



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Roderick & Solange MacArthur Justice Center

President and Executive Director (ED)

Illinois Louisiana Mississippi Missouri Washington, DC

A Unique Opportunity

The [MacArthur Justice Center](#) (MJC) is a 40-year-old national nonprofit law firm that advocates for people harmed by the criminal legal system. MJC fights to vindicate their rights, hold people with power accountable, and transform the system.

Founded in 1985 with a small office in Chicago, MJC has grown to a staff of 56 across five offices in Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Washington, DC. MJC has both deep community roots and a national footprint. Its expert litigators and teams focus on advocating for the rights of incarcerated people; redressing misconduct by police, prosecutors, and prison officials; and exposing and ending the pernicious effects of racism and poverty in the criminal justice system.

MJC attracts top-tier lawyers who are innovative and audacious in challenging individual and systemic injustices through litigation and related public policy advocacy. Many are former clerks on the Supreme Court and other federal courts.

The work of MJC has never mattered more. In an era of emboldened racism and authoritarian uses of criminal law, MJC's work matters more than ever. MJC is uniquely equipped to represent individual defendants, prisoners, and vulnerable populations adversely affected by the criminal justice system under hostile and challenging conditions, including in jurisdictions and contexts where authorities are at best indifferent to racism and injustice.

This is a time of promise and inflection for MJC. The President and Executive Director position is open because former Executive Director Amir Ali was confirmed as a Federal District Court Judge in November 2024. MJC needs a leader who can expand its advocacy; lead a diverse cadre of highly qualified and successful trial attorneys, appellate advocates, and staff; and further develop the organization.



Photo: Amir Ali, former President and ED of MJC, now a Federal District Court Judge in Washington, DC.

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MJC will need to supplement its endowment with raised revenue from individual and institutional donors. To increase its impact and attract donors, MJC must further develop its external visibility, storytelling, and fundraising capacities.

The new President and Executive Director (ED) will build on MJC's strengths and lead its next era of impact.

The Mandate

At this time of promise and inflection, MJC is seeking to build its external profile, as well as its internal cohesion and core supportive infrastructure. Recent staff additions include leaders of operations, communications, and HR.

The President and Executive Director (ED) will have substantive litigation and management experience and be an inspiring, visionary, and collaborative leader. The ED will lead MJC's further evolution, hiring a development director and potentially a legal director to support legal and advocacy work. While fostering high engagement and morale, the ED will enhance cross-office collaboration, resource sharing, and storytelling.

The ED will be a big-picture strategist and builder of trust and relationships, with significant experience in litigation, organizational leadership, and external communications. The ED will have passion for MJC's mission, advocacy, and litigation work, and excitement about its potential for even greater impact.

Specifically, the new ED will:

Be a visionary leader for MJC's next era.

- Be a thought leader in developing organizational strategies, advocacy, and resources.

- Embody the MJC values of excellence, innovation, collegiality, and collaboration.
- Provide exemplary leadership internally and externally.
- Be a valued partner to the Board, Leadership Team, and staff.
- Foster shared vision and planning, cross-office engagement, and collaboration.
- Lead MJC to build on prior successes to combat new challenges posed by the new federal administration, including efforts to displace local control of criminal legal system issues; inhumane conditions of confinement, which may now arise in the context of mass deportations; and an increasingly hostile federal judiciary, which has led MJC to strategically litigate in state courts and under state constitutions.

Build public profile and presence.

- Serve as a compelling external spokesperson and communicator, able to present a persuasive narrative about MJC's differentiation, successes, and aspirations.
- Develop a more cohesive and visible external profile for MJC within the social justice community and among potential donors.
- Advance relationship-building, communication, and storytelling capacities.
- Foster external alliances, collaborative and coalition partnerships that augment MJC's work and impact with clients, issues, and initiatives.

Grow fundraising capacity and resources.

- As a primary face of the organization, inspire support for MJC's current work and future initiatives.



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The new ED will develop more supportive internal communications, processes, and infrastructure that also respects individual office differences and needs.

- Lead development of MJC's fundraising function and team, information and messaging infrastructure, positioning, and case for support.

Build organizational strength.

- Build on MJC's culture of excellence and agility.
- Cohere an organizational infrastructure that optimizes impact and collaboration.
- Develop more supportive internal communications, processes, and infrastructure that also respects individual office differences and needs.
- Make outstanding strategic hires of fundraising, legal, and other staff, and enhance the organization's ability to attract and retain top talent consistent with MJC values.

Deepen MJC's impact.

- Explore ways to extend MJC's innovation and effectiveness. Working closely with staff, the ED will explore expanding MJC capabilities in policy, advocacy, client support, and communications to deepen the systemic impact and sustainability of the work.
- Enhance relevant data gathering and analysis, knowledge management, and other tools to support MJC best practices and differentiation.
- Position MJC for deeper systemic, sustainable impact as "one MJC" by building the culture, financial base, and supportive infrastructure.
- Foster a national identity, while preserving the benefits of diverse local offices that are responsive to unique issues in their community.

The Organization

The [MacArthur Justice Center](#) was founded by the adult children of J. Roderick MacArthur, the pioneer of the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's "genius" grants, to honor his lifelong passion for social justice and human rights. A bequest from his late daughter, Solange MacArthur, has underwritten the organization's commitment to social justice and resulted in its current \$90 million endowment. (MJC has no formal relation to or funding from the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.)

MJC has grown in size, footprint, and scope in recent years. It has a staff of 56, a \$12 million annual budget, and a docket of well over 200 cases. MJC has expert litigating teams in five offices: Chicago, IL; St. Louis, MO; New Orleans, LA; Oxford, MS; and Washington, DC. It operates clinical programs at Northwestern University Law School, Harvard Law School, and the University of Mississippi Law School, through which scores of law students support its work. Each office is unique in its focus and has enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in choosing cases to pursue.

Individual office autonomy enables MJC to act nimbly and decisively, to fill critical gaps, and to take on individual cases of injustice as well as systemic problems. Additionally, the reputation of many of its trial attorneys, and of its Supreme Court and Appellate Practice, has enabled MJC to lead initiatives and serve as lead and/or collaborating counsel in cases of national importance.

The MacArthur Justice Center has achieved notable successes in landmark legal and reform efforts in the U.S. Supreme Court and beyond. These include combatting racial discrimination in the criminal justice system; overturning wrongful convictions and death sentences; exposing police and prosecutorial misconduct; winning substantial judgments for victims of prosecutorial, police, and prison abuse; supporting the rights of protestors; and securing consent decrees and systemic settlements in cases involving defense resources, prosecutorial and police misconduct, and prison conditions.



Photo: Roderick MacArthur in 1984, recipient of the ACLU Roger Baldwin Award, with David Bradford.

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MJC's impact extends well beyond the courtroom to thought leadership and coalition building.

MJC has achieved consequential Supreme Court victories, including landmark decisions, on issues that include:

- Establishing the presumption of prejudice for Sixth Amendment purposes applies to the loss of the right to appeal even if that right was waived by the defendant.
- Establishing the right of U.S. citizens to seek a writ of habeas corpus in federal court challenging their detention by the American government, regardless of where they are detained.
- Establishing the right of access to the courts through a writ of habeas corpus for foreign nationals held in Guantanamo.
- Allowing a victim of falsified charges to hold the government accountable for malicious prosecution.

The breadth of MJC's impact is broad, spanning advocacy on behalf of individuals who have been subjected to injustice within the criminal legal system. MJC has successfully litigated consequential and precedent-setting cases on solitary confinement; the death penalty and denial of parole; and has held multiple prison officials, police, and prosecutors accountable for wrongful conduct. MJC has recovered over \$100 million in civil cases arising out of wrongful convictions, recently serving as co-counsel in securing a \$50 million jury verdict, the largest financial award for a wrongful conviction in U.S. history.

MJC's impact extends well beyond the courtroom to thought leadership and coalition building. As an example, last year MJC led the National Parole Transformation Project, a coordinated campaign of strategic impact litigation and community-based advocacy directly challenging the parole systems feeding mass incarceration.

Separately, in collaboration with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, MJC launched Forensic Navigators, an innovative new program to help Mississippians in local jails access mental health resources and services.

The Candidate

Although the role does not call for regular representation of clients, MJC seeks a President and Executive Director (ED) who is a lawyer with litigation experience sufficient to lead a staff of 22 permanent attorneys with an average of 14 years' experience and a number of externally funded attorney interns and Fellows. Including all these positions, the ED has responsibility for an organization of between 50 and 60 full-time employees.

The Board is open to candidates with diverse backgrounds including relevant government service or other criminal justice advocacy work. Prior experience in organizational leadership, fundraising, and people and change management are a strong plus. In addition to these assets and passion for the mission and work of MJC, the ideal candidate will bring a background that includes:

Professional Experience

- Big-picture strategic skills
- Litigation expertise
- Leadership experience
- Organizational and change management
- Fundraising
- Business and budgeting acumen
- Public speaking and representation



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Photo: Joe Margulies, Board Member; David Bradford, Board Chair; Dickey Gaines, former death row inmate; Solange MacArthur; Rick MacArthur in 2005.

Personal Assets

- Inspiring personal, relationship, and communication skills
- Self-awareness and confidence, and low ego and humility
- A collaborative, inclusive approach
- High emotional intelligence, listening, and trust building skills
- Intellectual depth, agility, nimbleness, and openness
- Ability to build consensus, and to make and sustain tough calls
- Passion for teambuilding, mentoring, and lifting up others

The Relationships

The President and Executive Director (ED) reports to and works closely with the Board of Directors and MJC's Leadership Team.

Reports to	and works collaboratively with the Board of Directors
Manages	<p>the Leadership Team, which includes Office and functional area Directors. Direct reports include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP & Legal Director (currently filled with an interim internal candidate) • Managing Director of Operations • Director of Communications • Director of Development (to be hired by the ED)
Collaborates closely with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer organization leaders and partners • Donors and prospective donors



The ED will be expected to travel, and to spend time in each of the office locations.

The Location

MJC has robust offices in Chicago, IL; St. Louis, MO; New Orleans, LA; Oxford, MS; and Washington, DC. The ED can be located in any of these five locations.

The organization currently has a policy of hybrid work, with 3 days a week in the office together and remote work permitted (but not required) for the remainder of the week. The ED will be expected to travel, and to spend time in each of the office locations.



The Compensation

A competitive compensation package of salary and full benefits will be offered to attract an outstanding candidate. The anticipated range for total compensation is \$285,000-325,000.

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email:

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or call Kathy Bremer or Terri Kohan at
404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).
