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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

## ***Joint Statement in Response to Reports that NYC Family Court Clerk Used Racial Slurs to Refer to 15-Year-Old***

**(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society’s Juvenile Rights Practice, The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Services, Lawyers For Children and Center for Family Representation issued the following joint statement in response to reports that a New York City Family Court clerk used racial slurs to refer to a 15-year-old during a virtual court proceeding:**

“White supremacy and violence fill every crevice of our criminal legal system. The killing of Adam Toledo, a 13-year-old child in Chicago, lays bare the impact of that racism and dehumanization at its most brutal. As the images of his death are still fresh in our minds, we are reminded of the insidious racism that Black and brown people experience inside New York courtrooms every single day. The use of racist slurs by court staff is part and parcel of the same system that allows police to repeatedly and disproportionately shoot Black and brown children, and we must seriously reckon with the ideology that fuels both.

Racism within the court system has a long-standing history in our city as well. There is a direct link between the funneling of thousands of Black and brown New Yorkers into a system of punishment every year and the racist attitudes of the court staff within that system. Over the last year, multiple court staff have been disciplined for racist social media posts and for disparaging comments towards colleagues of color. An independent statewide review of state courts issued in October confirmed what our clients and staff experience daily: racial prejudice and other biases are very much embedded in our court system. Our court system must have zero tolerance for this egregious behavior, and OCA must swiftly implement the recommendations laid out in last year’s review.

OCA must also be held accountable for addressing the systemic racism that permeates the court system but the only way to truly confront the harm is by fundamentally shrinking the criminal legal system and stemming the endless tide of Black and brown people that the NYPD funnels into that system.”

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