

Christina Swarns is the Executive Director of the Innocence Project.

Christina previously served as the Attorney-in-Charge of the Office of the Appellate Defender, one of New York City's oldest providers of appellate representation to poor people convicted of felonies, the City's second oldest institutional indigent defense office, and a national model of effective, innovative, and holistic defense representation.

Before joining OAD, Christina served as the Litigation Director of the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc., where she oversaw all aspects of LDF's litigation in its four key practice areas: economic justice, education, political participation and criminal justice. In that capacity, Christina conceptualized and evaluated new cases and campaigns, reviewed and edited all substantive briefs, assisted with preparation for oral arguments, and provided overall supervision for the legal staff. Christina also strategically engaged the media through the development of messaging themes, press releases, talking points, letters to the editor, op-eds, and other communications vehicles. Christina served as Lead Counsel in the litigation of significant impact cases.

Christina previously served as the Director of LDF's Criminal Justice Project, where she analyzed, developed and implemented litigation, organizing, public education, communications and other advocacy strategies to ensure that the American criminal justice system is administered fairly and without regard to race.

As a nationally recognized expert on issues of race and criminal justice, Christina participates in committees, advisory panels, strategic convenings, conferences and national media interviews (including MSNBC, PBS News Hour, and Democracy Now). In 2014, Christina was selected by the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania Law School to be an Honorary Fellow in Residence, an honor given to an attorney who makes "significant contributions to the ends of justice at the cost of great personal risk and sacrifice."

Prior to joining LDF, Christina worked at the Capital Habeas Unit of the Philadelphia Federal Defender.

Christina earned a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and a B.A. from Howard University.