



# ABOLISH

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## FROM DIRECTOR MJ (MALEEKA JIHAD)

At age 11, I was removed from my home in the middle of the night. Police cars with lights flashing red and blue lit up my entire block. As the oldest of four, I felt helpless as we were shuffled one by one into police cars. My family's crime? Poverty. We were home unsupervised as my single black father worked evenings as a janitor to provide for his children. There was no abuse, no neglect, no harm—just poverty.

It took over a year for my family to be reunited. Though my siblings and I live all over the world, including one in Africa, we always mark our family anniversary date on February 11th. We know not every family is able to celebrate this day.

In 2012, I moved to Denver from New Orleans after receiving my master's degree in Social Work from Tulane University. My first job was as an in-home family therapist experiencing possible removals of their children from court involving dependency and neglect cases. In 2013, I became a clinical consultant, working alongside attorneys that represented the children's best interests. Never did I share that I was once one of the children we represented. It did not take very long for me to accept that the "system" created generational trauma and generational poverty, and streamlined individuals and families into other systems of oppression.



Realizing the populations I worked with were suffering from unhealed trauma imposed by the "system" and my own hands, I began to work with attorneys that represented parents during their dependency and neglect cases. There, I saw that the parents were set up to fail and that families were being destroyed by professionals with a white (cultural) colonizing lens.

The MJCF: Coalition is a grassroots, non-profit organization that fights for the people of color and those experiencing poverty that have a right to raise their children in their communities. This is also a space to heal from the shame and trauma of being system involved.

I graciously thank my current team for having faith in not only me to help lead this change, but I also thank you all for believing in our communities. Thank you. And welcome to the community.



## COALITION PUBLICATIONS

The MJCF: Coalition Members include the thoughts, ideas and solutions from both "system-experienced" professionals and impacted communities and individuals as it relates to child welfare. We believe in educating our community from both the academic lens and from lived experiences through collaborative publications.

Societies - Structures of Oppressions in the U.S. Child Welfare System

The Guardian - The Weaponization of Whiteness in Child Welfare

Part 1: Attachment Theory

Part 2: Parallels Between Child Welfare Parenting Time & Prison Visitation

## LETTER TO FORMER JUDGE KATHERINA DELGADO: **YOU MAY BE SEATED**

A judgeship in our criminal legal system is a sacred space. It is in this seat where even if you don't have your eyes on history, history has its eyes on you. Congratulations, Judge Delgado! Your career has proven that this seat was never about responsibility...it was about power. You have allowed yourself to be a well-oiled cog in a system of destruction.

What you seemingly have forgotten is that Black, Indigenous, and Brown families are conditioned for resilience. We are committed to the stronghold of community and family. It is this resilience that can not be understood and can not be contained. So we offer you this list as we say THANK YOU for the UNJUSTIFIED resilience that your career left. Thank you for:

- Perpetuating the narrative that we are incapable of rearing our children. This proved you to be lazy in your judgeship.
- The destruction of the Black, Indigenous, and Brown families proved you to be racist, period!
- Choosing power over responsibility proved you to be vain and self-centered.
- Sustaining a system of pain proved you to be an obedient soldier of misanthropy.
- Speaking over and not speaking up for those that your judgeship was supposed to serve proved you to be loud and unwilling to partner.

In retirement, you will have to face this destruction in your moments alone. You will have to carry the reflection of racism left behind as you attempted to silence voices that will always be immovable. May it be known and forever understood that our community and families will ironically ALL RISE to hold each other through the healing process, the continued pursuit of joy, and the love that drives our persistence. As for you, **YOU MAY BE SEATED**.

Respectfully,  
The Coalition Community

*Delgado served as Judge in the 17th Judicial District in the state of Colorado.  
Including Adams and Broomfield counties. She retired at the end of 2022*

## SHOUTOUTS

The Coalition would like to give a huge thanks to Ms. Lisa Merkle-Hougin. Lisa has spent hours volunteering by writing grants and due to her tireless efforts, the coalition was awarded our first operational grant through the Women and Girls of Color Fund.

Lisa is the Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Director of the National Center on Family Group Decision Making at the Kempe Center with the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Center. She has over 30 years of experience in identifying, developing, and implementing transformative changes to child welfare systems. She continues to convene an international community of practice to challenge issues of racism, sexism, classism, oppression and othering that are deeply embedded in formal child welfare systems across the world. Thank you, Lisa. we appreciate all that you bring to this community.

The Women & Girls of Color Fund focuses on organizations led by women or girls of color executive directors that are committed to building economic power and dismantling oppressive systems through direct service or community organizing.

## REPEAL CAPTA

In advance of the 50th anniversary of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) in 2024, impacted families, advocates, social workers, and attorneys called the "Repeal CAPTA Workgroup" is working to end the so-called "Child Protective Services (CPS)" system that relies on surveillance, policing, and separation.

The group seeks a caring approach that increases direct support and material benefits, eliminates the power and harm of the family policing system, supports family integrity and autonomy, and promotes healing and reparations for those impacted by CPS.

## WHAT IS ICWA?

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 is a Federal law that governs the removal and out-of-home placement of American Indian children. The law was enacted after the Federal Government recognized that American Indian children were being removed from their homes and communities at a much higher rate than non-Native children.

Listen to this very thorough and informational podcast by Crooked Media to learn why ICWA is on the chopping block.

## POLITICAL CORNER

### LOCAL

The Colorado Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel (ORPC) needs your support for two great bills to help keep families together.

- SB 23-039, Concerning Measures to Reduce Family Separation Caused by a Parent's Detention
- House Bill 23-1024, Concerning Measures to Increase Family Resiliency Through Providing Greater Supports and Protections for Children Placed with Kin, Including Relative

Please fill out this form or email Melanie Jordan at [mjordan@coloradorpc.org](mailto:mjordan@coloradorpc.org) to receive action alerts or to support these bills.

MJ is scheduled to testify on House Bill 23-1024 on February 8th. Tara Doxtater will be testifying on SB 23-039.

### NATIONAL

In Texas, House Bill 635 has been filed by the chairman of the House Human Services Committee, which has oversight authority for our CPS agency. Here's our research on the topic, which the legislator may find helpful.

# STOLEN CHILDREN

The Coalition is one of the first organizations to keep a registry of stolen children. These "stolen children" were placed in foster care and adopted out, even though family members fought to be a placement for them. The family members are usually denied as placement due to racial bias and discrimination by the department, the child's attorney, and the judges.

During the end of the Civil War and Emancipation, many searched for their loved ones by placing newspaper ads. The Coalition will utilize this idea and feature a family member monthly that fought for (and lost) the right to care for their relative by the unjust court system. We hope this registry will provide some solace to the impacted people (stolen children and their birth families) and also educate professionals and adoptive parents that they are emulating their ancestors by participating in this form of human trafficking that destroys communities and creates generational trauma.

The Coalition is currently building the kinship legal program, which will provide kinship, such as grandparents, with pro-bono attorneys to help them fight for the right to be placement for family members involved in foster care. To find out more about the registry and or kinship legal services, [visit the coalition website.](#)

# COALITION COURT WATCH

The goal of a Court Watch/Court Monitoring Initiative program is to keep the courts accountable and make the criminal legal system more transparent and equitable. Court Watch is made up of local citizens who are usually non-legal professionals that volunteer to observe court proceedings.

In December 2020, the Coalition held its first "court watch" to support a kinship placement that was battling over the custody of their baby cousin (against the state's recommendation to have the child be adopted out by foster parents). Over 50 coalition members logged onto a virtual court hearing to support the family. Due to the unprofessional manner that the judge displayed during the open court hearing; the case was moved to another Colorado county. The new judge supported the law and placed the child to its kinship.

The kinship placement said multiple times that without the Coalition's "intervention," they believe their baby cousin would have been lost forever to the unjust foster care system.

The Coalition will begin featuring cases in our monthly newsletter to "court watch." We hope through observation that we can bring humanity to the court cases and that the families will see that we are here to advocate for change.

## SAVE THE DATE

3RD ANNUAL PROTEST AGAINST  
RACISM IN CHILD WELFARE JUNE  
2023

INTERESTED IN HOLDING A  
PROTEST IN YOUR STATE? EMAIL  
[INFO@MJCFCOALITION.COM](mailto:INFO@MJCFCOALITION.COM)



## IMPORTANT LINKS

[FILE COMPLAINTS](#)

[ABOLISH ON YOUTUBE](#)

[LATEST PUBLICATIONS  
FROM MEMBERS](#)

