

**STRENGTHENED BONDS: ABOLISHING THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM  
AND RE-ENVISIONING CHILD WELL-BEING**

**Columbia Law School  
Columbia Journal of Race and Law  
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**June 16-18, 2021**

**DAY ONE**

**June 17, 2021**

**11:00 am to 6:00 pm EDT**

- **Panel 4: Community Approaches to Child Well-Being and Strengthening Bonds (4:15 – 5:30 pm)**
  - **Kele Stewart**, Professor and Associate Dean of Experiential Learning, Co-Director Children & Youth Law Clinic, University of Miami School of Law, *Re-Envisioning Child Well-Being: Untangling the Inequitable Intersections among Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice and Education*.
  - **Caitlyn Garcia**, Attorney, Brooklyn Defender Services and **Cynthia Godsoe**, Professor, Brooklyn Law School, *Divest, Invest, and Mutual Aid*
  - **Bianca Shaw**, Assistant Director for Programs and Culture, **Halimah Washington**, Community Coordinator and **Imani Worthy**, Parent Leader, *Centering Parents in Child Welfare Abolition - Reflection and Learning from RISE on How to Build, Center and Mobilize Impacted Parents*
  - Moderator, **Tricia Stephens**, LCSW-R, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, CUNY Mellon-Inaugural Fellow, Hunter College - Silberman School of Social Work
- **“Cocktail hour” (5:30- 6:00 pm) (Breakout rooms available to meet with panelists and attendees)**

**Note: If you wish to assign yourself to one of the many breakout rooms, you must have Zoom Desktop client or mobile app version 5.3.0 or higher or ChromeOS version 5.0.0 (4241.1207) or higher.**

## Panelist Biographies



**Caitlyn Garcia** is a Staff Attorney with Brooklyn Defender Services, Family Defense Practice. Caitlyn graduated from Brooklyn Law School in May of 2020, where she previously served as the Co-Chair of Brooklyn Law Students for the Public Interest, was a Family Law and Policy Fellow and Pro Bono Scholar, and won the 2019 Schwab Essay contest for her paper, “Replacing Foster Care with Family Care: The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018.” Now as a Staff Attorney, Caitlyn seeks to reunify families impacted by the family regulation system and aims to keep children out of foster care.



**Cynthia Godsoe** is a Professor of Law at Brooklyn Law School. She teaches courses in family law, criminal law, children and the law, sex crimes, and public interest lawyering. She has also taught family law as a Visiting Professor at Columbia Law School. Her scholarship centers on the regulation of intimate behavior and gender roles through family and criminal law, encompassing topics including the path to marriage equality, the criminalization of non-conforming girls, and the abolition of the child welfare system. Before joining the Brooklyn Law School faculty, Professor Godsoe represented children and youth in impact litigation and individual cases in juvenile justice, education, and child protection matters as an attorney at the Legal Aid Society’s Juvenile Rights Division and Advocates for Children, among others. Professor Godsoe is a graduate, *magna cum laude with distinction*, of Harvard College, and of Harvard Law School, *cum laude*.



**Bianca Shaw** currently serves as the Assistant Director for Programs and Culture at Rise. There, Bianca is responsible for supervising Rise's dynamic team of Directors, Coordinators and Parent Leaders. She is also responsible for shifting Rise's internal culture to be not only anti-oppressive and anti-racist, but also healing-centered. Ultimately, Bianca's work is to ensure that Rise's programs and outcomes are aligned with its mission and values. Since 2012, Bianca has worked in partnership with groups directly impacted by systemic harm and oppression. To amplify their voices, experiences and leadership, Bianca has served as a training and technical assistance provider for organizations led and operated by people who are living with HIV/AIDS, as well as those who have faced chronic homelessness, substance use and mass incarceration. Through a Black queer feminist lens, Bianca brings to Rise popular education, abolitionist theory and the ability to envision and create communities of safety, wellness and care, in the workplace and in communities. Bianca is a graduate of Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work where she focused on Community Organizing, Planning and Development.



**Dr. Tricia Stephens** joined the faculty at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College (CUNY) as an Assistant Professor in 2015. Her research with child welfare (CW) affected parents of color highlights the trauma parents face as they encounter layers of injustice within the CW and Family Court systems. Noting that these systems are more adept at replicating their involvement in families across generations than helping families resolve immediate needs, Dr. Stephens maintains that families who need help should be able to get support in a dignified manner without the threat of separation and regulation.



**Kele Stewart** is a Professor at the University of Miami School of Law where, as co-director of the Children & Youth Law Clinic, she supervises law students in representing children in the family regulation system. Using a holistic model, the clinic represents children in dependency, education, public health benefits and other cases. Professor Stewart's research and law reform advocacy focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children. She is active in child welfare reform efforts and currently serves as the Co-Chair of the Miami Dade Community-Based Care Alliance, Committee on Race Equity in Child Welfare. In 2017, Professor Stewart co-founded the University of Miami site of First Star Academy, a holistic college preparation program for youth in foster care. In 2011, she was awarded a J. William Fulbright Scholar grant to study child protection in her native Trinidad and Tobago. Stewart earned a B.S. in Human Development and Family Studies from Cornell University and a J.D. from N.Y.U. Law School.



**Halimah Washington** is a Black mama and social justice activist/advocate from New York City. Halimah has over 15 years of experience in human services and has made it her mission to be a social change agent. She has been action oriented, lobbying in Albany as an activist and advocate fighting for criminal justice reform, reproductive justice, education reform, fair and affordable housing and HIV/AIDS-related issues. She continues her activism efforts with the #endASFA, #AbolishACS and #DefundACS campaigns and her advocacy efforts through work as a Birth Justice Defender. Halimah is a Columbia University Beyond the Bars Fellow and NYC Department of Health Birth Justice Defender



**Imani Worthy** is a Parent Leader at Rise. Imani facilitates workshops on public speaking for the Rise & Shine Parent Leadership Program and CORE parent advocate training. Imani is a graduate of the 2020 Rise & Shine Parent Leadership Program and has learned so much about child welfare history and family preservation. After witnessing and experiencing a lot of racial bias in the child welfare system, health care system and in workplaces, Imani is determined to raise awareness and bring healing to communities impacted the most by child welfare and other forms of systemic racism. Imani supports Rise's work to ensure the abolition of the child welfare system. She is a radical who is determined to make serious changes to the child welfare system and to empower parents who have been impacted by it. Imani joined Rise because she believes in its mission. Any platform that allows families to tell their stories without biases or prejudices is an extremely powerful one. Imani hopes to open the pathway of people who want to tell their story to advocate for the abolition of the child welfare system.