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***SHAPING AND INSPIRING FUTURE LEADERS IN PUBLIC DEFENSE:
PUBLIC DEFENDER CORPS FELLOWS ANNOUNCED***

(May 1, 2012) Washington, DC – Across the country public defender offices are under-funded, under-staffed, and inundated with enormous caseloads, resulting in a fundamentally unfair criminal justice system. Equal Justice Works® and The Southern Public Defender Training Center (SPDTC) are working to change that and have announced the 2012 Class of Public Defender Corps Fellows. These 19 fellows will spend the next three years committed to changing the standard of practice for defendants who are caught in the criminal justice system and cannot afford an attorney. Selected through a highly competitive process that drew more than 450 applicants from law schools across the country, the Public Defender Corps Fellows will receive intense training, mentorship and support as they launch their careers as leaders of criminal justice reform.

The 2012 class of Public Defender Corps Fellows joins a community of defenders dedicated to changing the culture of indigent representation and systemic reform. “These new lawyers come out of law school ready to change the world and through the Public Defender Corps they have an avenue to do it,” said Jonathan Rapping, Founder and President of SPDTC. “They are given an intensive training experience and are supported by a faculty of some of the best public defenders in the country. As we get ready to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s landmark Gideon decision next year, these new public defenders can help us live up to Gideon’s promise.”

“The competition for the Public Defender Corps program is intense,” said David Stern, Executive Director of Equal Justice Works. “To be considered, applicants must meet a set of rigorous academic and professional requirements; demonstrate a commitment to improving the indigent defense system and providing exceptional client-centered representation through personal experiences; and convey a conviction to the responsibilities of a public defender. I am confident that the 19 chosen for this year’s class represent the best and brightest in the field.” Among this year’s class are a Fulbright Scholar, an “Ending Supermax” Project participant, a former defense investigator for NOLA Investigates, and a recipient of the 2011 Nussbaum Public Interest Fellowship.

Public Defender Corps began in 2011 placing Fellows in ten host sites. In 2012, five new host sites have been added: Augusta, Georgia; Charleston, West Virginia; Memphis, Tennessee; and Lafayette and New Orleans, Louisiana. The Fellows will meet in July in Birmingham, Alabama, where the new class is set to begin training at the 2012 SPDTC Summer Institute. Ed Monahan, Chief Defender for the Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy stressed the leadership potential of Public Defender Corps Fellows, “I come from the viewpoint that the most significant way to improve representation for our clients is to get the best leaders – people with heart and the most passion. Leadership is a significant sustainable competitive advantage for our clients. That is what Public Defender Corps affords us.”

The Public Defender Corps is supported by a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

“The Bureau of Justice Assistance is proud to support this year’s Public Defender Corps Fellows” says BJA Director, Denise E. O’Donnell. “The Department of Justice is dedicated to providing resources for leadership training to elevate the quality of legal representation for indigent defendants. The new lawyers that emerge from this fellowship will advance the level of public defender services across the nation.”

A full list of the 2012 Public Defender Corps Fellows is attached. For additional information on the Public Defender Corps program, please visit www.thespdtc.org or www.equaljusticeworks.org.

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Equal Justice Works is the national leader in creating public interest opportunities for law students and lawyers. Collaborating with the nation’s leading law schools, law firms, corporate legal departments and nonprofit organizations, Equal Justice Works offers a continuum of opportunities that provide the training and skills that enable attorneys to provide effective representation to underserved communities and causes. Equal Justice Works is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. For additional information about Equal Justice Works, please visit www.equaljusticeworks.org.

The Southern Public Defender Training Center (SPDTC) aims to inspire, mobilize, and train legal professionals to provide the highest quality defense representation to people unable to afford an attorney. SPDTC lawyers, alumni, trainers and partners are changing the culture of indigent defense in the South and across the country, ensuring that every person has access to justice. SPDTC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For additional information, please visit www.thespdtc.org.

2012 PUBLIC DEFENDER CORPS FELLOWS

Georgia

- Robert Chan, Augusta Circuit Public Defender Office, *Emory University School of Law*

Kentucky

- Lyla Askejian, Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy, *Thomas Jefferson School of Law*
- Rob Beckwith, Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy, *University of Georgia School of Law*
- Michaela Beloiu, Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy, *Golden Gate University School of Law*
- Heather Gatnarek, Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy, *Georgetown Law*
- Christine Madjar, Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy, *Case Western Reserve University School of Law*

Louisiana

- D. Omavi Harshaw, Orleans Public Defenders, *Harvard Law School*
- Jessica Heyman, Juvenile Regional Services, New Orleans, *New York University School of Law*
- David Rubin, 15th Judicial District Public Defenders Office (Acadia Office), *University of San Francisco School of Law*
- Kevin Valdez, 15th Judicial District Public Defenders Office (Lafayette Office), *Washington University School of Law*

New York

- Campbell Paige Roth, Monroe County Public Defender's Office, Rochester, *Washington College of Law, American University*

North Carolina

- Christine Malumphy, Wake County Public Defender Office, Winston-Salem, *University of California, Berkeley, School of Law (Boalt Hall)*
- Jonathan Rex Marvel, Mecklenburg County Office of the Public Defender, Charlotte, *University of Cincinnati College of Law*

Tennessee

- Carmen Brooks, Public Defender of Metropolitan Nashville & Davidson County, *Georgetown Law*
- Kate Holtkamp, Knox County Public Defender's Community Law Office, Knoxville, *University of Tennessee College of Law*
- Katherine Oberembt, Shelby County Public Defenders, Memphis, *Yale Law School*
- Laurie Sansbury, Shelby County Public Defenders, Memphis, *University of Alabama School of Law*
- Maya Sheppard, Knox County Public Defender's Community Law Office, Knoxville, *University of Washington School of Law*

West Virginia

- Sara Whitaker, 13th Judicial Circuit Public Defender, Charleston, *Northwestern University School of Law*