



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



PUBLIC DEFENDERS PROTECTORS OF JUSTICE

2025



**A MESSAGE FROM THE
CHAIRMAN OF
THE BOARD**

Dear Supporters,

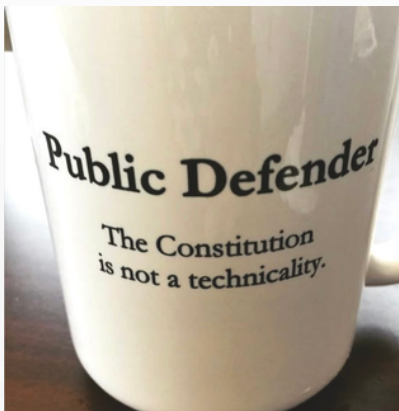
In July 2025, Gideon's Promise's sixteenth class completed the three-year Core 101 Program. These lawyers joined their predecessors and the graduates of our Maryland and Texas partnerships (launched in 2014 and 2022, respectively) on the front lines of the fight to ensure that accused individuals who cannot afford lawyers receive zealous representation and a chance at equal justice. Our graduates face profound challenges, from a lack of resources to hostile judges to even more hostile prosecutors and skeptical jurors. But they continue the fight to humanize their clients and seek the justice they deserve because they have Gideon's Promise community behind them to lift them and keep them in the struggle.

On behalf of all the members of the Gideon's Promise board, I offer our thanks and admiration for our many graduates, and our commitment to continue the work to ensure that more trail-blazing classes will follow. In these trying times, the mission of Gideon's Promise is more critical than ever, and we appreciate the continued generosity and commitment of our donors and the excellence of our staff and leadership.

We are excited to welcome Kellie Brownlow as the next CEO of Gideon's Promise. Kellie comes to us after serving in leadership positions at two Atlanta-based non-profit organizations. She brings both a passion for the mission of Gideon's Promise and a track record of finding creative solutions to the challenges that face non-profits. We look forward to working with Kellie as she continues the growth and impact of Gideon's Promise.

Gideon's Promise remains in the fight for our democracy that public defenders have waged for decades. Thank you for partnering with us in this critical mission.

ANDREW WISE
Board of Directors, Chairman



➤ Gideon's Promise, a nationally recognized nonprofit, is dedicated to reshaping the criminal justice system by empowering public defenders to deliver equal justice to marginalized communities.

Since its founding in 2007, Gideon's Promise has expanded from a small training program for just 16 attorneys in Georgia and Louisiana to a formidable national organization with over **3,000 public defenders.**

NATIONWIDE IMPACT. NATIONWIDE PROGRESS

Training public defenders for the frontlines of justice and transforming the culture of public defense.



Frontline Defense

A total of 24 states received Gideon's Promise training this year.

Partner Offices

CORE 101: **58 Offices**

LSPP: **9 Offices**

New Programming

We introduced new regional programs and trainings in Maine, Buffalo, NY, and at the University of Georgia.

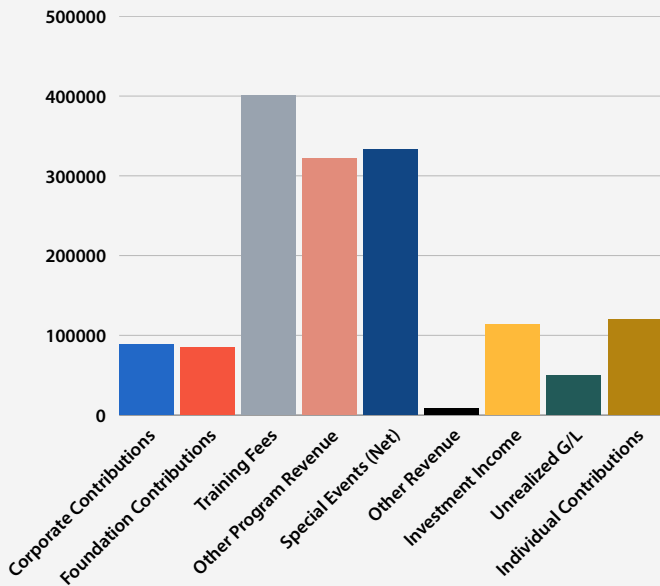
Upward Movement

We increased participation in our Future Indigent Leaders Program by 10%.

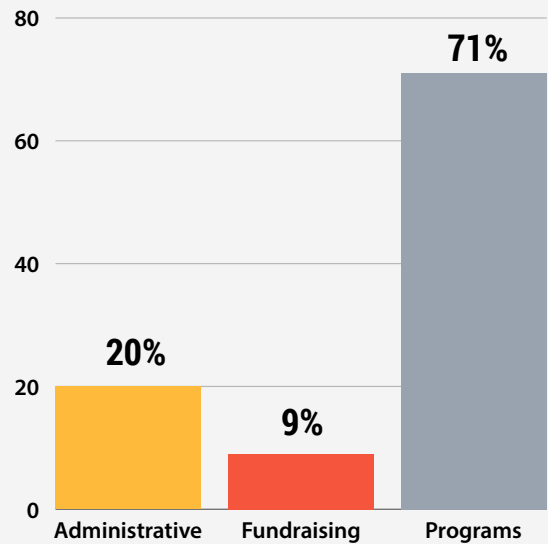
Advancing Justice FINANCIAL REPORT

In 2025, we supported six programs. Over half of the budget was dedicated to our training programs, including Core 101 training, the Alumni, Leadership, and Mentorship programs, Trainer Development, and the Law School Partnership Program. New regional programs expanded our reach in Maine, Buffalo, NY, and at the University of Georgia. Our management efforts focused on strengthening internal operations and enhancing technology to improve the organization.

2025 Income Distribution Breakdown



2025 Statement of Functional Expenses



Individual Contributions \$199,506.24

Corporate Contributions \$88,000

Foundation Contributions \$184,500

Training Fees \$400,615.30

Other Program Revenue \$321,721.36

Special Events \$332,848

Other Revenue \$8,507.38

Investment Income \$114,058.75

Unrealized G/L \$49,597.93

Total Income \$1,514,854.96

Remembering Mark Rochon

An Advocate, a Friend, and a Trailblazer for Justice



This year, the Gideon's Promise family was heartbroken over the passing of Mark Rochon, one of the most important contributors to the Gideon's Promise story. We were so inspired by the life he lived and honored that he poured so much of himself into our shared mission over the last fifteen years.

Mark's aura was infectious. We are grateful to have experienced that love, compassion, and commitment to justice that Mark exuded until the very end. Our community has benefited greatly from Mark's dedication to bringing justice to places where it struggles to breathe. Mark's spirit lives on through the thousands of people he touched. The world is a better place because of Mark Rochon.

Gideon's Promise was two years old when it began the process of seeking its 501(c)(3) status. In 2009, Mark, who was already a prominent supporter of the organization, became its Board's founding co-Chair along with Gary Kohlman. Mark spent eight years as co-Chair before his term expired. During his initial tenure, Mark helped build an organization with a multi-program model touching public defenders all across the nation. There is no success we experienced during that time that Mark did not help achieve.

Mark began his second tenure as Chairman of the Board in 2023 – although he remained one of Gideon's Promise's staunchest supporters in the interim – and helped steer the organization through a critical transition. He served in that role for nearly three more years, until September 19, 2025.

Mark was a husband, father, friend, and public defender. Gideon's Promise lost a dear friend and a leader. Our hearts are with Mark's family and friends; the DC Public Defender Service family; the Miller Chevalier family; and, most importantly, Mark's wife, Page, and children, Georgia and Alex. May they take some comfort in knowing that Mark lives on through so many of us whom he has inspired and shaped.

Defenders on the Frontline

Our training sessions unite public defenders at all career stages to enhance their courtroom skills.



Play Summer Institute Recap



Play Student Testimonial

During the Trainer Development Program, students from Atlanta's John Marshall Law School participated and shared reflections on their experience.

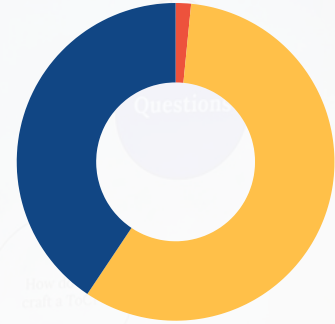


SUMMER INSTITUTE 2025

67

Participants

- > Returners: 37
- > Alumni: 1
- > CORE 101 Class: 26



WINTER INSTITUTE 2025

73

Participants

- > Returners: 46
- > Alumni: 1
- > CORE 101 Class: 26





STORYTELLERS OF JUSTICE

Public Defender Spotlight



Henry Oostrom-Shah

CLASS: 2024

LAW SCHOOL: Boston University School of Law

OFFICE: Metropolitan Public Defender

How has being a part of Gideon's Promise changed the way that you practice public defense?

Gideon's Promise has changed the way I practice public defense in a basic level. It's given me new training and skills. Most times when we stand up in the courtroom for our clients, we're standing up alone. Being a part of Gideon's Promise has made me realize that we are really not standing up alone, that amazing things are happening around the country, and that we're all standing up together.

Why do you think it's important to center the voices and experiences of public defenders in conversations about justice reform?

Public defenders play a crucial role in amplifying the voices of those most affected by the justice system. Individuals who have been policed, prosecuted, or have served time in prisons or jails have the most important perspectives because they are closest to the issues at hand. Public defenders act as effective amplifiers or megaphones for these voices. We recognize that the problems faced by our clients are not isolated; they are systemic issues that affect one client after another.

What gives you hope for the future of public defense in the fight for justice?

I find hope every day working with my clients. No matter the challenges they face, they consistently strive to improve their lives. They seek ways to restore their humanity and dignity, even when those aspects feel diminished. Across the country, countless lawyers are dedicated to collaborating with their clients in courtrooms, committed to transforming everyday practices for the better.

2025 IMPACT AT A GLANCE



TOTAL CLE HOURS
6,729.75
DELIVERED
(CREDIT HOURS # ATTENDEES)

Public defenders and civil rights attorneys, by the nature of their professions, are required to consider the impact of the law on everyday people. Their jobs require them to understand the circumstances of marginalized groups and ensure that large institutions do not strip them of their most basic rights.

KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

TOP POST OF 2025

153.4K
VIEWS

via Facebook & Instagram

8
LAW SCHOOL PARTNERS

90% **AVERAGE GRADUATION RATE**

(CORE 101 + FIDL 2023 & 2024)

300+
Public Defenders SERVED

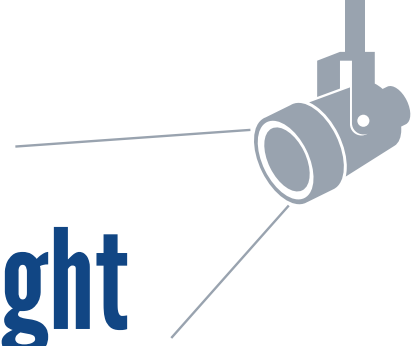
BIPOC	35%
WHITE	65%

PUBLIC DEFENDER RATIO (CORE 101)

CORE 101
GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS
Female: 20 | Male: 5 | Non Binary: 1

STORYTELLERS OF JUSTICE

Faculty / Alumni Spotlight



We are excited to highlight Genesis Draper, a valued faculty member and friend. She is part of the second class of the Southern Public Defender Training Center, now known as Gideon’s Promise.

Draper began her legal career as an assistant public defender, representing clients at both the state and federal levels. She later served as a criminal court judge and as an adjunct professor.

After relocating to Texas, she joined the Federal Defender Program before transitioning to the Harris County Public Defender’s Office, making history as the first African American and the first woman to hold the role. She currently leads one of the largest public defender offices in the nation, grounded in a steadfast belief that freedom is not an aspiration, but a constitutional promise worth defending every single day. She succeeded Alex Bunin, who was the first chief to run the Harris County Public Defender’s Office.

Her leadership and spirit have been instrumental in our training throughout the years. Acting as a mentor for our community, she has inspired many to come after her within the Gideon’s Promise community. We are proud to have her as our new board member, where she will continue to impact public defenders nationwide.

Genesis Draper

CLASS:

2008

LAW SCHOOL:

The University of Texas School of Law

OFFICE:

Harris County Public Defender’s Office

ALUMNI / FACULTY



Gideon's Promise has a new home.



Last year, we announced our partnership with Atlanta's John Marshall Law School (The Barristers Society (TBS) to launch the Criminal and Civil Justice Institute (CCJI) at Atlanta's John Marshall Law School. This initiative established an unprecedented collaboration between legal education and frontline advocacy to prepare the next generation of legal advocates – developing compassionate lawyers for everyday people. Along with launching CCJI, Gideon's Promise has a new home.

In the summer of 2025, Gideon's Promise made a tremendous change and moved our headquarters and training space to Atlanta's John Marshall Law School.

AJMLS has been a constant partner and supporter, and this new location will move our mission forward towards a more equitable legal system, inclusive of all individuals. From the heart of the city, we are more committed than ever to nurturing future lawyers and advancing the promise of public defense.

PREMIER TRAINING SPACE <



Expanding Our Leadership

Our Board of Directors is comprised of leaders from the business, legal, and philanthropic sectors who are deeply committed to advancing equitable justice. We recently appointed three new board members to join our community and help advance our strategic goals and mission.

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ADDITIONS



Steve Sachman



Mecca Anderson



Genesis Draper

Event Recap

IGNITING CHANGE

Igniting Change 2025 at City Winery Atlanta brought together advocates, community leaders, and supporters. The John R. Lewis Lifetime Achievement Award was presented posthumously to President Jimmy Carter and accepted by his grandson, Jason Carter, recognizing President Carter's enduring legacy of courage, compassion, and advocacy for equality. The Community Impact Award was presented to The Honorable Gino Brogdon, Sr., whose visionary leadership and tireless efforts bridged divides, fostered unity, and drove lasting social change across the region.

A NIGHT TO CELEBRATE

A Night to Celebrate was held at the Manhattan Penthouse in New York, the event brought together supporters to recognize America's justice system heroes. We honored Chris Morvillo, posthumously, with the Ian Yankwitt Equalizer Award, and Bobbi Sternheim with the Champion of the Community Award, recognizing their extraordinary advocacy.

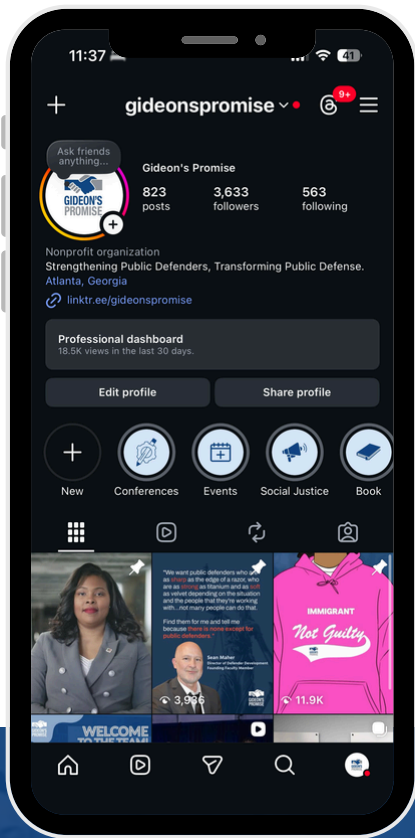
D.C. PROMISE PARTY

Hosted by Miller & Chevalier, the D.C. Fall Promise Party is Gideon's Promise's annual autumn celebration. Though founded in Atlanta in 2007, Gideon's Promise has long held deep roots in the D.C. indigent defense community, where early supporters helped shape the organization's vision and growth. The Fall Promise Party honors progress and renews our collective commitment to building a fairer legal system for all.

JAZZED FOR JUSTICE

Jazzed for Justice was a special evening celebrating our movement! Guests gathered in our new Atlanta office and training space within Atlanta's John Marshall Law School, offering an inside look at where the next generation of defenders was equipped and inspired. The event featured live jazz, light bites, and meaningful connection between our supporters and partners.





Social Awareness

We are dedicated to creating a robust online platform that champions the cause of public defenders, advocates for social justice, and fights for civil rights. Our online presence aims to raise awareness, provide resources, and promote meaningful change in the system.

Follow Us!



National Public Defense Day

In response to the current political climate, we created an animation for Public Defender Day featuring our signature “Not Guilty” hoodie. The piece highlighted the vital role of public defense in upholding a fair legal system while challenging harmful stereotypes.

It reinforced that labels such as immigrant, disabled, or formerly incarcerated should never define a person or invite judgment without due process and proof.



View Social Post



OUR TEAM



Jarrett R. Ransom, MBA
Interim Chief Executive Officer



Caitlin Costello
Interim Advancement Director



Stephani Britt
Finance Manager



JP Pennie
**Project Coordinator
Defender Development**



Alia Coy-Smith
Advancement & Marketing Assistant



Hanxi Sun
**Project Coordinator
Defender Development**



Sean Maher
Director of Defender Development



Amma Williams, MBA, CPIA
Chief Operating Officer

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Sam Starks
Atlanta, GA

Your Support Matters

SCAN QR CODE



You don't have to be a public defender to stand for equal justice. By becoming a donor, you'll help reduce incarceration, diversify the next generation of defenders, expand law school partnerships, and ensure more families stay together through client-centered defense.

Every gift protects the promise of zealous counsel for all—because justice can't wait.

Gideon's Promise Inc.
Suite 1700
245 Peachtree Center Ave NE
Atlanta, GA 30303

(404) 525-4505
info@gideonspromise.org
www.gideonspromise.org
EIN # 26-1947437

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