



## **Senior Supervising Attorney, Criminal Justice Reform (Alabama)**

Montgomery, Alabama

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a leader in the fight against hate and bigotry in the United States, is seeking nominations and applications for the role of Senior Supervising Attorney (SSA), Criminal Justice Reform in Alabama. Joining a legal team that uses impact litigation and policy advocacy as its primary tools to relentlessly pursue justice and equal rights, the Senior Supervising Attorney will lead the implementation of SPLC's criminal justice reform agenda in Alabama and manage a highly-talented team in using all possible tools – including litigation, legislative campaigns, and public advocacy, to advance the rights of all.

As fear, political and cultural division, hatred, and economic uncertainty persist in the American consciousness and manifest in discriminatory policies, speech, and actions, individuals across the country are reigniting their commitment to equal justice. Southern Poverty Law Center's Legal Department is growing in response to the increased demand to protect Americans whose civil rights are being threatened in cities and states across the country. Over the last 12 months, the growth of this team has been unprecedented. Under the direction of Legal Director Rhonda Brownstein and Deputy Legal Director Lisa Graybill, the Criminal Justice Reform practice group is growing to meet the goal of delivering systemic reforms to a state that is among the top ten nationally in its rate of incarceration. Not only does Alabama lead most states in incarceration, its history of systemic racism resonates in every aspect of the criminal justice system, from over-policing to draconian sentencing policies to horrific conditions of confinement to collateral consequences that ensure that even when people leave prison, they are not free.

The new Senior Supervising Attorney will report to the Deputy Legal Director and collaboratively develop the vision and strategy for criminal justice reform in the state. Together with a team of attorneys, policy counsel, advocates, and support staff, the SSA will use every tool at his/her/their disposal to challenge the structural inequalities that have infected the criminal justice system in the state and continue to result in mass incarceration and the disproportionate incarceration of people of color. Specifically, the SSA will be responsible for developing and litigating impact cases raising constitutional and statutory claims in Alabama and federal courts, at both trial and appellate levels. The SSA will engage in litigation and public advocacy related to civil rights issues relating to practices in policing, prosecution, sentencing, incarceration, and probation/parole. This may include, but will not be limited to, advancing sentencing reform and addressing unconstitutional conditions in Alabama's juvenile, adult, and immigrant detention facilities. The SSA will lead the team in addressing other issues such as: the denial of due process in the criminal justice system; racial disparities; collateral consequences of justice system involvement; the provision of indigent defense; and over-policing or police misconduct.

The ideal candidate will be an exceptionally talented litigator, strategist, and manager with a deep, personal passion for equity and constitutional compliance at every stage of the criminal justice system. He/she/they will bring at least seven (7) years of litigation experience and two (2) years successfully managing and leading a highly-talented team and be barred or willing to sit for the next bar exam in Alabama.



This search is being conducted by Katherine Jacobs, Callie Carroll, and Erica Nicole Griffin of Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group. Please find application instructions at the end of this document.

## HISTORY AND MISSION

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Southern Poverty Law Center was founded in 1971 by Morris Dees and Joe Levin to secure the promises of the Civil Rights movement through impact litigation. While landmark court decisions of the 1950s and 1960s had set precedents to usher in widespread racial equality, states and local jurisdictions were reluctant to implement changes to ensure all people had equal access to public resources and equal protection under the law. Instead, vulnerable communities, especially Blacks in the South, faced discrimination in the workforce, in schools, in state legislatures, and the criminal justice system and hate-driven terror in their communities. Dees and Levin committed their careers at SPLC to pro bono litigation, taking on cases that few were willing to pursue and aggressively pushing for decisions that would have widespread implications.

In 1971, civil rights activist Julian Bond was named as SPLC's first president and the organization began to campaign for and win national financial support. As SPLC grew and expanded, it restructured its work to focus on four crucial areas of programming in the fight for justice. These include:

- **The Intelligence Project**, (formerly known as KlanWatch) a team dedicated to monitoring, infiltrating, reporting, and shutting down the activity of domestic hate groups.
- **Teaching Tolerance**, which combats prejudice among our nation's youth while promoting equality, inclusiveness and equitable learning environments in the classroom.
- **Civil Rights Memorial Center**, located across the street from SPLC and near other historic sites, features the names and stories of martyrs of the Civil Rights Movement, a theater, classrooms, and the Wall of Tolerance.
- **The Legal Department** continues to seek justice and advocate for the rights of all people, just as Morris Dees and Joe Levin did at SPLC's founding.

With critical wins over the years against discriminatory practices by individuals, the private sector, and local, state and federal government entities and actors, SPLC's legal team has inspired hope and brought justice to vulnerable individuals and marginalized communities throughout the South. Landmark cases against the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryan Nation significantly bankrupted elements of those groups and the Intelligence Project's sophisticated tracking of these groups continues to support the ongoing work of the legal team.

The Criminal Justice Reform practice area is one of five related but unique practice groups, which also include Economic Justice, Immigrant Justice, LGBT Rights and Special Litigation, and Children's Rights. More information about these practice areas and SPLC's other programs can be found at: <https://www.splcenter.org/>.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM AT SPLC

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Over the past four decades, the US incarceration rate has more than quadrupled and is now unprecedented in world history. Roughly 2.2 million people are behind bars in the United States, an increase of 1.9 million since 1972. The US has the world's largest prison population, with one-quarter of its prisoners but just 5 percent of the total population. On any given day, some seven million people, or about one in every 31 people, are under the supervision of the corrections system, either locked up or on probation or parole. This vast expansion of the corrections system, which has been called “the New Jim Crow”, is the direct result of a failed, decades-long drug war and a “law and order” movement that began as a reaction to the urban unrest of the late 1960s, just after the Civil Rights era. It's a system marred by vast racial disparities and that stigmatizes and targets young black men for arrest at a young age, unfairly targets communities of color, burdens taxpayers, and exacts a tremendous social cost.

The Criminal Justice Reform team works across the region – using litigation, education, and policy advocacy – to reduce Alabama's reliance on the criminal justice system, decrease Alabama's prison population, eliminate racial disparities, and ensure that Alabama's criminal justice system operates fairly and equitably for all. This work is organized by three priorities:

- **Reform unjust sentencing policies, eliminate racial disparities, and ensure humane conditions of confinement.** Alabama is home to the most over-crowded prison system in the United States, operating at about 165% of capacity. It is understaffed and conditions are dangerous and even deadly for both guards and people who are imprisoned. Alabama's swollen prison population is the result of decades of needlessly harsh and unproductive sentencing policies, many of which disproportionately impact people of color. SPLC is working to reform those policies at the legislature, while also litigating a historic statewide case to reform conditions of confinement in Alabama's 16 prisons.
- **Reduce juvenile incarceration, improve access to services, and end the practice of charging children as adults.** Children as young as ten years-old can be incarcerated in Alabama, and children as young as 14 can be charged as adults. Children being tried as adults are held in adult jails, where they are vulnerable to isolation, suicide, and violence. Racial disparities infect the system. SPLC is working to reform the juvenile justice system to ensure alternatives to incarceration are prioritized, end the practice of trying children as adults, and eliminate racial disparities.
- **Fight the detention of immigrants and end profiteering.** Although it is not a crime to be present in the United States without authorization, the immigration enforcement system has become conflated with the criminal justice system. People awaiting adjudication of their immigration cases are detained in jails operated by local law enforcement agencies or private prison operators looking for profits. SPLC is working to combat the profit incentive in incarceration, reduce immigrant detention, and ensure adequate conditions for immigrants who are detained.

Today, Alabama has one of the ten highest rates of incarceration in the US, is home to one of the worst immigrant detention centers in the country, and Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and the poor still face disproportionate arrest rates, longer sentences, greater risk of a death sentence, and inhumane living conditions in county jails and prisons.

The Criminal Justice Reform team in Alabama has been working diligently to combat these injustices, and there is much work still to do to ensure the humanity, dignity and fair treatment for all those that come into contact with the police, the courts, and the criminal justice system.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FACING THE SSA

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Work at the Southern Poverty Law Center is both a great privilege and responsibility. SPLC's mission to fight hate and bigotry and to seek justice for the most vulnerable members of society is a clarion call to advocates who are willing to commit their professional skills to the defense of a greater nation for all.

The Senior Supervising Attorney for Criminal Justice Reform in Alabama will work closely with Deputy Legal Director, Lisa Graybill, to set vision and strategy and manage the Alabama team to effectively deploy tools to reduce mass incarceration and ensure that all people in Alabama's criminal justice and immigrant detention systems are treated fairly and humanly. He/she/they will:

**Lead the development and implementation of SPLC's criminal justice work in Alabama, using all possible tools including litigation, legislative campaigns, and public advocacy to advance reform across the state.**

The Criminal Justice Reform team understands that successful social change often means exploiting the relationships between litigation, public awareness, state and federal policy, and legislators' platforms. The SSA will need to be particularly strategic as he/she/they identifies otherwise overlooked policy and legal avenues and arguments to weaken and eventually eliminate policies and practices that disproportionately target people of color and lead to mass incarceration.

**Develop strategic cases and lead cutting-edge litigation across Alabama to reform the criminal justice system.** The new SSA will partner with the Deputy Legal Director and the CJR team to identify and execute strategic litigation across the state. He/She/They will lead cases where appropriate, and delegate cases to senior staff attorneys, overseeing each stage of the process and providing support and consultation.

**Develop and lead public advocacy and awareness campaigns related to Criminal Justice Reform priority areas in Alabama.** The SSA will collaborate with the Deputy Legal Director and Policy Counsel, and Communications Department to identify and support the advancement of state and local policy priorities through public awareness and advocacy campaigns and targeted testimony to legislative bodies. The SSA will supervise outreach activities related to cases and campaigns in the state.

**Effectively manage a highly talented litigation, policy, advocacy, and support team.** The SSA will supervise and manage the work of Policy Counsel, Senior Staff Attorneys, Staff Attorneys, Law Fellows, and other legal staff and will assist in supervising and managing the work of the regional policy analyst data analyst and regional researcher/policy specialist.

**Represent SPLC's Alabama Criminal Justice Reform work to a diverse array of internal and external stakeholders.** The SSA will work collaboratively with other SSAs across the Criminal Justice Reform team, other practice areas, and the entire legal team to coordinate, collaborate, and align resources and strategy on key issues. The SSA will represent SPLC in various forums, including before community groups, legislatures, state agencies, and the press.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

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The ideal candidate will be an entrepreneurial and effective litigator, strategist, and manager with an unrelenting commitment to justice on behalf of all. While no one candidate will have all the qualifications



enumerated below, the ideal candidate will be a trained attorney and have the following skills, qualifications, and abilities:

- A sincere commitment to social justice and a keen awareness of the indelible relationship between impact litigation, policy advocacy, and social change;
- Exceptional litigation skills and at least seven (7) years of federal court civil litigation or comparable legal experience;
- At least two (2) years of demonstrated success inspiring and leading highly talented and diverse teams, preferably of legal staff; proven success hiring, training, conducting performance evaluations, and mentoring teams;
- Initiative, vision, creativity, and a demonstrated willingness to take calculated risks in crafting and executing strategies; the absolute drive to succeed and the understanding the personal commitment to going above and beyond in service to mission and success;
- A deep personal commitment to diversity and inclusion; proven success in engaging with diverse communities; lived experience that informs an authentic understanding of the challenges faced by vulnerable communities and a sophisticated understanding of the historical nature of structural power differences with a lens into how that impacts social justice efforts today;
- Demonstrated knowledge of at least two of the following areas is a plus: advancing sentencing reform; addressing unconstitutional conditions in juvenile, adult, and immigrant detention facilities; the denial of due process in the criminal justice system; racial disparities; collateral consequences of justice system involvement; the provision of indigent defense; and over-policing or police misconduct;
- Experience applying highly analytical skills to public policy issues, including an ability to synthesize and summarize large amounts of information and to focus quickly on the essence of an issue;
- Excellent communication skills, including research and writing, interpersonal and public communication skills, and an ability to translate vision and strategy into external messaging;
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including maturity, keen judgment, the ability to facilitate challenging conversations and quickly read interpersonal dynamics, and the ability to work with people from a wide array of backgrounds and perspectives and across projects;
- Ability to create a positive atmosphere in a high-energy, fast-paced work environment; excellent and consistent attention to detail and the ability to prioritize and meet deadlines;
- A natural intellectual curiosity and personal drive for self-reflection, improvement, and learning;
- Patience, a sense of humor, gravitas and a high tolerance for ambiguity; the ability to adapt quickly to change; an optimistic outlook, a natural orientation towards collaboration with the self-confidence to move forward in areas of uncertainty or where there is not necessarily agreement;
- The ability and willingness to travel regionally;
- Spanish or other language skills relevant to the Southeast are desired;
- Justice system-involved candidates are preferred; and,
- Admission to the Alabama Bar or willingness to sit for the next Bar Exam is required.

## TO APPLY

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This search is being conducted with assistance from Katherine Jacobs, Callie Carroll, and Erica Nicole Griffin of Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group. Candidates are encouraged to apply as soon as possible, and applications will be reviewed as they are received. Please send nominations and/or applications including cover letter describing your interest and qualifications, your resume (in Word format), and



where you learned of the position to: [SPLC-CrimJust@nonprofitprofessionals.com](mailto:SPLC-CrimJust@nonprofitprofessionals.com). **Southern Poverty Law Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Candidates of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.**

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