

# PARTICIPATORY DEFENSE



## FAMILY & FRIENDS CAN HELP

Participatory defense invites family and friends of those accused of a crime to help with their defense. Family members are often the best historians and are dedicated to recounting personal history to help mitigate a loved one's sentence.



**RAJ JAYADEV**

Raj Jayadev, creator of the participatory defense model, trains local and national organizations to run participatory defense and community outreach programs. These programs offer a support system for families and friends and train them to aid defense attorneys. Workshops include lessons on delivering testimony and soliciting letters of support from key witnesses, as well as creating social biography videos.

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### **TIDC funds indigent defense innovation in Texas counties.**

TIDC provides funding for improving indigent defense processes and technology.

Programs that measure and ensure the quality of representation are priority areas for funding.

Participatory defense can help supplement an overwhelmed criminal justice system. As the Chief Public Defender of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania noted, "Public defenders are overworked already. We have to show them that it helps the client, but it also helps the lawyer." Nationally, the program has cut over 3,350 years from prison sentences.

## MODEL PROGRAM: CHARACTER LETTER 2.0: USING SOCIAL BIOGRAPHY VIDEOS TO HUMANIZE CLIENTS

“I just wish they knew him like we know him.” A defendant’s personal history is sometimes sidelined from the decision-making process. Social biography videos allow judges and juries to walk in defendants’ shoes—seeing their home and work, learning how they grew up, and meeting who will be waiting for them when they get out.

Jayadev’s Albert Cobarrubias Justice Project (ACJP) trains public defenders on storytelling and teaches them how to produce and integrate social biographies into mitigation. The videos have proved useful in reducing charges and lowering sentences. As one Alabama federal defender noted, “I am absolutely amazed at how effective and powerful the video can be in such a short amount of time. I’m also convinced that this is the future of sentencing.” ACJP has conducted training with the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association and anticipates training the Harris County Public Defender’s Office.

# BENEFITS

## OF PARTICIPATORY DEFENSE

- ✓ Family and friends give emotional support and learn how to navigate the court system
- ✓ Taxpayers save money on unnecessary years of imprisonment
- ✓ Defense attorneys more effectively humanize their clients
- ✓ Communities gain a voice in their justice systems

### TIDC INNOVATION SERIES

For more information on participatory defense and other innovative practices, go to:

[tidc.texas.gov/innovation](https://tidc.texas.gov/innovation)

//// Or call us—you may qualify for grant funding:

512-936-6994