

The Advocates for Human Rights selects Michele Garnett McKenzie as its new Executive Director

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In this moment when the human rights movement faces some of its greatest challenges, The Advocates for Human Rights announces the appointment of Michele Garnett McKenzie as Executive Director. McKenzie is a fierce champion for The Advocates' mission: to ensure that all people can live in dignity,

equality, and peace. The Advocates leverages its work through dedicated volunteers and partnerships with local and international human rights organizations. Last year, 1,800 dedicated volunteers contributed more than \$20 million of human rights work, amplifying the work of the organization's 34 permanent staff. McKenzie joined The Advocates as a staff attorney in 1999



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Michele Garnett McKenzie

and subsequently held positions leading the organization's immigration legal services, advocacy, communications, and operations. She begins her new role immediately. McKenzie replaces Robin Phillips, who led the organization for more than 22 years.

The Advocates for Human Rights Board Chair Dan Supalla said, “Michele’s unwavering commitment to human rights, her deep organizational knowledge, and her strong ties to

our human rights partners and volunteers will guide The Advocates during this challenging period in our nation’s history.”

Leadership builds on decades-long tenure -

In her 26 years at The Advocates, McKenzie has achieved notable successes by working in partnership with communities affected by human rights violations and mobilizing ordinary individuals to engage in complex human rights work:

- In 2011, she led the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth Act campaign, culminating in

legislation that transformed Minnesota's approach to sex trafficking.

- In 2017, she launched the Immigration Court Observation Project, one of The Advocates' most successful public engagement initiatives with more than 1500 observers to date.□
- Most recently, she brought together nonprofit, law firms, and public partners to establish the Immigration Hub, an innovative multi-agency initiative to provide immigration legal help throughout Minnesota, positioning the state to weather the unprecedented challenges of the current administration.

In accepting her new role, McKenzie said, "I am honored to lead our smart, experienced, and dedicated team at a moment when our work could not be more urgent. My vision is clear: strengthen our capacity to protect human rights, forge strategic partnerships that amplify our collective power, and ensure The Advocates' independence and resilience."

Dan Supalla thanked outgoing Interim Co-Executive Directors Jennifer Prestholdt and Rosalyn Park for their able stewardship during the search process. Both will continue to serve as senior leadership, overseeing The Advocates' international advocacy and global partnerships.

About The Advocates for Human Rights -

Based in Minneapolis, The Advocates for Human Rights is a nonprofit organization that engages volunteers and partners in providing direct legal services and transforming unjust systems, tackling some of the world's most intractable human rights issues.□□Last year, The Advocates mobilized more than 1,500 volunteers to provide free immigration legal services to people fleeing persecution or torture, unaccompanied children, trafficking survivors, and people in detention; monitor court proceedings; and engage in international advocacy. Additionally, The Advocates:

- promotes international human rights by partnering with human rights defenders, coalitions, and affected communities in the United States and worldwide to abolish the death penalty and protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, women, migrants, and others facing violence and discrimination;
- combats sex and labor trafficking by addressing the root causes of trafficking, prioritizing survivor protection and agency, and reforming law, policies, and systems; and
- partners with the Sankhu-Palubari community in Nepal to provide access to completely free education for children from pre-K to 10th grade as an alternative to child labor.

For media inquiries or more information please contact:

Madeline Lohman, Director of Advocacy & Outreach

612-746-4696

mlohman@advrights.org

Madeline Lohman

The Advocates for Human Rights

+1 612-746-4696

mlohman@advrights.org

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