Excessive Sentencing Fellowship – Fall 2023

The Powell Project’s mission is to fight against, and provide relief from, the extreme and excessive sentencing practices that have come to define the American criminal legal system. We believe everyone is more than their worst act, that our own humanity is implicated by the way we treat those who are incarcerated, and that we cannot end mass incarceration until we take an inclusive approach to policy change.

The Project was created to advance a national strategy to end the death penalty by providing consultation services to capital trial teams in select jurisdictions across the country in an effort to reduce new death sentences. Over the last year, we have launched a new initiative to challenge non-capital excessive sentencing practices in our home state of Colorado. This effort seeks to provide back-end relief via post-conviction litigation and clemency for clients serving some of Colorado’s most extreme and unjust sentences, engages in policy and advocacy efforts to change excessive sentencing practices at the state level, and strives to shift the prevailing conversation about criminal legal reform, which too often writes off those branded as violent offenders.

We welcome third-year law students and recent law graduates who are interested in working with us on a one- or two-year fellowship that is funded by an external source. Securement of a fellowship is a two-step process. Candidates will first apply to our organization. If selected by our project, candidates will then apply for external sources of fellowship funding with our support and guidance as a sponsoring organization.

The Fellow will join our Colorado excessive sentencing team but may receive occasional assignments from the capital side of our project if desired. Our excessive sentencing project focuses primarily on clients serving death-by-incarceration sentences for felony murder, elderly clients, clients who were youthful when incarcerated, and criminalized survivors of gender-based violence. The Fellow will help expand the scope and scale of this initiative.

The successful Fellow will have a demonstrated commitment to public interest law, lived and/or professional experience with the criminal legal system, and strong research and writing skills. Our organization was built to fight subordination based on race, poverty, gender, and disability status—values that the Fellow must share. The Project is committed to the well-being of its team members and, accordingly, provides a fully-funded benefits package and generous paid time off. The fellowship is based in Denver, Colorado and will require travel to prisons across the state. Applicants should send a cover letter, resume, and three references to Dan.Meyer@powellproject.org. The cover letter should include information about potential sources of funding or fellowships for which the candidate intends to apply.
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