



ACLS LEADING EDGE FELLOWSHIP

Project:	Collateral Consequences: COVID-19 and the Criminal Justice System in North Carolina
Organization:	Southern Coalition for Social Justice
Location:	Durham, NC [Fellow will work remotely]
Stipend:	\$60,000 per year, plus health insurance and professional development funding
Start Date:	January or February 2021

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

The Southern Coalition for Social Justice (SCSJ) partners with communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities in the South to defend and advance their political, social, and economic rights through the combination of legal advocacy, research, organizing, and communications. SCSJ's Justice System Reform team promotes social and economic justice through its efforts to ensure police accountability, end racial profiling and mass incarceration, eliminate the unfair collateral consequences of involvement with the criminal legal system, and challenge systemic racial discrimination and inequities at all stages of the system. To learn more about SCSJ, visit <https://www.southerncoalition.org/>.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

At the same time that COVID-19 has ravaged North Carolina's prisons, jails, and detention centers, the pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated the inadequacies of North Carolina's system of supports for justice-involved individuals trying to build a successful life after reentry. In a state that incarcerates five times as many Black residents as white residents, scaling back of already limited resources and supports, and a two-week quarantine requirement are derailing an already difficult transition. The process of pre-release has shifted, putting a gap between volunteers and job training that slows reintegration and can even increase recidivism. Some localities have created pilot programs to fill gaps in services; evidence based-research could help incentivize the state to make these permanent.

SCSJ has identified new concerns as well as opportunities in the areas of pre-release and reentry as a result of COVID-19. The Justice System Reform (JSR) team will be releasing two toolkits in Fall 2020: *Your First 48 Hours*, a community resource guide for individuals coming home from local jails as well as state and federal prisons, and the *Umar Muhammad Clean Slate Toolkit*, a guide to removing charges and convictions from a person's criminal record so they may economically and socially better their lives. The release of these resources during an ongoing health and economic crisis provides an opportunity to evaluate the existing support system as well as the ongoing urgent gaps and needs in the reentry and expungement processes in the state.

Building on this work, the Leading Edge Fellow will use a range of data, including personal narratives, to document the impact of COVID-19 on reentry supports and expungement efforts in North Carolina. The fellow will ground all research projects in the lived experiences of those most impacted. As a first step, the fellow will collaboratively design a research agenda with SCSJ staff and community partners, then using this foundation to elaborate research products that will help advance public awareness, support local and state-wide community efforts to make meaningful changes to support those impacted by an unjust system, and make the case for a shift in funding and legislative priorities in the context of advocating for policy reforms. Based on interest and capacity, the fellow will also have the opportunity to work with

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SCSJ's Voting Rights (VR) project staff on documenting and expanding the knowledge base about the ways that COVID-19 has shifted the voter registration and elections landscape and infrastructure.

The Leading Edge Fellow will be part of SCSJ's Research team, will report to the Co-Executive Director, and will work closely with key staff members on the JSR team. The fellowship tenure is 12 consecutive months, with an expected time commitment of approximately 40 hours per week.

Responsibilities and tasks:

- Work closely with JSR staff and community partners to learn from justice-involved individuals and key stakeholders to produce an internal research and strategy memo
- Track, gather and analyze demographic, reentry support, and recidivism data trends in North Carolina and across the South, with a racial equity lens
- Research comparative state reentry support and expungement policies to collaboratively contribute to a policy recommendation platform to support the JSR team's work
- Work closely with JSR and research staff (as well as potentially VR staff) to produce reports, profiles, case studies, and policy proposals that will be disseminated via the communications department to stakeholders and to community partners
- Assist in developing funding proposals for future research projects

Qualifications:

- PhD in any field of the humanistic social sciences, so long as the applicant's research contributes to the scholarship and understanding of religion, theology, or ethics. Read more about eligible fields [here](#).
- Alignment with SCJS's mission and vision, as an organization guided by principles and practices that promote racial equity
- Excellent research and writing skills; familiarity with qualitative methods and quantitative data analysis (without necessitating sophisticated statistical methods)
- Proficiency in the presentation of complicated data or policies in an accessible and useful manner
- Ability to perform job duties with high degree of initiative, professionalism, and solution-oriented mindset
- Flexible nature and willingness to support others in team environment

Preferred:

- Knowledge of participatory research methods

APPLICATIONS

- Information on the Leading Edge Fellowship Program: <https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships>
- All applications must be submitted through the ACLS Online Fellowship Application System (ofa.acls.org)
- Application deadline: 9pm EST, November 2, 2020

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