**HUMAN RIGHTS DAY SPEAKERS**

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| **Paula C. Johnson** is professor of law at Syracuse University College of Law. Professor Johnson is the Co-Director of the Cold Case Justice Initiative (CCJI), an interdisciplinary project based at the Syracuse University College of Law that seeks justice for racially motivated murders during the Civil Rights era on behalf of the victims, their families, local communities, and society-at-large. She previously served as co-president of the Society of American Law Teachers (SALT), a national organization of approx. 800 law professors. She received her B.A. from the University of Maryland, College Park; her J.D. from Temple University School of Law; and her LL.M. from Georgetown University Law Center. At Syracuse, in addition to CCJI courses, she teaches criminal law, criminal procedure, voting rights, professional responsibility, and a  | Paula C.  Johnson |

seminar on women in the criminal justice system. She also has taught at the University of Alabama, the University of Arizona, the University of Baltimore, and Northern Illinois University.

She has written and spoken extensively on legal issues concerning race, gender, LGBTQ, and human rights, in academic arenas, the popular press, and community forums. Her publications include, “Beyond Displacement: Gentrification of Racialized Spaces as Violence,” in Accumulating Insecurity: Violence and Dispossession in the Making of Everyday Life (Feldman, Geisler & Menon, eds., Univ. Georgia 2011); Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States (Solinger, Johnson, et al., eds., UC-Berkeley Press 2010); Inner Lives: Voices of African American Women in Prison (NYU Press 2003); Violence Against Women of African Descent in the United States and South Africa, 1 Univ. Iowa Journal of Gender, Race and Justice 471 (1998); and Silence Equals Death: The Response to AIDS within Communities of Color, University of Illinois Law Review 1075 (1992).

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| **Bruce Sexton** is a Juris Doctor Candidate at Syracuse University College of Law, where he will also work on an array of research projects at the Burton Blatt Institute related to independent living, social security disability insurance, and issues relating to the Americans with Disabilities Act. His goals for practicing law include strategizing, designing and implementing Civil Rights cases. Mr. Sexton, grew up in Dublin, Calif., and is the fifth of seven children. His mother and two of his siblings are also blind. He began attending the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) conventions when he was 12. He recalls, "It was an amazing experience to be around thousands of blind people." "I'd always heard 'you can do whatever you want,' but to meet all these doctors and lawyers was really inspiring." | Photo Image of Bruce Sexton |

His mother and two blind siblings learned Braille at an early age, but Bruce did not learn to read Braille until he was 18. His Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team members had determined early on that he should learn to read using print instead. Sighted readers may be surprised to hear that his early educational experience was the norm at the time. "Braille has become not the method of choice but the method of last resort," wrote the NFB in a fact sheet about its attempts to get Congress to amend the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It successfully did so in 1997. From that day forward, Braille is the starting point: all visually impaired children are supposed to be taught Braille unless all of the child's IEP team members agree it is unnecessary. After high school, he attended the Louisiana Center for the Blind's nine-month program to help prepare him for college and living alone. He learned Braille and became used to getting around using a cane. After attending Las Positas College in Livermore, in the fall of 2005 he transferred to University of California at Berkeley, where he majored in Multi-Disciplinary American Studies and graduated in 2011.

While an undergraduate at the University of California at Berkeley, he represented the public as a main named plaintiff in a class action lawsuit against Target Corporation, in which the company was asked to increase accessibility for the blind online. During this suit he learned about a number of issues in legal procedure, read the legal briefs and court decisions and spoke on the class’ behalf in depositions as well as in interviews to the local and national press.  He attended hearings where he observed legal arguments and strategies, and remembers being "thrilled to serve, observe, and learn in my capacity as the voice of the class" Then in 2012, he participated in another legal case, this one more personal.  He testified for an 8-year-old third grader whose New Jersey school district had refused to teach him Braille. The school district asserted that this boy was “a proficient print reader.” While his visual acuity was sufficient, the boy's condition made his eyes tire rapidly.  His parents sued the school district in an administrative court under the due process provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). When the parent's lawyers phoned he agreed to testify.  Mr. Sexton reflects on this experience, "Sharing my story was powerful for me, because I was denied the opportunity to learn Braille as a child for similar reasons.”

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| Abdul Saboor is a representative and advocate for refugees and immigrants in the Syracuse area. He was born and raised in Afghanistan, and came to the United States in 2014. From 2007 to 2012 he taught counterinsurgency and counterterrosm measures to Afghan and NATO soldiers. Then he worked with USAID and AECOM International as a Stability Program Manager. Since 2014, Abdul has worked for Interfaith Works of CNY on the staff of the Center for New Americans. He is now the Coordinator of the Match Grant Program that helps families achieve self-sufficiency with their 180th day in the United States. He received a degree from Onondaga Community College in the spring of 2016 and he is currently a student at Syracuse University.  | Abdul Saboor |

**At a recent community event, Mr. Saboor spoke of the difficult transition refugees face. He said** “when you go from being detached from your home, from your country, from the place where you built your dreams on, when you go to leave those places, it’s not easy…. But, this is a journey, and this is something that I had to make in order to survive, in order for us to continue our dreams.” However, he stated that “it requires a lot of effort and it is not the job of the resettlement agency alone. It takes a neighborhood, it takes a community… It depends on all of us… We do it hand-to-hand, shoulder-to-shoulder with those individuals and we try to make sure they succeed because their success is our success.”

Interfaith Works’ Center for New Americans provides resettlement and post-resettlement services for refugee families to re-establish their lives and overcome barriers to successful integration in their new communities. Up to the end of 2017, the program has been resettling 500-600 new refugees each year and annually serves an additional 1,200 families who have been in the U.S. for less than five years.