



---

## Client-Centered Representation & Advocacy Skills

*Presented by Gideon's Promise*

---

**When:** June 9 – 13, 2025 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

**Where:** Central Maine Community College, 1250 Turner Street, Auburn ME

**Summary:** [Gideon's Promise](#) will lead a 5-day interactive training on client-centered representation and advocacy skills for employed public defenders and assigned counsel. Participants will learn how to apply client-centered principles to indigent defense representation in interactive large and small group sessions led by the nationally recognized Gideon's Promise faculty. By the end of the 5 days, participants will have a greater appreciation of what goes into indigent defense advocacy and will take away both in-court and out-of-court skills that can be applied immediately to improve one's ability to represent indigent people. The program will also help foster continued collaboration and community-building amongst defenders working throughout the state even after the program has ended.

**Admission Restrictions:** To attend this training, you must be eligible to accept PDS case assignments. Admission is by invitation only. Interested attorneys must apply at the link below.

**Application:** Apply [here](#). The application deadline is March 1, 2025.

**Cost:** Free!

**CLE:** This training has been approved by PDS for CLE credit and is eligible for payment in accordance with [Chapter 301-A](#). This training is approved by the Board of Overseers for a maximum of 31.5 of CLE credit.

*Please note that this event is not sponsored by Central Maine Community College (CMCC). Additionally, all college buildings and grounds are smoke and tobacco-free environments. This prohibition includes vaping and marijuana.*

## **Faculty Biography**

### **Travis Bell**

Travis Bell serves as a Lead Trial Attorney, supervising a team of public defenders at the Montgomery County Office of the Public Defender in Montgomery, Alabama and working directly with his clients on their cases. He has been there since 2017. He is also a proud graduate of the Gideon's Promise Class of 2017 and the UCLA School of Law. Throughout his time as a public defender, he has served as a public defender trainer at his office, NAPD events, and Gideon's Promise events. He was awarded the Gideon's Promise Ambassador Award for his work to motivate law students to pursue careers in public defense and he coordinates the internship program at his office. Outside of public defense, he can be found enjoying family time with his wife and son or out of the soccer field as a soccer referee.

### **Cathy Bennett**

Cathleen L. Bennett is an Assistant Training Director for the National Association for Public Defense and a training and trial consultant. Cathy moved to Anchorage, Alaska from Boston, Massachusetts where she was a public defender with the Committee for Public Counsel Services (the Massachusetts Statewide Public Defender) for 30 years. She was the Criminal Defense Training Director at CPCS for 17 years. As a trial lawyer in the CPCS Public Defender Division, she defended clients charged with murder and other serious felonies. Cathy is on the faculty and the Board of Regents of the National Criminal Defense College. She is a Core faculty member of Gideon's Promise, which was the subject of the award-winning HBO documentary Gideon's Army, and she has taught for the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and criminal defense training programs across the country. She received the Thurgood Marshall Award from the Committee for Public Counsel Services in 2007, the Scholar-Mentor Award from Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education, Inc. (MCLE) in 2008, the Outstanding Faculty Award in 2011, the Stephen B. Bright Award from Gideon's Promise in 2018, and the Gideon Award from the Massachusetts Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers in 2017.

### **Gabriel Bombara**

*Please note that this event is not sponsored by Central Maine Community College (CMCC). Additionally, all college buildings and grounds are smoke and tobacco-free environments. This prohibition includes vaping and marijuana.*

Gabriel Bombara is a Trial Team Chief at the El Paso County Public Defender's Office in El Paso, TX. He is a graduate of UCSF Law and Stanford University. He is licensed in both Texas and New Mexico, and has been licensed since 2010. He is a Gideon's Promise Graduate of the class of 2015. He has been a faculty member at multiple teaching programs for public defenders, including the Texas Future Indigent Defense Leaders Program, the Darrel Bolz Public Defense College in Idaho, and the Mountain Trial Skills Program in Salt Lake City. Through Gideon's Promise, he has trained public defenders in Atlanta, Philadelphia, and throughout Texas' 254 counties--from El Paso to Texarkana, and Brownsville to Amarillo. He lives in El Paso, TX with his wife, two daughters, and two dogs.

### **Catherine DeRoth**

Catherine DeRoth graduated from the University of Georgia with a Bachelor's in Business Administration and a minor in history. She went on to study at Atlanta's John Marshall Law School where she participated in the Criminal Justice Honors Program. Upon graduation from law school in 2014 and being sworn in, Catherine moved to South Georgia to work as an Assistant Public Defender in the Atlantic Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office. She represented juveniles in all types of delinquency proceedings within Bryan, Evans, Liberty, Long, McIntosh and Tattnall Counties. She also represented parents and children in dependency proceedings in Liberty County, and she participated in the Family Treatment Court as a parent's attorney. In February of 2019, Catherine transferred to the Griffin Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office, and she has worked in Juvenile Court, State Court and Superior Court. She was a team member on the misdemeanor DUI/Drug Court and the felony Drug Court. Catherine is a graduate of the Gideon's Promise Core 101 Program (Class of 2015), and she completed the Gideon's Promise Trainer Development Program in January of 2024. Catherine currently lives in Fayetteville, GA with her two dogs, Lily and Myrtle.

### **Kenneth Hardin**

Kenneth Hardin is the Director of the Harris County Managed Assigned Counsel (MAC) program in Houston. Kenneth earned his B.A. in Finance from Louisiana State University and his J.D. from Thurgood Marshall School of

*Please note that this event is not sponsored by Central Maine Community College (CMCC). Additionally, all college buildings and grounds are smoke and tobacco-free environments. This prohibition includes vaping and marijuana.*

Law. He served as both a staff attorney and supervising attorney at the Orleans Public Defender's Office in New Orleans, Louisiana before joining the Harris County Public Defenders in 2019. Hardin not only has extensive experience in handling felony and misdemeanor cases, but also serves as faculty for Gideon's Promise and the Harvard Trial Advocacy Program. Kenneth is a graduate of the Gideon's Promise Class of 2012.

## **Sean Maher**

Sean Maher is the Director of Defender Development at Gideon's Promise, Inc. where he oversees all the national and regional programs conducted by Gideon's Promise. Sean has been a member of the Gideon's Promise faculty and its precursor organizations since 2005. Before joining the Gideon's Promise staff in January 2025, Sean was a criminal defense attorney in New York City and represented the criminally accused in federal and state courts. Many of Sean's clients were court-appointed through his participation on the federal Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Panels for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York.

Before entering private practice, Sean supervised the criminal trial division of the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (NDS) and was a senior trial attorney at the Fulton County Public Defender's Office in Atlanta. Sean serves on the faculty of Gideon's Promise, Harvard Law School's Trial Advocacy Workshop, the National Criminal Defense College (NCDC), and several state public defender trial skills academies. He received his B.A. from Northwestern University in 1991 and his J.D. from Boston University in 1995.

## **Aisha McWeay**

Aisha is a career public defender and indigent defense advocate. Prior to assuming the Executive Director role at Still She Rises in February 2019, Aisha served as the Deputy Public Defender for Nashville-Davidson County, where she began her career as a law clerk. Both nationally and locally, Aisha serves in several training and mentoring capacities within indigent defense and community organizations. In recognition of her contributions to the public defense community, in July 2017 she was awarded the Stephen B. Bright award from Gideon's Promise. Aisha remains committed to causes that align with strengthening and sustaining high-quality indigent defense

*Please note that this event is not sponsored by Central Maine Community College (CMCC). Additionally, all college buildings and grounds are smoke and tobacco-free environments. This prohibition includes vaping and marijuana.*

while empowering and supporting client communities. Aisha graduated summa cum laude from Clark Atlanta University, where she majored in Mass Communications with a concentration in Public Relations. Aisha serves as adjunct faculty for the University of Virginia Law School and Vanderbilt University Law School, where she obtained her law degree and currently serves as the 2021-22 George Barrett Distinguished Practitioner in Residence.

### **Gráinne O'Neill**

Gráinne is a partner in the law firm O'Neill and Hassen based in New York City. Gráinne is a criminal defense attorney with a strong focus on technology issues. She is a member of the federal Criminal Justice Act Panels (CJA) for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York. Before entering private practice, she was the Director of MyGideon at the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute at Harvard Law School, and was a staff attorney at the Orleans Public Defender Office in New Orleans. Gráinne is a graduate of the Gideon's Promise Class of 2007 when it was known as the Southern Public Defender Training Center. She received her B.A. in Mathematics and Computer Science from Cornell University, and her J.D. from Columbia Law School in 2007.

### **Andrenette Sullivan**

Andrenette Sullivan is an Assistant Federal Defender for the Federal Defender for the Northern District of Texas. Before becoming a federal defender, Andrenette was a state public defender with the Florida 10th Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office. Andrenette received her J.D. From Stetson University School of Law.

### **Rick Wardroup**

Rick was licensed to practice law in 1980 after earning an undergraduate degree in chemistry. His general law practice focused almost exclusively on criminal defense early on. He became involved in capital litigation in 1983. Rick focused on capital defense \* trying, handling direct appeals, and doing both state and federal habeas work for death row clients. In 2011, Rick became the Capital Assistance Attorney for the Texas Criminal Defense

*Please note that this event is not sponsored by Central Maine Community College (CMCC). Additionally, all college buildings and grounds are smoke and tobacco-free environments. This prohibition includes vaping and marijuana.*

Lawyers Association. His responsibilities with TCDLA include updating the association's publications, directing courses in capital defense, and forensics. He also has a special interest in lawyer wellness and has served on the Texas Lawyers Assistance Board.

*Please note that this event is not sponsored by Central Maine Community College (CMCC). Additionally, all college buildings and grounds are smoke and tobacco-free environments. This prohibition includes vaping and marijuana.*