

MELANIE CARR

A Fighting Chance

Co-Founded with Colleen Francis

2002 Global Fellow



BIG BOLD IDEA

Level the playing field for indigent defendants in the criminal justice system.

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

A Fighting Chance's mission is to provide prompt and thorough investigation and mitigation development services to indigents facing the death penalty, to expand access to qualified investigators and mitigation specialists through aggressive funding litigation, and to improve standards for investigation through recruiting, training, and supervising investigators and mitigation specialists. A Fighting Chance investigators work alongside the attorneys as members of the defense team, interviewing witnesses, procuring relevant documents, reviewing and analyzing evidence, and developing working relationships with clients and their families. In 2008, the organization re-incorporated into a for-profit organization and changed its name to NOLA Investigates. NOLA Investigates is still thriving and continues to raise the standards of capital defense investigation and mitigation development throughout the Deep South and beyond. The organization's investigators have expanded their expertise into areas of forensic science investigations, civil rights cases, and background investigations.

PERSONAL BIO

Melanie Carr is a consultant, investigator, mitigation specialist in civil rights and human rights cases. She also serves as a defense-initiated victim outreach specialist. After graduating from Harvard in 1997 with a bachelor's degree in social anthropology, Melanie moved to New Orleans to work as an investigator with a nonprofit law office that provided representation to poor people facing the death penalty. In 2002, with the help of her Echoing Green Fellowship, Melanie and her colleague, Colleen Francis, founded A Fighting Chance. In 2007, Melanie transitioned the leadership of A Fighting Chance to a new director and moved back to her native northeast. She now lives in NYC, consults on capital defense, criminal defense and civil rights cases and continues her involvement in training and mentoring for investigators and mitigation specialists. Recent clients have included the Jena 6, a Guantanamo client facing capital charges in the Military Commissions, a class of juveniles in detention, and a class of workers facing inhumane working conditions and discrimination in Mississippi.

Issue area

Civil and Human Rights

Organization/Fellow Location

Brooklyn, United States

Impact Location

North America

United States

Organization Structure

Nonprofit