

Amanda Oren, Esq. - Amanda's legal career has been dedicated to assisting traditionally underserved populations either through direct client services or through policy reform. After graduating from CUNY Law School in 2001, and being admitted into the bar in 2002, Amanda began her professional trajectory advocating for children with autism who had been denied a meaningful education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). After relocating to Rochester, New York, she represented clients in civil rights matters and employment law including litigating racial discrimination, gender discrimination and false imprisonment cases. Amanda served as a Monroe County public defender representing indigent clients in criminal and family court. She then undertook policy work in Albany implementing reforms of New York's public defense system. In April 2020, Amanda returned to Monroe County and began as the supervising attorney of the Children's Services Unit for the Monroe County Law Department, which provides legal representation to Monroe County's Department of Human Services, Child and Family Services Division.

Christine Sabino Kiesel - is an Attorney and Independent Contractor and works as a Child Welfare Specialist for JBS International, where she provides support to the Federal Children's Bureau supporting legal and judicial integration into states' Child and Family Services Reviews. Previously, Ms. Kiesel was the Coordinator of the New York State Child Welfare Court Improvement Project. Christine came to that position after presiding over a best practice permanency part in Oneida County Family Court as a Court Attorney Referee; and serving as a Principal Court Attorney to Hon. Frank S. Cook, Oneida County Family Court Judge and Hon. W. Dennis Duggan, Albany County Family Court Judge. Prior to her government service, Ms. Kiesel's practice focused primarily as a Family Law Attorney serving as the First Assistant Public Defender for the Oneida County Public Defender's Office - Civil Division, as well as representing many Oneida County children. She provides training on child welfare topics and supports child welfare system change work across the country.

Coral Mrozik is a Houghton College graduate; she studied Psychology, Education, and Literature to support trauma-impacted youth. She is currently serving in many different roles through OCFS and NY Courts. Coral is involved in the Professional Development Program, on the OCFS Youth Advisory Board, and just finished her work on the Chafee Data Project. Coral also works as a direct support staff and has collaborated with those working on the Child Welfare Court Improvement Project. Her passion to advocate for youth in foster care is a result of her own lived experience. She hopes to contribute to the improvement of the foster system for those who follow behind her. She spends her spare time volunteering at a local community center, being in nature, and furthering her knowledge about how trauma manifests and impacts different populations.

Deonna Jones, Esq. – Deonna Jones, Esq., is an attorney in Buffalo, New York, and proud mother to her daughter, Justice. Deonna started her legal career as an Assistant District Attorney for Erie County and later moved on to her current role as Assistant Legal Counsel for the Buffalo Public Schools. Deonna currently serves on the executive board for both the Minority Bar Association of Western New York and Friends of Broderick Park.

Deonna was born and raised in Buffalo and graduated from Bennett High School and later University at Buffalo. Deonna is a former foster care youth and she aged out of foster at the age of 21. During her sixteen years in and out of the foster care system, Deonna lived in foster homes, kinship homes, and was reunified with her family multiple times. As a former foster care youth, Deonna has devoted herself to working with troubled youth and serving her community. Before applying to law school Deonna worked part-time as a caseworker at a group home for foster care teen moms and she worked in the community with organizations such as No More Tears and Buffalo Peacemakers. Throughout law school, Deonna interned at the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo in the Attorney for Children unit, the Erie County District Attorney’s office, with the legal services provided at The Door; a non-profit organization in New York City, she also volunteered with pro se litigants at Family Court, and she volunteered at the Mexico Border with clients seeking asylum. As a proud member of Elim Christian Fellowship, Deonna continues to dedicate herself to improving Buffalo’s community.

Honorable Jacqueline Deane - Judge Deane was appointed to the Family Court bench by Mayor DeBlasio in February of 2015 and she currently presides over a combined juvenile delinquency and child abuse and neglect part in Kings County Family Court. In that capacity, Judge Deane has Co-Chaired the Kings County Family Court LGBTQ Pride Event Committee, the Teen Day Committee and the Gender Fairness Committee.

Prior to her appointment, Judge Deane had been a legal advocate for young people in the NYC juvenile and criminal justice systems for 30 years. During that time Judge Deane held various positions within the Juvenile Rights Practice of the Legal Aid Society (“JRP”) including Deputy Attorney in Charge of the Practice. JRP represents young people charged with juvenile delinquency petitions in all of the NYC Family Courts as well as children who are the subjects of abuse and neglect proceedings. Judge Deane’s last position at JRP was as the Director of Delinquency Training and Practice where she oversaw supervision, training and policy development in the area of juvenile delinquency. Judge Deane was also an Adjunct Clinical Professor at New York University School of Law for almost 20 years. Beginning in 2006, Judge Deane developed and taught the Children’s Rights Clinic which focused in part on the representation of LGBTQ youth and she previously taught and supervised students in the year-long Juvenile Defender Clinic. Judge Deane was the first Director of the Northeast Regional Juvenile Defender Center for NY, NJ, PA and DE when the Center was housed at JRP. Judge Deane has also trained and supervised new attorneys for the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem and was a staff attorney with the Criminal Defense Division of Legal Aid.

HON. JOAN S. KOHOUT, Acting Supreme Court Justice and Monroe County Family Court Judge, Ret. A graduate of Albany Law School and Skidmore College, Judge Joan S. Kohout was appointed to Monroe County Family Court by Governor Mario Cuomo 1988. After 30 years on the bench, Judge Kohout retired in December 2018.

Prior to becoming a judge, Judge Kohout was in private practice and then represented indigent defendants and parties in the Monroe County Public Defender's Office for twelve years. While in the Public Defenders Office, Judge Kohout handled felony and misdemeanor cases and later served as the supervising attorney for the Family Court section.

In addition to her primary assignment as a Family Court Judge, Judge Kohout had long term assignments in County Court handling felony cases and as a Multi-Bench Judge in Supreme, County and Surrogate Courts. She established the Monroe County Youth Part as part of the Raise the Age legislation and was concurrently assigned to the Juvenile Delinquency Part.

As a Family Court Judge for over 30 years, Judge Kohout handled thousands of cases involving abused and neglected children, adoption, child custody, domestic violence and juvenile matters.

As a member of the NYS Finger Lakes Youth Justice Team, Judge Kohout continues to provide local leadership on juvenile justice issues. She also serves on the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee of the Office of Court Administration's the Family Court Advisory and Rules Committee where she actively advocated for passage of Raise the Age legislation and other criminal justice reform impacting youth.

Judge Kohout is a Past Dean of the Monroe County Bar Association Academy of Law and a current member of the Monroe County Bar President's Commission on Access to Justice, the Assigned County Advisory Board, the Health and Wellness Committee and the Criminal Law Section. She is also a member of the New York State Bar Association and the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys. She is the current Chair of the Educational Loan Fund of the Greater Rochester Branch of the American Association of University Women. Judge Kohout continues to train judges through the NYS Judicial Institute and to mentor attorneys and assist clients through Just Cause.

Judge Kohout is a recipient of the NYSBA Ruth Shapiro Award, the Albany Law School Kate Stoneman Award, the Monroe County Bar Association Pauley Award for leadership in CLE programming for attorneys, the Hanna Cohn Mentoring Award and the Distinguished Jurist Award from the Center for Dispute Settlement.

Joshua Corbo - Josh Corbo's involvement with the child welfare system and courts started at the age of three due to neglect. Although Josh entered the foster care system at the age of eleven, he remembers random individuals always coming into his home to check on his family due to allegations of sexual abuse and neglect. Josh's mother was the steadfast presence in his life while his father was in and out of prison. At the age of eleven, Josh and two of his three siblings entered the foster care system and were placed separately. Josh remained in care until he aged out at 21. Josh joined the military and has gone on to become a NYS court officer. He currently has a relationship with his mother and his sisters.

Larry Malcom Smith Jr. - Also known as IAMQUEENS, is an Activist, Organizer, Movement Strategist, Social Justice Leader, and Youth Public Advocate for the Child Welfare System.

IAMQUEENS is also a survivor of the Administration for Children's Services NYC child welfare foster care system, having spent the majority of his life moving between **23 different foster homes** where he endured countless physical, psychological, sexual, and emotional abuses.

Today, IAMQUEENS works to advocate for foster kids and youth, so that **no other child has to go through this deeply flawed and destructive system.**

IAMQUEENS attended his **first protest at age 8** and has not stopped since. By sharing his story and helping to mobilize the community, Larry plans to **impact tangible change for foster youth** and be a voice for this voiceless community.

IAMQUEENS' activist work has been recognized and covered in numerous publications including The New York *Times* and among many highlights, the march for Black foster youth which he helped to co-organize was attended by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Larry's Purpose : To bring attention to the harm caused by foster care, so that no child is abused or neglected by a system that should facilitate homes in which children are **protected, loved and nurtured.**

IAMQUEENS is an award-winning Social Justice Activist and Foster Youth Advocate who has been recognized for his dedication to fighting for marginalized people everywhere.

He has received a Congressional Achievement Award from Congressman Gregory Meeks, a **Certificate of Appreciation** from iRock Charities, two **Citations** from New York State Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman, and was named **Honorable Man of 2020** at the 2nd Annual NY Hussle Awards.

Stephen Weisbeck, Esq. - Steve is a graduate from the University at Buffalo Law School. He worked briefly at a matrimonial firm and a Legal Aid Office in Long Island representing parents in Family Court. In 1995, he joined the Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Division in New York, and worked as a law guardian in the Bronx office for the next five years. For the past twenty-three years, he has worked as an AFC at the Legal Aid Society of Rochester, and has served as the Division Director of the AFC Unit since 2008

Thalia Wright – Ms. Wright is the Commissioner at Monroe County’s Department of Health and Human Services. As the first Afro-Latina Commissioner in Monroe County history, Thalia takes pride in her culture and heritage. Thalia was born to parents who migrated to the United States from Panama, Central America. Raised in Brooklyn NY her mother instilled the values of education and hard work, always reminding her that the sacrifices that her family made to migrate to the US for better opportunities and that this was not to be taken for granted.

Thalia has more than 20 years of experience in child welfare and social services, with an expertise in strategic planning and regulatory oversight. Before becoming DHS Commissioner, Thalia served as the Regional Director for Westchester and Long Island Regional Offices at the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Ironically, after relocating to Rochester from Brooklyn, she was employed as a Child Protective Investigator for Monroe County.

Thalia is a certified trainer in the Safe and Together Model, assisting practitioners with safety planning for survivors of domestic violence. She also facilitates Racial Equity Learning Exchange Sessions and data-driven discussions with local and statewide organizations that are designed to improve outcomes for children and families of color involved with juvenile justice and the welfare system. She also provided sessions on the intersectionality of the work of leadership development, managing difficult conversations, cultural competence, and unconscious bias for stakeholders.

Thalia has a bachelor’s degree in human services from SUNY Brockport and a master’s degree in organizational management and strategic leadership from Roberts Wesleyan College. She is a recipient of Robert’s Wesleyan’s distinguished Christian service award and is an alum to several different state and national fellowships. Thalia is the proud mother of Tailah who seeks a career in nursing. In her present role, Thalia works diligently to address the community needs and alternative approaches that will have a sustaining and positive outcome for children and families in Monroe County.
