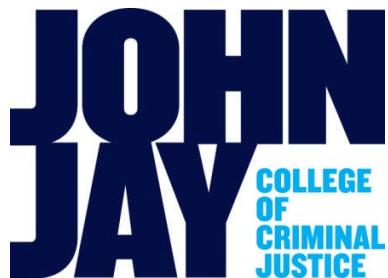


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For Immediate Release

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John Jay Reporting Fellows Tackle America’s “Debtors’ Prisons”

New York, NY, September 23—Few Americans are aware that prisons and jails confine thousands of people whose main offense is that they are too poor. Confronted with an accumulation of fees and fines associated with both felony and non-felony convictions as well as unpaid tickets and other civil penalties, they wind up behind bars in what amounts to a 21st-century version of debtors’ prisons.

Researchers, legislators and advocates from around the country will join journalists this week at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City for a conference aimed at widening public debate on the fines and fees imposed by courts that especially burden low-income populations.

The two-day conference, entitled “Cash Register Justice,” scheduled September 26-27, 2019, is the second in a series of national training programs that bring experts and journalists together for briefings and conversations to encourage and promote evidence-based reporting on the issue.

“The press has a crucial role in bringing to light practices that are often ignored in wider discussions about criminal justice reform,” said Stephen Handelman, director of John Jay’s Center on Media, Crime and Justice, which organized the conference.

“Our first program last spring has already generated incisive and compelling reporting that has expanded the debate.”

Fifteen journalists from around the country have received travel fellowships to attend the conference, and pursue reporting projects on the issue. Their names and affiliations are below.

Speakers include: Maryland State Rep. **Erek Barron**; **Jessica Feierman**, Senior Managing Director of the Juvenile Law Center; the **Hon. Lisa Foster**, Co-Director of the Fines and Fees Justice Center; **Emily Gerrick**, Senior Staff Attorney of the Texas Fair Defense Project; **Marc A. Levin**, Vice President of Criminal Justice policy at the Texas Public Policy Foundation; **Mitali Nagrecha**, Director of the National Criminal Justice Debt Initiative; **Anne Stuhldreher**, Director of Financial Justice of the City and County of San Francisco; **Judge**

Egan Walker of Washoe County Nevada; and Minnesota State Sen. **Nick Zerwas**.

The conference is the second phase of a two-year journalists' fellowship program, supported by Arnold Ventures.

Conference proceedings and journalists' projects will be published online at <https://thecrimereport.org/cash-register-justice/>

JOHN JAY/ARNOLD VENTURES JUSTICE REPORTING FELLOWS

Seyma Bayram, *Jackson Free Press*
Chandra Bozelko, *Gatehouse Media*
Emma Coleman, *Route Fifty*
Bret Hauff, *Durango Herald*
Meghan Keneally, *ABC News*
Ben Kleppinger, *Advocate-Messenger*
Pete Madden, *ABC News*
Juliette Rihl, *PublicSource*

Kat Russell, *The Gazette*
Michael Sainato, *The Guardian*
Caitlin Schmidt, *The Arizona Daily Star*
Alison Staman, *Freelance*
Andy Stiny, *Freelance*
Kali Venable, *The Victoria Advocate*
Samantha Vicent, *Tulsa World*

About [John Jay College of Criminal Justice](#): An international leader in educating for justice, John Jay College of Criminal Justice of The City University of New York offers a rich liberal arts and professional studies curriculum to upwards of 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 135 nations. In teaching, scholarship and research, the College approaches justice as an applied art and science in service to society and as an ongoing conversation about fundamental human desires for fairness, equality and the rule of law. For more information, visit

[The Center on Media, Crime and Justice](#), established at John Jay College in 2006, is the nation's only practice- and research-oriented think tank devoted to encouraging and developing high-quality reporting on criminal justice. Publisher of [The Crime Report](#), it promotes better-informed public debate on the complex 21st century challenges of law enforcement, public security and justice in a globalized urban society.

[Arnold Ventures](#) is a philanthropy dedicated to tackling some of the most pressing problems in the United States. Founded by Laura and John Arnold in 2010, Arnold Ventures' core mission is to improve lives by investing in evidence-based solutions that maximize opportunity and minimize injustice.