

SETON HALL | LAW

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An Innocence-Centered View of New Jersey's Post-Conviction Jurisprudence
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Laura Cohen

Distinguished Clinical Professor of Law and Virginia Long Scholar
Rutgers Law School
Panel: 3

Laura Cohen is a Distinguished Clinical Professor of Law, the Justice Virginia Long Scholar, and Director of both the New Jersey Innocence Project at Rutgers University, which is the first New Jersey-based member of the national Innocence Network, and the Criminal and Youth Justice Clinic (CYJC) at Rutgers Law School. In addition to its actual innocence work, the CYJC provides post-conviction legal representation to clients incarcerated as adolescents in parole, executive clemency, re-sentencing, and conditions of confinement-related matters, among others. Laura also founded and directs the Rutgers Center on Criminal Justice, Youth Rights, and Race.

One of the country's leading experts on youth justice and the legal representation of children and adolescents, Laura served as the International Legal Foundation's inaugural UNICEF Juvenile Justice Fellow in Myanmar in 2020. From 2013-2017, she was the due process consultant to the United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division in its investigation of systemic constitutional violations in the St. Louis County, Missouri Juvenile Court. Prior to joining the Rutgers faculty, she was the Director of Training for the New York City Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Division, where she oversaw the attorney training program and public policy initiatives relating to child welfare and juvenile justice. She also has served as Deputy Court Monitor for the U.S. District Court, District of Puerto Rico in *Morales Feliciano v. Hernandez Colon*, a federal class action challenging conditions of confinement in Puerto Rico's prisons; Senior Policy Analyst for the Violence Institute of New Jersey; and staff attorney for the Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Division in the Bronx.

Laura has received several awards for her work, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's "Champion for Change" award; the National Juvenile Defender Center's Robert E. Shepherd Award for Excellence in Juvenile Defense; and the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey's Legal Leadership Award. In addition to numerous law review articles, she is a co-editor of the book *Rights, Race, and Reform: 50 Years of Child Advocacy in the Juvenile Justice System* (Kristin Henning and Ellen Marrus, co-editors; Routledge, 2018).

Laura received her J.D. from Columbia Law School, where she was Managing Editor of the *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*.