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## P\*LAW Week 2021 Spotlights Public Service



Cardozo's annual P\*LAW Week, sponsored by the Center for Public Service Law, took place from January 19-22. It was a virtual event series this year, but as in years past was filled with thought-provoking panels and included a range of discussions that engaged students in the practice of public interest law.

Fifteen panels took place over four days, including such events as "For the People: A Call For Progressive Prosecution"; "In the Trenches: Understanding and Challenging Faulty Digital Forensics"; "Comparable Crimes, Separate Service: Comparing Criminal Procedure in the UCMJ and Civilian Court"; "Urban Land Use Through the Lens of Environment Law"; "Protecting Students' Rights to a Free and Appropriate Education During COVID-19"; and "The Value of Diversity in ADR."

"Our incredible student planning team that organized P\*LAW 2021 created a truly inspiring series of discussions, addressing a variety of momentous public service issues," said Alissa Bernstein, director of the Center for Public Service Law. "With fifteen panel discussions taking place over four days, and multiple sessions registering over 100 participants, it is clear that the Cardozo community continues to be at the forefront of so many efforts seeking to pave the way to a more fair and just society."

On January 19, students gathered for "Abolishing the Police: Getting There and Imagining the World After." Cardozo Professor Kate Levine moderated a group of leaders in this movement: Derecka Purnell, Human Rights Lawyer and Abolitionist; Professor Amna Akbar, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law; Woods Ervin, Admin Coordinator at TGI Justice Project; and Activist and Professor Carlton E. Williams, Movement Lawyer and Adjunct Professor, Cornell Law School.

Panelists discussed the personal paths that lead to this movement, and the ways in which they are currently involved in working toward change in law enforcement. "If we do less harm," said Professor Williams, "less harm will return."

Professor Levine asked pointed and timely questions about the Black Lives Matter movement and the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, specifically how those events impact and are impacted by the call to redistribute police funds.

When asked what role lawyers and law students can play in this movement, Ervin replied “You have to use the framework of size, scope, power and resources of the law (to create change).”

Professor Akbar added, “It’s not just incarceration or policing, it’s detention and enforcement. The (legal) profession is a central tool to this system. We have to take accountability and create tools to correct (what isn’t working).”

“Juvenile Prison: Abolition and Alternatives,” took place on January 20 and examined racial disparity in youth prisons as well as the harmful effects of the disparity. Panelists on the Juvenile Prison panel discussed the often futile outcomes of sentences in juvenile detention centers, and highlighted alternatives they believe to be better suited to addressing the needs of underserved youths who fall victim to these systems. One solution discussed was the need for community building programs.

“We need to invest in communities...and allow communities to identify the sets of support they need,” said Gladys Carrion, Senior Fellow and Attorney at the Columbia Justice Lab. “We need to create pathways to success, and not build more cells.”

Tianesha Drayton, a community advocate for Youth Represent, noted the importance of first creating supportive communities before implementing specific programs. “The sense of community has to be there in order for community-oriented justice to take place.”

Other panelists included Mishi Faruquee, National Field Director, Youth First Initiative and Latrice Walker, New York State Assemblywoman. The panel was moderated by Rebecca Laden, a 1L student at Cardozo.

Drayton talked about the idea that there are neighborhoods in NYC as opposed to communities; there should be more communities where young people feel like they could call someone, or able-bodied members of the community could step in and offer support/assistance as opposed to calling the cops, and it would be more beneficial than calling the cops which would escalate the situation into something more detrimental. “The sense of community has to be there in order for community-oriented justice to take place,” she said.

Carrion said, “There are no lobbyists for children. We are that voice, you are that voice.”