

THE ADVOCATE

The Polestino Trial Advocacy Institute Newsletter
2020-2021



PTAI's 2020-2021 Executive Board

To call the past twelve months historic would be an understatement. As a nation, we have simultaneously grappled with a global pandemic and begun confronting a centuries-long tragedy of racial inequity and violence against people of color. As an organization, the Polestino Trial Advocacy Institute met this year's unprecedented challenges. We successfully competed in numerous virtual trial advocacy tournaments. We hosted in-depth discussions on how the criminal legal system can better serve all people. In a year marked by isolation, we stayed connected. In short, PTAI's members met this moment head-on, becoming stronger, more engaged advocates and citizens.

2020-2021 Externals Competitions



This year, in order to stay safe and stop the spread of COVID-19, the world moved to virtual spaces. Classes moved online. Court moved online. Mock trial moved online. We practiced over WebEx from our bedrooms. We hurriedly unmuted ourselves on Zoom and lodged our objections. Making the right impression is an important component of advocacy, so each of us got a crash course in the world of lights, camera, action. When we did enjoy the rare opportunity to gather in person, we masked up and hugged just long enough to take a photo, before scattering to a socially distanced six feet.

Maybe the only thing that didn't change this year was PTAI's dominance in the 2020-2021 mock trial competition season. Twenty advocates competed in the fall; twenty advocates competed in the spring. Our stalwart coaches guided us through a difficult year and taught us skills we will take into our professional lives.

In the fall, during the National All-Star Bracket Challenge, 3Ls Matthew Cleaver, Jasmine Johnson, Sandra Jovic, and Samantha McCarthy, coached by Brian Hughes and Joanna Matuza, cleared the regionals, advanced to the nationals, and placed in the top eight teams in the country out of sixty-four other teams. During the Syracuse National Trial Competition, 3Ls Emma Bausert, Erik Barron, Ryan Hallock, and 2L Carihanna Morrison, coached by Scott Davis and Kaitlin McTague, advanced to the final four out of a total of twenty-two teams.

In the spring, during the regionals of the Texas Young Lawyers' Association National Trial Competition, 3Ls Jasmine Johnson and Samantha McCarthy, coached by Brian Hughes and Joann Matuza, advanced to the final round. During the Capitol City Challenge, 2Ls Jared Brady, Kimberly Gernatt, Chelsea McGee, and Rebekah Sherry, coached by Hon. Gene Guarino and Brenna Strype, advanced to the Sweet 16 Round, competing against an extremely competitive field.

A class of strong 3L advocates leaves us this year, but over the course of the fall and spring seasons, sixteen 2Ls competed and made their mark, indicating a deep bench of talented advocates who are ready to take on the 2021-2022 season. As for the 2020-2021 season, not only did we get through it, we rose to the challenge and succeeded.

FALL 2020 EXTERNALS SEASON

Syracuse National Trial Competition

- Advocates
 - o Emma Bausert (3L)
 - o Erik Barron (3L)
 - o Ryan Hallock (3L)
 - o Carihanna Morrison (2L)
- Coaches
 - o Scott Davis
 - o Kaitlin McTague

National All-Star Bracket Challenge

- Advocates
 - o Matthew Cleaver (3L)
 - o Jasmine Johnson (3L)
 - o Sandra Jovic (3L)
 - o Samantha McCarthy (3L)
- Coaches
 - o Brian Hughes
 - o Joanna Matuza

Buffalo Niagara Trial Competition

- Advocates
 - o Lauren Collins (3L)
 - o Dallas Neely (3L)
 - o Elizabeth Sheehan (2L)
 - o Rebekah Sherry (2L)
- Coaches
 - o Hon. Joe Calabrese
 - o Michael Vicario

Hofstra Medical Legal Trial Competition

- Advocates
 - o Javonne Jenkins (2L)
 - o Kelly Keane (2L)
 - o Dariana Reid (2L)
 - o Tiffany Testa (3L)
- Coaches
 - o Marlee Galvez
 - o Michael Maffei

In Vino Veritas Trial Competition

- Advocates
 - o Nick Kania (3L)
 - o Chelsea McGee (2L)
 - o Emily Price (3L)
 - o Jenna Valente (3L)
- Coaches
 - o Erik Snipas
 - o Brenna Strype

SPRING 2021 EXTERNALS SEASON

Texas Young Lawyers Assoc. Natl. Trial Comp.

- Advocates
 - o Erik Barron (3L)
 - o Sandra Jovic (3L)
- Coaches
 - o Marlee Galvez
 - o Michael Maffei

Texas Young Lawyers Assoc. Natl. Trial Comp.

- Advocates
 - o Jasmine Johnson (3L)
 - o Samantha McCarthy (3L)
- Coaches
 - o Brian Hughes
 - o Joanna Matuza

Amer. Assoc. for Justice Student Trial Ad. Comp.

- Advocates
 - o Dallas Neely (3L)
 - o Dariana Reid (2L)
 - o Elizabeth Sheehan (2L)
 - o Roger Wong (3L)
- Coaches
 - o Scott Davis
 - o Daniel Quinn

Amer. Assoc. for Justice Student Trial Ad. Comp.

- Advocates
 - o Alex Araya (2L)
 - o Skye Boutte (2L)
 - o Javonne Jenkins (2L)
 - o Olivia Piluso (2L)
- Coaches
 - o Hon. Joe Calabrese
 - o Mike Vicario

Capitol City Challenge

- Advocates
 - o Jared Brady (2L)
 - o Kimberly Gernatt (2L)
 - o Chelsea McGee (2L)
 - o Rebekah Sherry (2L)
- Coaches
 - o Hon. Gene Guarino
 - o Brenna Strype

National Ethics Trial Competition

- Advocates
 - o Jack Davis (2L)
 - o Janelle Eng (2L)
 - o Lauren Howard (2L)
 - o Mouna Jaouad (2L)
- Coaches
 - o Pat Brand
 - o Jana McNulty

The 2021 Brian Peterson Memorial First-Year Trial Competition



1L Competition Champions!

Advocates

Michael Allain
Gabriella Blum
Ryan Fenn
Kayla Nieves

Coaches

Lauren Collins
Sandra Jovic

Seventy-two 1Ls. Forty-six coaches. Thirty evaluators. In a year when the simple act of coming together often felt like a miracle, 148 individuals – students, professors, and alumni – came together to make the 2021 Brian Peterson Memorial 1L Trial Competition a resounding success.

Over the course of five weeks and conducted entirely over WebEx, a tremendously talented class of 1L advocates learned how to read a fact pattern, develop a theme and theory of a prosecution and defense case, and draft examinations and statements. They got a crash course in evidence, lodging objections, and making cogent pre-trial and mid-trial motions.

Our gratitude goes out to the many PTAI alums and current members who dedicated their time and expertise to coaching these teams and evaluating the five competition rounds. The 1L Competition is always a moment where those who know and love trial advocacy give back to the next generation of future practitioners, and this year, with its myriad challenges, was no different. That dedication is a testament to the strength of the relationships PTAI produces.

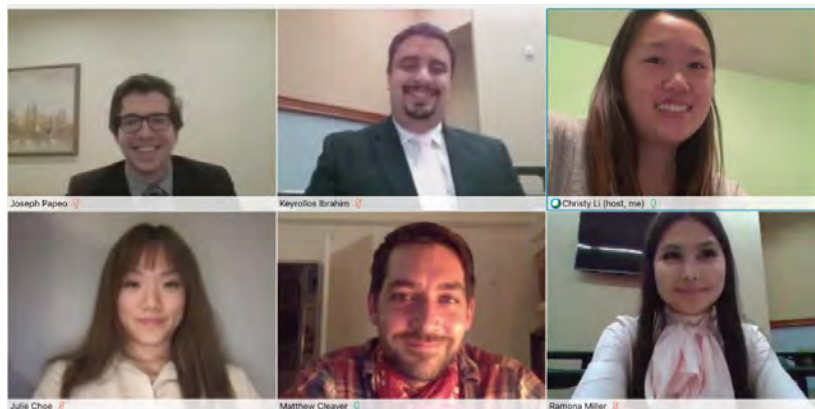
1L Competition Finalists!

Advocates

Julie Choe
Keyrollos Ibrahim
Ramona Miller
Joseph Papeo

Coaches

Matthew Cleaver
Christy Li



The McKenna Forum

The Role of Prosecutorial Discretion in a Justice-Seeking Model



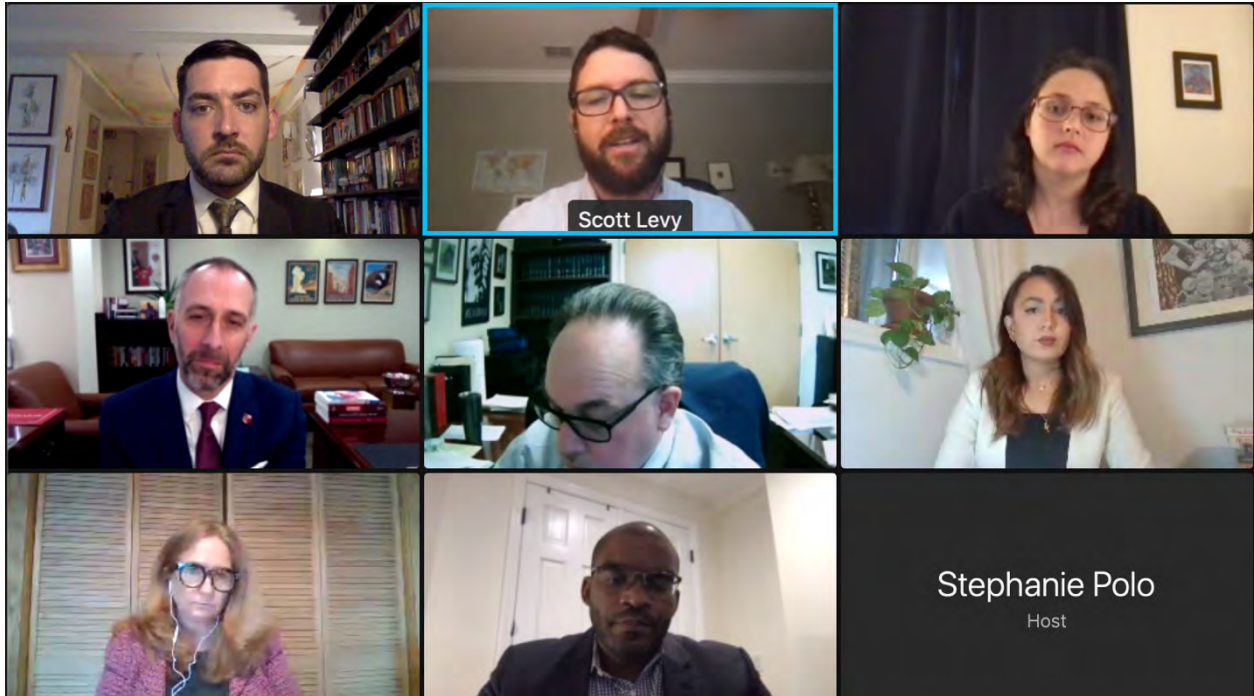
Over the summer and coming after the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and so many other people of color by law enforcement, PTAI's Executive Board met to discuss the upcoming year's programming and how we as an organization could add to the discussion on criminal legal reform generated by the summer's protests for racial justice.

The first of those discussions was our fall McKenna Forum, a panel on the role of prosecutorial discretion in a justice-seeking model. Joining us in that discussion were Darcel Clark, Bronx County District Attorney; Timothy J. Koller, Chief Assistant District Attorney for Richmond County; Jennifer L. Naiburg, Chief Assistant District Attorney for Queens County; Nitin Savur, Executive Assistant District Attorney for Strategic Initiatives for Manhattan; and Pishoy Yacoub, Executive Assistant District Attorney for Queens County and the head of St. John's Prosecution Clinic. The discussion was moderated by Dean Michael Simons.

The discussion covered a wide range of issues posed by prosecutorial discretion, including the scope of discretion; the contexts in which that discretion is used, including in charging decisions, plea negotiations, grand juries, and in investigating and prosecuting police misconduct; and in what ways prosecutorial discretion harms and helps the movement for a more racially equitable justice system.

Advocates in the Spotlight

Abolish ____: What's Next in Criminal Legal Reform



After the fall discussion with district attorney executives on prosecutorial discretion and its intersection with criminal legal reform, PTAI wanted to hear from the other side of the courtroom. In the spring, we chose to dedicate our Advocates in the Spotlight series to a conversation with public defender policy experts, called “Abolish ____: What’s Next in Criminal Legal Reform.”

Joining us in that discussion were N. Scott Banks, Attorney-in-Chief of The Legal Aid Society of Nassau County; Philip Desgranges, Supervising Attorney for The Legal Aid Society of NYC’s Special Litigation Unit; MK Kaishian, Senior Policy Counsel for Brooklyn Defender Services (and a PTAI alum!); Scott Levy, Chief Policy Counsel for The Bronx Defenders; Andrea Nieves, Senior Policy Attorney for New York County Defender Services; and Dorothy Riordan-Hughes, Supervising Attorney for Queens Defenders’ Domestic Violence Unit. Again, the discussion was moderated by our own Dean Simons.

After 2019’s historic reforms to New York’s bail and discovery laws – and their subsequent rollbacks, the horizon shifted. This discussion helped answer the questions of how far and in what directions that horizon shifted. In a political climate where the word “abolish” featured prominently both on protest banners and in scare-tactic headlines, this discussion helped define the goals and obstacles of future criminal legal reforms.

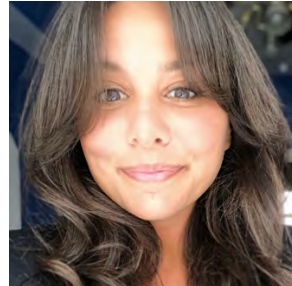
Meet the 2020-2021 Executive Board



Emma Bausert
Executive Director



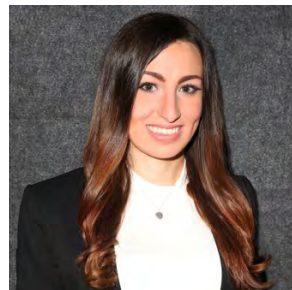
Jasmine Johnson
Managing Director



Sandra Jovic
*Director of Externals
Competitions*



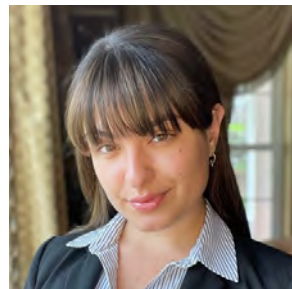
Samantha McCarthy
*Director of Internals
Competitions*



Lauren Collins
Director of Special Events



Matthew Cleaver
*Director of
Alumni Relations*



Jenna Valente
Chair of Communications



Dallas Neely
Chair of Recruitment



Erik Barron
*Chair of
Inter-Organizational
Events*

Meet the 2021-2022 Executive Board



Elizabeth Sheehan
Executive Director



Carihanna Morrison
Managing Director



Dariana Reid
*Director of Externals
Competitions*



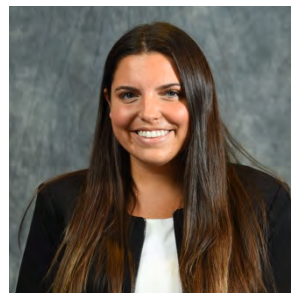
Alex Araya
*Director of Internals
Competitions*



Jared Brady
Director of Special Events



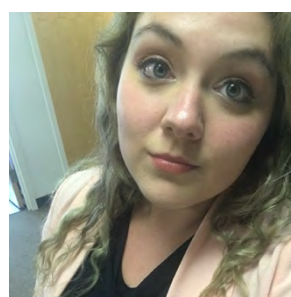
Chelsea McGee
*Associate Director of
Alumni Relations*



Lauren Howard
*Associate Director of
Communications and
Records*



Javonne Jenkins
*Associate Director of
Recruitment and
Outreach*



Kimberly Gernatt
*Associate Director of
Inter-Organizational
Events*