

The Social Justice Speaker Series presents the CJ Colloquium

Voices of Justice and Change

The Social Justice Speaker Series is proud to host the special Criminal Justice Colloquium event “Voices of Justice and Change.” For the first time ever, changemakers transforming the face and soul of the justice system today will speak about their experiences with the justice system. By amplifying these voices, this speaker series aims to build lasting bridges between justice system professionals, service providers, scholars, advocates, and system involved peoples—and share the secrets to a more people centered system of justice. All interested students, faculty, and staff as well as the public are invited to attend.

Events

Alex “PoeticSoul” Johnson

Monday, March 14th
3:30 - 4:45 PM

Orleans Parish Public Defender’s Office

Wednesday, March 23rd
3:30 - 4:45 PM

Michael Cahoon and Shareef Cousin with Promise of Justice

Tuesday, March 29th
11:00 AM - 12:15 PM

Location

Fayard Hall, room 207

Speakers

A fiercely determined female with a strong voice, **Alex Johnson** is taking spoken word poetry by storm. Known as PoeticSoul, this Lafayette, Louisiana, native wants to encourage others to never give up, stand up, be fearless and be heard. Poetic has worked as a teaching artist in the Lafayette Parish Juvenile Detention Home and was a featured panelist during the 2016 Split this Rock Poetry Festival in Washington, DC in which she discussed “Language of the Unheard: Rural Children of Color.” She recently published a book of poetry titled Poisonous Thoughts and leads the Eyes of the Sun mural in Lafayette, a project sponsored by 24 Hour Citizen Project.





The **Orleans Parish Public Defenders** office represent nearly 20,000 people each year utilizing a client-centered, community-oriented defense model that puts the client first and takes a 360 degree approach to our advocacy and representation. They recognize that their clients are unique individuals and work to address their needs both in the court and out. Their diverse staff includes adult and juvenile attorneys; social workers; client, youth and parent advocates; investigators and administrators all working together for equal justice for their clients, their families, the community and a better New Orleans. In short, they protect innocence, defend the constitution, demand justice, and hold power accountable.

Michael Cahoon is a Co-Lead Organizer and Policy Advocate working on PJI's LA Repeal Project and East Baton Rouge Parish Prison Project. Before coming to PJI in 2018, Michael was a lead organizer with SEIU Local 509, a 20,000 member union of social workers, human service providers, and educators, where he also served as president for an independent union of SEIU organizers and support staff. Before organizing, he worked in policy research and development for New Jersey After 3, a nonprofit providing after school programming, evaluation, and policy consultation.



Shareef Cousin spent three years on death row in Louisiana for a crime he did not commit. In 1998, the Louisiana Supreme Court ordered a new trial on the grounds that evidence in the case had been mishandled and improperly used. A few months later, the district attorney of Jefferson County Parish decided to drop the case, citing any lack of evidence to pursue it further. In 2005, Roger Jordan was disciplined by the Louisiana Supreme Court for his misconduct in Shareef's case. Today, Shareef is active with John Thompson's Resurrection After Exoneration project and serves on the Witness to Innocence's Justice After Exoneration Committee.

