



GRIT

A Workshop to Energize, Elevate, and Educate Women in Public Defense

March 9-11, 2023

Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts
Defender Services Office
Training Division

Marriott New Orleans
555 Canal Street, New Orleans, LA
70130

Draft Agenda



Grit is an experience that will stir your strength and sensitivity and kindle courage and connection. We offer you dynamic and impactful presentations and panels, small group conversations guided by skilled and thoughtful facilitators, unique experiences such as restorative circle and group coaching sessions, wellness activities to start off your day, and social gatherings in the evening. For the first time we will be together in person for Grit, an alchemy for forming close and lasting bonds.

Why join us?

- Because you are remarkable and have earned time to join this community
- Because your work has great meaning for you and you want to figure out how to sustain yourself in the profession
- Because you seek inspiration from women who have journeyed in ways similar to and different from yours
- Because you yearn to understand more about who you are and how to manifest your strengths
- Because you want to explore the future of your professional life in a safe and supportive space
- Because you believe we have much to learn from each other and so much to celebrate*

Big thank you to New Orleans for embracing us. The city is filled with out of this world music and food, art and architecture, storytellers and ghosts. You can also find quiet places, walks along the river or meanders through lovely parks. This is a city that hums with energy and bursts with beauty. May you be inspired.



Wednesday, March 8, 2023

5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Restorative Practices in Action: Peacemaking and Healing Circles

Vivianne Guevara, *Director of Client & Mitigation Services, Federal Defenders of New York, Inc., Brooklyn, NY*

Special
Pre-Grit
Session

Restorative and Transformative Justice, through the use of peacemaking and healing circles, are processes rooted in global indigenous practices. Restorative circles are used to team-build, plan, and solve conflict within systems, businesses, schools, families, and communities. Peacemaking circles can address conflict and harm approach communication in a non-binary way; the entire circle is responsible for each other and committed to holding space for each other's harm and healing. In this experiential session, we will learn one process for circlekeeping while sharing and reflecting in our own restorative circle.

This session is limited to 12 people. Pre-registration required. Please join if you're in town; we are unable to authorize earlier travel to attend.

Thursday, March 9, 2023

7:00 - 8:00 a.m. Mindfulness Meditation (optional)

Sandi Dawson, *Attorney, Alabama Middle Federal Defender Program, Inc., Montgomery, AL*

Please join Sandi in a morning meditation designed to help you find calm and nourish resilience.

No registration necessary. All are welcome.

7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Registration - Continental Breakfast

8:30 - 8:45 a.m. Introduction and Welcoming Remarks

Annalisa Mirón, *Assistant Federal Public Defender, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Eastern District of Louisiana, New Orleans, LA*

Lisa Lunt, *Attorney Advisor, Training Division, Defender Services Office, Washington, DC*

8:45 - 9:45 a.m. PLENARY SESSION: Voices of Us: Insights and Inspiration from Impactful Women

Alison "Tex" Clark, *Assistant Federal Public Defender, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of Oregon, Portland, OR*

Keri Nash, *Director, Racial Equity Initiatives, NLADA, Washington, DC*

Mary Veral, *Mitigation Specialist, Los Angeles, CA*

Juval Scott, *Federal Public Defender, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA*

S. Jai Simpson-Joseph, *Founder, [Wings UpRising](#), Atlanta, GA (moderator)*

How much energy is generated when you gather five determined, dynamic, and daring women in one room? Join us and find out. We are kicking off this program with a conversation among five intrepid women who have made substantial



contributions to our field and to the profile of women in the process. Share in their wide-ranging, personal discussion about their accomplishments, their experiences as women in the legal field, and their thoughts on advancing our collective interests.

9:45 - 11:00 a.m. SMALL GROUP SESSION: Introductions

“What! You, too? I thought I was the only one.”

Meeting in small groups for the first time, participants will introduce themselves and share hopes and expectations for the program with new friends.

11:00 - 11:10 a.m. Break

11:10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. PLENARY SESSION: Me, Myself & I: Examining, Embracing, and Employing Your Strengths

Lori James-Townes, *Executive Director, National Association of Public Defense & President, Expand-Now, Stoney Beach, MD*

Do you know your strengths? At Grit, you will take a powerful strengths assessment and be able to answer this question. Lori James-Townes will share ideas on how to embrace those strengths, discover what you do best, and return to your office revitalized.

Strengths assessments are powerful tools for office teams, too. For instance, imagine a defender culture where each person gets to focus on what they do best. When individuals know their strengths, as well as the strengths of their colleagues, it leads to more thoughtful relationships and stronger teams. Ideally, we partner with people who bring different strengths to the group. Collectively these teams are more engaged and effective. Strengths assessments have transformative potential.

12:00 - 1:30 p.m. Lunch – On Your Own

12:40 – 1:25 p.m. Professional Coaching – Mastermind: Creating a More Sustainable Work-Life Balance

Optional

Group Coaching Session with Natalie K. Miller, *MA, PCC, Master Certified Life Coach, [Mind Witchery Podcast](#) Host, Silver Spring, MD*

advanced sign-up/limited to 22

1:30 - 2:50 p.m. SMALL GROUP SESSION: Doing it My Way

Participants will explore their own journey toward authenticity by completing a strengths assessment. Participants should complete the assessment before the small group session (ideally a day before). In session, we will discuss our strengths, how to lean in to those strengths, embracing vulnerability, and overcoming any



fears we might have in realizing our strengths. Finally, participants will identify three ways they can manifest those strengths in their professional identity.

3:00 - 3:45 p.m.

PLENARY SESSION: Mentorship Matters: Building Brave Spaces to Empower, Include and Elevate

Jennifer Uyeda, *Visiting Attorney Advisor, Defender Services Office Training Division, Washington, D.C.*

“A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself.” ~ Oprah Winfrey

This session explores the importance of mentorship and the mentor’s role in guiding a mentee to realize their full potential and achieve their aspirations and goals. It will include tips on how to be a guide not an expert, how to coach not clone, how to ask not advise, how to meet your mentee where they are, and how to create brave and safe spaces that foster a mentee’s individual authentic self to come into his/her/their own.

3:45 - 4:00 p.m.

Break

4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

PLENARY SESSION: Race, Women, and Powerful Voices

Liliana Coronado, *Vice President and Counsel, The Brimley Group, Pasadena, CA (moderator)*

Sandi Dawson, *Attorney, Alabama Middle Federal Defender Program, Inc., Montgomery, AL*

Vanessa Pai-Thompson, *Assistant Federal Public Defender, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Washington, Seattle, WA*

Isabel Sanchez-Cummings, *Mitigation Specialist, Federal Public Defender Office for the Northern District of Ohio, Cleveland, OH*

Monique Toussaint, *White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans*

U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC

Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor famously attributed her wisdom to her richness of experience as a Latina or Latinx woman. Indeed, diversity in leadership is a rising tide that lifts all boats. This panel discussion will be a celebration and acknowledgment of the contributions of five diverse female legal professionals who have pioneered, led, and invigorated. They will discuss achieving equity in leadership at the intersection of race and gender, surviving the spotlight, and mentorship.

5:30 p.m.

The Mentorship Space (optional)

If you are participating in the Grit pilot mentorship program (we’ll send information on this to admitted participants), this hour is for you. Bring a beverage of your choice to this one-hour lounge session that will include a brief orientation of the program and an opportunity for mentors and mentees connect.



5:30 p.m.

Social Activity (TBD - optional)

**Friday, March 10, 2023**

7:00 - 8:00 a.m. **Wellness Activity (optional)**

7:30 - 8:30 a.m. **Continental Breakfast**

8:30 - 9:15 a.m. **PLENARY SESSION: What Is Psychological Safety and Why Does It Matter So Much**

S. Jai Simpson-Joseph, *Founder, [Wings UpRising](#), Atlanta, GA*

Imagine a diverse workplace in which all employees felt a genuine sense of inclusion and belonging. Amy Edmonson coined the phrase “psychological safety” in 1999; it means an environment where people feel safe to be their full selves at work. In other words, they can exhibit their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, background, family status, and any other part of their identity without judgment.

Psychological safety also means feeling safe to voice opinions, thoughts, or ideas in a collaborative atmosphere. Employees will feel safe to take risks, ask other team members for help, and more easily discuss difficult challenges and issues. Lastly, and potentially most importantly, all team members celebrate, value, and respect each other’s contributions to the workplace, a safe space to be your authentic self.

Learn about language and behavior that furthers the goal of an office culture of psychological safety.

9:20 - 10:15 a.m. **PLENARY SESSION: Managing Up, or How to Be a Leading Lady in a Supportive Role**

Natalie K. Miller, *MA, PCC, Master Certified Life Coach, [Mind Witchery Podcast](#) Host, Silver Spring, MD*

Is your office dynamic more *Team Work Makes the Dream Work*, or *Every man for himself [sic]*? While studies show that collaborative approaches to getting things done are most efficient, effective, and innovative - not to mention pleasant! - not everyone has gotten that memo. Join Master Certified Life Coach Natalie Miller to explore how to spark more co-creativity with ALL your co-workers, and how improving the way you connect and communicate enables you to lead from anywhere on the org chart.

10:15 - 10:30 a.m. **Break**

10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. **WORKSHOP SESSION: Learning, Growing, Giving**

This session is dedicated to discussing each group member’s professional identity and goals and formulating a path to achieve a future that promises challenge,



fulfillment and happiness. The group will also discuss the value of mentorship in making goals a reality.

12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

1:10 - 1:55 p.m.

Optional

Lunch - On Your Own

Professional Coaching – Mastermind: Owing Your Next Level

Group Coaching Session with Natalie K. Miller, *MA, PCC, Master Certified Life Coach*, [Mind Witchery Podcast](#) Host, Silver Spring, MD

advanced sign-up/limited to 22

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

PLENARY SESSION: Empowering Grit with Cognitive Fitness

Dr. Debra Austin, *JD, PhD, Professor of the Practice, University of Denver Sturm College of Law, Denver, CO*

The research conducted by Angela Duckworth, author of *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, demonstrates that the secret to outstanding performance is not talent, but a special blend of passion and perseverance. Women have never lacked passion. Perseverance can be challenging when your physical and mental resources are depleted.

Research shows that legal professionals suffer from higher rates than the general public of mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and substance misuse. While overwork is a problem in our profession, women:

- Are more overcommitted
- Have to exert more effort to receive workplace rewards than men
- Engage in more risky drinking and hazardous alcohol consumption than men and
- Are considering leaving the legal profession at higher rates than men, due to burnout and mental health concerns

Some women are working while impaired. Even if you are not in a state of impairment, because many people in the legal profession are Type A overachievers, who care deeply about their work, you may be at a higher risk of languishing, often a precursor to anxiety and depression.

Neuroscience and psychology research can help us understand how to empower grit and strengthen cognitive fitness. This session will include information on brain function; stress and other risks to brain health; how the motivation and reward system in the brain can be hijacked by substances such as sugar, alcohol, and cannabis; the mental health spectrum from languishing to flourishing; and obstacles to maintaining mental strength. It will provide a menu of science-based recommendations to protect brain health and enhance mental strength.

Dr. Debra Austin writes and speaks about how neuroscience and psychology research can improve the well-being and performance of legal professionals and law students. She teaches Professionalism and Well-being Skills for the Effective Lawyer, and she has a book forthcoming from Cambridge University Press, *The Legal Brain: A Lawyer's Guide to Well-being and Better Job Performance*.



3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

SMALL GROUP SESSION: Filling Our Cups

This small group session provides an opportunity for participants to delve more deeply into insights gained from self-assessments on mindset, perfectionism, and stress. In this supportive setting, participants will have an opportunity to discuss experiences on self-care which help women in the highly stressful work of public defense to maintain balance, well-being, and cognitive health.

4:15 - 4:30 p.m.

Break

4:30 - 5:15 p.m.

PLENARY SESSION: Embracing “We” instead of “Me”: Celebrating the Joys and Navigating the Complexities of Working in Teams

Donetta Bray, *Chief Paralegal, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Ohio, Cleveland, OH*

Vivianne Guevara, *Director of Client & Mitigation Services, Federal Defenders of New York, Inc., Brooklyn, NY*

Dana Harrison, *Mitigation Specialist, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Eastern District of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR*

Desiree Lassiter, *Visiting Attorney Advisor, Defender Services Office Training Division, Washington, D.C.*

Anu Vishwamitra, *Director of Mitigation, George Capital Defenders, Atlanta, GA (moderator)*

Teams are complicated systems. They are, after all, made up of a group of people bringing unique personalities, preferences and predicaments. A cohesive team is beautiful to behold; it inspires each team member, and it is easy to see how much more the team achieves as a whole rather than a collection of individual accomplishments. Hear from our colleagues how they have learned to form and maintain strong, successful, satisfying teams.

But what if your team doesn't gel or team members can't work out conflicts? Have you been part of a team that leaves you feeling frustrated and even angry? These common scenarios do not necessarily spell the end of the team but, rather, they may be resolved with creativity and commitment. Our colleagues will share strategies that have worked for them.

“I do my best because I'm counting on you counting on me.” — *Maya Angelou*

6:00 p.m.

Social Activity (optional)

Saturday, March 11, 2023

7:00 - 8:00 a.m.

Sunrise Walk (optional)

7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

Continental Breakfast



8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

PLENARY SESSION: How to Have Uncomfortable Conversations

Keri Nash, *Director, Racial Equity Initiatives, NLADA, Washington, DC*

“Difficult conversations are almost never about getting the facts right. They are about conflicting perceptions, interpretations, and values.” — *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*

A team and an office are, at the heart, a group of humans with a shared mission. And humans are beautiful, messy, imperfect, and brilliant. Keri Nash digs into how to listen intently, break down silos, and boldly engage in tough talks rather than avoid them.

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

SMALL GROUP SESSION: BYO Professional Challenge

This final small group gathering presents a special opportunity for each participant to focus on a professional challenge. We have created 6 broad challenge categories: interpersonal conflict, professional development/invisibility, family responsibility, work/life balance, succession planning, and economic. Participants will submit a brief summary of the challenge in advance of the program and chart a course of action, relying on the wisdom and reflections of the group they have come to know and trust.

10:30 - 10:40 a.m.

Break

10:40 a.m. -
12:00 p.m.

SMALL GROUP SESSION: BYO Professional Challenge (continued)

12:00 - 12:30 p.m.

PLENARY SESSION: Grit, Grace, and Gratitude

Sister Helen Prejean, <https://www.sisterhelen.org/>, *New Orleans, LA*

12:30 p.m.

Closing Remarks / Adjournment

Additional Small Group Faculty

Marilyn Cruz, *Visiting Program Analyst, Defender Services Office Program Operations Division, Washington, DC*

Rahwa Gebre-Egziabher, *Attorney Advisor, Defender Services Office, Program Operations Division, Washington, DC*

Lisa Guffey, *Attorney Advisor, Defender Services Office Program Operations Division, Washington, DC*

Jennifer Kaplan, *CJA Resource Counsel, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Washington, Seattle, WA*

Foongy Lee, *Investigator, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Central District of California, Los Angeles, CA*



Rena' Ross, *Investigator, Middle District of Alabama Federal Defenders Program, Inc., Montgomery, AL*

Dawn Scott, *Program Manager, Diversity Fellowship Program, Defender Services Office Program Operations Division, Washington, DC*

Callie Glanton Steele, *Trial Chief - Santa Barbara County Public Defender's Office, Santa Barbara, CA*

Stephanne Thornton, *LICSW, MAC, CCTP, CSOTP Clinical Director, WVJLAP/Owner, Transform Legal, Charleston, WV*

Jen Uyeda, *Visiting Attorney Advisor, Defender Services Office Training Division, South Pasadena, CA*

