



# children's defense fund

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## **The Children's Defense Fund-California (CDF-CA) appoints Thomas B. Harvey as State Director and National Litigation Strategist**

**January 12, 2022; Washington, D.C.** — The Children's Defense Fund has appointed attorney and racial-justice advocate Thomas B. Harvey as State Director of CDF-California and National Litigation Strategist.

Harvey has a long track record as a lawyer supporting racial justice movements, as an innovative litigator who combines legal and organizing strategy to build power in Black and brown communities. He previously served at Advancement Project National Offices as the Director of its Justice Project, which supports grassroots movements in communities of color to counter racism and predatory structures in the criminal legal system, particularly policing. Harvey and his team supported local campaigns seeking not simply to reform, but to wholly dismantle systems that criminalize and incarcerate people of color in the name of law and order. His work supports racial justice grassroots organizers through research, policy advocacy, litigation, political education, and strategic communications in cities across the country.

"I am thrilled to join Children's Defense Fund, a legacy civil rights organization whose work I have long admired," Harvey said. "From the incredible history of Marian Wright Edelman's work to Freedom Schools and the promise Rev. Dr. Starksy Wilson's leadership brings, I can't wait to join the talented people on the California team and add to this rich history."

Prior to joining Advancement Project, Harvey helped launch the Bail Project and served as its first National Director of Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy. He also supported research and advocacy around the Bail Project's efforts to reduce the jail population, save jobs, homes, and families, and attack mass incarceration by demonstrating the coercive, racist and discriminatory impacts of our nation's cash bail system.

"Thomas's experience makes him an ideal candidate to lead CDF's efforts to advance child well-being and racial justice in California," said Catoya Roberts, CDF's National Director of Movement Building. "We look forward to his continued efforts to not just protect California youth from a racist carceral system, but also to organize people in marginalized communities so they wield the power to ensure their children thrive."

Harvey co-founded ArchCity Defenders in 2009 and served as its first Executive Director until 2018. In addition to providing criminal and civil legal services to the unhoused population in St. Louis, Harvey built a civil rights litigation unit that worked with organizers and activists on campaigns including federal and state class actions, impact litigation on debtors' prisons, cash bail, police misconduct and the illegal use of chemical munitions during protests following the murder of Mike Brown in Ferguson, MO. He was also the lead author of ArchCity's 2014 paper on St. Louis County's municipal court system which served as the template for the Justice Department's findings in Ferguson.

Harvey received his JD from Saint Louis University School of Law in 2009 and a Master's in French Literature from the University of Missouri before pursuing his Ph.D. in French at the University of California, Irvine.

Harvey will aim to build on CFA-CA's recent successes. In 2021, the group's guiding policy provided the foundation for newly signed bills that invest nearly \$3 billion in California Community Schools Partnership Program, which integrate schools with health, mental health, trauma-informed care, and education/social supports for children and families. CDF-CA's continued advocacy to transform the youth justice system from a punitive system to one that prioritizes youth development and wellness led to the creation of a new state office—Office of Youth and Community Restoration. Their leadership of a statewide coalition for guaranteed income also secured transitional-age foster youth the nation's first state guaranteed income program, which provides matching funds for local pilot projects.

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**About the [Children's Defense Fund](#):** Celebrating 50 years in 2023, the Children's Defense Fund envisions a nation where marginalized children flourish, leaders prioritize their well-being, and communities wield the power to ensure they thrive. The only national, multi-issue advocacy organization working at the intersection of child well-being and racial justice, CDF advances the well-being of America's most diverse generation, the 74 million children and youth under the age of 18 and 30 million young adults under the age of 25. CDF's grassroots movements in marginalized communities build power for child-centered public policy, informed by racial equity and the lived experience of children and youth. Its renowned CDF Freedom Schools® are conducted in nearly 100 cities and 30 states and territories. Learn more at [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)