

## **The Lawyers Justice Corps: A Link Between Access to Justice And Lawyer Licensing**

### **Panelist Bios**

Cayley Balsler, Professor of Practice, University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law

As the Service Impact Area Lead at Innovation for Justice (i4J) --- housed at the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law and University of Utah David Eccles School of Business --- Cayley's role is to implement & teach trauma-informed, community-engaged, project-based courses centered on applying design & systems thinking research methodology to the identification and development of legal empowerment pathways. Through this work, Cayley connects with community members, plans & oversees interviews, & teaches students qualitative & quantitative data collection, analysis, & synthesis. Her multidisciplinary research interests focus on access to & integration of trauma-informed approaches within legal education & services. Cayley earned her JD from the University of Arizona College of Law in May 2022, graduating Cum Laude, & is a licensed attorney in the state of Arizona. Cayley joined the Legal Service Corporation's Emerging Leaders Council in May 2024. Prior to law school, Cayley earned Master in Education & Education Specialist degrees in Mental Health Counseling from the University of Florida and is a National Certified Counselor. Her area of focus as a clinician was suicide prevention, trauma, & substance use. She attended Clemson University where she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa & earned a BA in Psychology.

Neil Fulton, Dean, University of South Dakota School of Law

B.A., Yale University 1994; J.D., summa cum laude, University of Minnesota, 1997; Law Clerk to the Honorable Diana Murphy, United States Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit, 1997-1998; May, Adam, Gerdes & Thompson Law Firm, Pierre, SD 1998-2007; Chief of Staff, Gov. M. Michael Rounds, 2007-2010; Federal Public Defender, Districts of North Dakota and South Dakota, 2010-2019; Dean, University of South Dakota School of Law, 2019-Present. Mr. Fulton currently serves on the CLE Committee, Committee for Diversity and Inclusion, and Strategic Planning Committee of the South Dakota State Bar Association. Fulton is also chair of the Commission on Indigent Legal Services and serves on the Bar Exam Implementation Committee for South Dakota tasked with implementing a pilot Public Service Pathway Program that provides an alternative pathway to bar admission based on supervised placement in a public service entity.

Marsha Griggs (Moderator), Associate Professor, St. Louis University School of Law

Professor Griggs is a nationally recognized scholar on the bar exam and licensing. She coauthored a widely distributed white paper that launched efforts to safely license new attorneys during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her most recent publication, *Outsourcing Self-Regulation*, 80 WASH. & LEE L. REV. 1807 (2024), examines the tension between the legal profession's claim of self-regulation and its privatization of licensing paths. An article in press, *Bar Examination: A Verb, Not a Noun*, \_\_ WASH U.J. LAW & SOCIAL POLICY \_\_ (2025),

explores innovative approaches to licensing. Professor Griggs is a past chair of the AALS Section on Academic Support, current president of the Association of Academic Support Educators, and a member of the Board of Governors for the Society of American Law Teachers. She has received numerous awards including the Trailblazer Award from the AALS Section on Academic Support in 2021 and the Essence of SALT Award in 2022.

Deborah Jones Merritt, Distinguished University Professor and John Deaver Drinko/Baker & Hostetler Chair in Law Emerita, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law

Professor Merritt co-directed the national *Building a Better Bar* study, which developed an evidence-based definition of minimum competence to practice law. She has served as a volunteer consultant to numerous jurisdictions on developing licensing paths that will better assess competence while reducing the inequities furthered by the bar exam. During the last two years, she has worked particularly closely with Oregon in developing and implementing their Supervised Practice Portfolio Exam, as well as with Nevada in designing their innovative three-step licensing plan. She is also a member of the Bar Admissions Working Group for the Committee on Legal Education and Admissions Reform (CLEAR), a national committee formed by the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators.

Zoë Polk, Executive Director of the East Bay Community Law Center; Faculty Member, Berkeley School of Law

Zoë Polk is the Executive Director of the East Bay Community Law Center, leading the organization in its mission of promoting justice and building a more equitable community through responsive anti-poverty legal services for low-income people and hands-on training for the next generation of social justice advocates. As Executive Director, Zoë leads a team of 80+ staff members in serving 8,000+ clients per year and advancing systemic policy change. As a Berkeley Law faculty member she oversees the training of 150+ students each year through EBCLC's eight teaching clinics: the Clean Slate/Reentry Legal Services Clinic, the Community Economic Justice Clinic, the Consumer Justice Clinic, the Education Advocacy Clinic, the Health & Welfare Clinic, the Housing Clinic, the Immigration Clinic, and the Youth Defender Clinic. Throughout her career, Zoë has successfully advanced racial and economic justice initiatives in the Bay Area and around the world.

Mai Linh Spencer, Clinical Professor, UC Law San Francisco

Mai Linh Spencer is a Clinical Professor at UC Law San Francisco, where — in addition to teaching the Individual Representation Clinic and Evidence — she is the Academic Director of the Lawyers for America fellowship program. LfA provides fellows a year of near-full-time experiential learning followed by a post-grad year in public interest law. Mai Linh served on California's Blue Ribbon Commission on the Future of the Bar Exam and was a member of the working group that proposed a Portfolio Bar Exam as an alternative path to licensing. She provides international trainings on clinical legal education and recently served as a consultant, helping the Mongolian Bar Association to modernize its bar exam.