

## **Call for Participation in a Discussion Group**

UNWINDING MASS INCARCERATION THROUGH LAW SCHOOL SECOND CHANCE ADVOCACY

**Due date: October 3, 2025**

### **Introduction**

This is a Call for Participation in Discussion Group on Unwinding Mass Incarceration Through Law School Second Chance Advocacy to be held during the in-person AALS Annual Meeting from January 6-9, 2026, in New Orleans.

Discussion groups allow a small group of faculty to engage in a sustained conversation about a topic of interest. This discussion group's participants are expected to write and share a short abstract (3 pages, double-spaced) to begin their participation in the discussion. The rest of the session will feature a lively and engaging discussion among the small group of participants. The participants in this discussion group will be the individuals identified in the original proposal submitted to the Program Committee, plus additional individuals selected from this "call for participation". There will be limited audience seating for those not selected in advance to be discussion participants.

### **Description**

Second chances work is critical to reducing America's prison population, which bipartisan experts and policymakers agree is excessive and inhumane. States are increasingly adopting "second look" laws premised on the idea that many people serving decades-long or life sentences are thoroughly rehabilitated and pose no danger to the public were sentenced at a time when youth, mental illness and disability, and trauma-related mitigation were considered irrelevant to the proportionality of punishment. Many of those same people do life-saving work in prison and when released continue it in communities roiled by violence.

Law school clinics have pioneered parole, compassionate release, habeas, and other second-chance advocacy that secures the release of people serving excessive sentences. As new resentencing opportunities become available, law school clinics are also setting the standard for second-chance resentencing advocacy nationwide and helping to educate policymakers. Their work both serves as a model for other advocates and trains the next generation of lawyers in second-chance advocacy. Law school clinics' resources and expertise are especially necessary now when legal aid and public defender offices face funding cuts.

This discussion group will bring together clinical law professors teaching state and federal post-conviction strategies for clients' release from incarceration. The discussion will center the sentencing and mitigation theories underlying the clinics' work and practical considerations for law faculty currently teaching or considering second-chance advocacy. Some themes will include: application of capital-style mitigation techniques to non-capital litigation; special considerations when representing mentally ill or disabled clients; racial justice rationales for second-chance advocacy; and incorporating victim outreach into clinical practice. We will explore how to scale-up the clinics' work by partnering with community law

offices and providing training and research assistance to less-resourced practitioners and their clients.

### **Call for Abstracts**

The Annual Meeting Program Committee invites faculty and administrators who would like to join this Discussion Group to submit a three-page abstract that addresses **by October 3, 2025**. Current organizers and confirmed discussion participants include:

MIRIAM GOHARA (DEPUTY DEAN FOR EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AND CLINICAL PROFESSOR OF LAW AT YALE LAW SCHOOL, FOUNDER CHALLENGING MASS INCARCERATION CLINIC),

ALEXIS KARTERON (PROFESSOR OF LAW, NYU SCHOOL OF LAW, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM CLINIC)

NGOZI NDULUE (ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LAW AND DIRECTOR OF THE POST-CONVICTION CRIMINAL DEFENSE CLINIC AT UDC DAVID A. CLARKE SCHOOL OF LAW)

Space in this Discussion Group is limited; the Committee, along with the faculty organizer who proposed this discussion, will select the remaining discussion participants from the abstracts submitted. At the AALS Annual Meeting in January, selected participants will make a one-two minute presentation during the Discussion Group. The remaining time will be devoted to a moderated, roundtable group discussion.

Each submission for this Discussion Group should include:

- The title of the submitted presentation/paper;
- The name, school and email of the applying participant;
- A three-page, double-spaced abstract that addresses mass incarceration and second chance advocacy, and America's prison policy.
- The curriculum vitae of the applying participant.

In reviewing the submitted abstracts, the discussion group organizer and selection committee will consider the following:

- The fit and overall quality of the abstract for the Discussion Group;
- The diversity that the applying participant may bring in terms of a variety of factors including viewpoint diversity, institutional affiliation, and status (tenure-track, non-tenure track, tenured); and if applicable.
- The applying participant's willingness to publish his or her paper along with other Discussion Group papers.

Abstracts are due by **October 3, 2025 and should be** submitted using the online submission form: <https://aalsweb.wufoo.com/forms/pc0l1ac030993p/>

