



May 13, 2022

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Legal Aid Announces Twyla Carter as Attorney-In-Chief and Chief Executive Officer, First Black Woman and First Asian American to Helm Nation's Oldest and Largest Public Defender, Legal Services Organization

Carter Brings Years of Leadership Experience in Public Defense, Civil Rights and Access to Justice Work to LAS

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society announced the appointment of Twyla Carter, a national leader in public defense, civil rights and access to justice work, as Attorney-In-Chief and Chief Executive Officer. Carter becomes the first Black Woman and first Asian American to serve in this role in its over 145 year history. Carter will assume this role full-time in August 2022.

Carter will depart her role as National Director of Legal and Policy at The Bail Project, a nonprofit organization that provides free bail assistance and pretrial support to thousands of low-income people every year. In this position, Twyla created the unit's strategic mission and directed the legal, policy, and advocacy efforts at the federal, state and local levels, and successfully fought efforts in multiple states to eradicate or limit the work of charitable bail organizations.

Prior to joining The Bail Project, Carter served as a Senior Staff Attorney in the Criminal Law Reform Project at the American Civil Liberties Union where she litigated local and state bail inequities and right-to-counsel protections in the federal courts and designed alternative bail and representation policies and procedures for targeted jurisdictions. Notably, Carter litigated *Booth v. Galveston County*, a pretrial bail case in Texas where the magistrate court held that people accused of crimes have a right to counsel in initial bail hearings under the Sixth Amendment, one of the only jurisdictions in the nation to guarantee legal representation at this critical stage of trial.

Carter was also a public defender for ten years and the Misdemeanor Practice Director for the King County Department of Public Defense. She also served as a Staff Attorney with The Defender Association on felony and misdemeanor cases.

“It’s truly an honor to join the nation’s oldest and largest public law firm serving low-income people on a myriad of issues ranging from criminal defense to tenant rights, access to justice for young New Yorkers, and so much more,” said **Twyla Carter, incoming Attorney-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer of The Legal Aid Society**. “Now more than ever, vulnerable New Yorkers need Legal Aid, and I look forward to further enabling and positioning the organization to strengthen bedrock direct services, policy advocacy and impact litigation work. Our clients deserve nothing less.”

In her new role, Carter will work to secure Legal Aid funding fairness to ensure that staff are fully compensated for their invaluable work and that the organization has the resources needed to continue to provide New Yorkers comprehensive legal representation. This campaign will build on Legal Aid’s pay parity efforts which sought to bridge the salary gap between public defender and civil legal services employees with City attorneys.

“Legal Aid has played an incomparable role in New York City for well over a century, connecting vulnerable New Yorkers with critical legal services to address a myriad of needs,” said **Zachary Carter, Chair of the Board of Directors at The Legal Aid Society**. “We are thrilled that Twyla Carter, a prominent member of the national public defender and civil rights community, will serve at the helm of Legal Aid, positioning the organization to meet the challenges that face our clients and the communities we serve.”

“The Legal Aid Society has been a vital partner in Robin Hood’s mission to elevate New Yorkers out of poverty, particularly through Legal Aid’s advocacy for the creation of safe, long-term, and affordable housing for low-income communities. From her time as a public defender and as a civil rights advocate, Twyla Carter has fought for justice for those too-long denied it. We are thrilled to see Twyla bring her expertise to a storied institution – an appointment made even more significant as the first Black woman Attorney-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer to lead Legal Aid,” said **Richard R. Buery, Jr., Chief Executive Officer of Robin Hood, New York City’s largest poverty fighting philanthropy**.

“The Legal Aid Society deserves to be commended for the historic appointment of Twyla Carter as its next Attorney-In-Chief and Chief Executive Officer. Ms. Carter brings a wealth of leadership experience in the areas of public criminal defense and civil access to justice,” said **Janet DiFiore, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and the State of New York**. “I have no doubt that she will be a valued contributor to New York’s ongoing efforts to close the access to justice gap and ensure fair and effective legal representation for individuals and families of modest means. We look forward to Ms. Carter’s leadership of The Legal Aid Society as it continues to carry out its mission of providing effective legal assistance and representation to the most vulnerable New Yorkers -- no matter who they are or where they come from in life.”

“Twyla Carter is an attorney who has committed her career to advancing access to justice on behalf of under-resourced communities and will undoubtedly take The Legal Aid Society to even higher levels,” said **April Frazier Camara, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Legal Aid & Defender Association**. “The Legal Aid Society is a national leader in providing both civil and criminal legal aid in America, and we are excited to see the first Black woman be selected as the new leader poised to continue the organization’s great legacy.”

“The National Association for Public Defense (NAPD) is thrilled at the announcement that Twyla Carter is the incoming Attorney-in-Chief and CEO for The Legal Aid Society. The Legal Aid Society is a leader within NAPD and in the national public and the defense community. The appointment of Twyla is wonderful news. Twyla’s exceptional talent and proven experience as both a direct advocate and national policy reformer will translate to important progress in our work for a fair and client-centered criminal legal system in oppressed communities - in New York and beyond,” said **Lori James-Towns, Executive Director of the National Association for Public Defense**.

“Twyla has been a national leader in public defense and systemic reform efforts for years,” said **Anita Khandelwal, Director of the King County Department of Public Defense**. “Twyla has the vision to transform

both the practice of public defense and the criminal legal system, and the clients and communities served by The Legal Aid Society will benefit immensely with her as Attorney-In-Chief and CEO of such an important institution.”

“Twyla Carter is an outstanding litigator and a natural leader, whose technical skill and strategic judgment served her clients well in her previous work as a civil rights lawyer and public defender,” said **Aaron Lewis, Partner at Covington & Burling LLP**. “Even more important, Twyla is a fearless, tireless advocate on behalf of the most vulnerable members of our nation's communities. Twyla's passion for securing justice for the vulnerable is perhaps her greatest strength, and it will benefit The Legal Aid Society and those it serves in the years to come.”

“Twyla Carter is a brilliant, strategic, and fierce advocate, who even in her role as a National Director of Legal and Policy at The Bail Project, always remained a public defender to her core. I can't think of anyone better to lead The Legal Aid Society at this moment,” said **Robin Steinberg, founder and Chief Executive Officer of The Bail Project and former Executive Director of The Bronx Defenders**. “We are grateful for her many contributions to The Bail Project and wish her all the best in this new leadership role.”

“Twyla Carter is a force to be reckoned with and we congratulate her and the Legal Aid Society on her appointment as Attorney-In-Chief and Chief Executive Officer,” said **Insha Rahman, Vice President of advocacy and partnerships at the Vera Institute of Justice**. “Twyla brings to this role a unique set of experiences, from courtroom public defender in Seattle to pretrial policy expert in statehouses across the country and manager of advocacy at one of the largest national justice reform organizations. She knows personally that the fight for justice in this country is, at its core, a fight for racial justice, and we know we will collectively benefit from her leadership.”

“I am thrilled to learn that Twyla will bring her proven leadership and vast legal experience to The Legal Aid Society as Attorney-In-Chief and CEO,” said **Jeffery Robinson, Founder of The Who We Are Project**. “Twyla is universally admired and respected for her tenacity, brilliance and humility, and Legal Aid will benefit tenfold with Twyla leading such a storied and invaluable institution, one that provides critical legal services on an array of matters to low-income communities of color.”

“Twyla Carter’s experience as a legal defense attorney, policy advocate and civil rights lawyer makes her exceptionally well-suited to lead The Legal Aid Society, the country’s largest legal aid provider,” said **Anthony D. Romero, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union**. “Twyla uniquely bridges the world of legal aid with high impact-litigation, but she’s been single-minded in the communities she serves and the individuals she helps. In Twyla, The Legal Aid Society has found an exceptional head who will lead the organization from strength to greater strength, and someone who will uniquely bridge the worlds of justice and opportunity for the least advantaged.”

“Twyla’s experience as a public defender, impact litigator, civil rights advocate and national leader on social justice issues makes her the perfect fit to helm the nation’s oldest and largest public defense and civil legal services law firm,” said **Maya Wiley, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights**. “Twyla knows and understands the plights facing low-income, Black and Latinx communities, and will work to strengthen Legal Aid’s holistic and client-centered approach, ensuring that our most vulnerable neighbors receive the legal representation that they need and deserve.”

“Legal Aid has hit the jackpot in selecting Twyla Carter to guide its work into the future! Twyla’s dynamic leadership style, extraordinary vision, passion for the work, and longstanding experience advocating on behalf of the most vulnerable people among us, will only enhance the remarkable work that Legal Aid attorneys do for their clients each day. And her fierce commitment to racial and economic justice across all sectors of our society ensures that the organization’s work will continue to center the communities of color that rely disproportionately on its services,” said **Jason D. Williamson, Executive Director of the Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law at New York University School of Law**.

"I have known Twyla Carter for a number of years as a trial lawyer in my courtroom and as a policy advocate at the Washington State Supreme Court. She is tireless in her advocacy for true justice," said **Justice Mary I. Yu of the Washington State Supreme Court**. "Twyla demands that the legal system serve those without resources or power because it is the true test of our constitutional principles. I am particularly proud that a woman of Black and Asian descent has ascended to this prestigious position and am so very proud that she will have an opportunity to use her exceptional intelligence and skills to advance justice in New York City."

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org