED IN PART BY THE ABA LAW STUDENT DIVISION