

GINA CLAYTON

Twitter - @GinaLClayton
Twitter - @essie4justice

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“SOCIAL MOVEMENT DOES NOT HAPPEN
WITHOUT MOBILIZED WOMEN.”

– GINA CLAYTON

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ESSIE JUSTICE GROUP, ATTORNEY, & SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Gina Clayton launched Essie Justice Group in 2014 to engage and mobilize women with incarcerated loved ones to **end mass incarceration’s harm to women**. Gina saw the impact of incarceration on women both in her personal and professional life. Despite years as a community organizer in Los Angeles, it wasn’t until someone she loved was sentenced to 20 years in prison that her focus centered on the criminal justice system.

Through the relationships she built with her clients at The **Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem**, Gina recognized systemic patterns of harm: women with loved ones behind bars were suffering, resulting in weakened communities. Gina returned to California and recruited women who had family members in prison to help develop a model that both

heals and unlocks the powerful advocacy potential of women. Gina’s award-winning, isolation-breaking Essie model successfully increases mental wellbeing, resources available for single-parent families, and civic participation among women.

Gina is an **Equal Justice Works Fellow**, a **Soros Justice Fellow**, an **Echoing Green Global Fellow**, a **Harvard Public Service Venture Fellow**, and a **JMK Innovation Prize Awardee**. Gina was named “Top 14 Women Who Rocked 2014” by Colorlines, a San Francisco Magazine Soldier of Social Change in their “Women In Power Issue,” one of the “Woke 100 Women” by Essence Magazine, and is a 2016 recipient of JustLeadershipUSA’s Redefining Justice Award. Gina is also featured in Ava DuVernay’s acclaimed Netflix documentary 13TH.

Speaking Topics

- Healing and Advocacy in the Age of Mass Incarceration
- Building Women-led Social Movements
- Unlocking Women’s Potential for Advocacy
- Mass Incarceration and Gender Equity

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