

NATOSCHIA SCRUGGS, PH.D.

Chief Access, Diversity, and Fairness Officer (CADFO)
Massachusetts Trial Court

At the core of every position Dr. Scruggs has held is a firm commitment to social justice. This commitment has provided her with the opportunity to gain extensive experience working with conflict-affected populations, refugees, survivors of gender-based violence, and others who have survived traumatic, oftentimes life-altering abuse and events. Some of Dr. Scruggs's experiences include having been trained in refugee law, interviewing techniques and legal testimony writing by the late world-renowned refugee studies expert, Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond (OBE) and serving as legal advisor to self-represented refugees from across the globe at a legal aid organization in Egypt. She further assisted self-represented litigants (SRLs) with immigration and civil cases in California and Massachusetts through organizations such as the International Rescue Committee and the Somali Development Center. Whether preparing a displaced person for a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) hearing, or working with multiple interpreters to accurately capture the harm experienced by an asylee as the adjudicating Asylum Officer, or accompanying a newly settled immigrant family to housing court, the need for proper signage, adequate interpreting services, accessible physical spaces and overall cultural sensitivity to make an encounter with an international legal authority, and/or the American judicial system a fair experience for petitioners, litigants and court users has never been lost on Dr. Scruggs.

A trained mediator and Appointed Commissioner to the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission, Dr. Scruggs has a deep understanding of US Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws and compliance, as well as over two decades of experience developing and overseeing strategic plans, projects, and initiatives to promote equitable and inclusive cultures—serving at times as "the" leader (National Director/Executive Director, End FGM/C Network) and at others as a trusted advisor and confidante to high-profile leaders. She has held teaching and administrative positions within K-12 and higher education academic institutions in the US and abroad (MIT, Harvard, Marymount University, Providence College, University of Denver, British School of Alexandria, Egypt, etc.), including seven years' experience working closely with administrators as an Assistant Professor, Assistant Provost, Appointed Researcher, Visiting Lecturer, Teacher (K-8) and Director of two Student Affairs affinity centers. As well, she has served as a leader focused on public policy formation and implementation at the local level (City of Boston), federal level (Department of Homeland Security), and international level, having served as principal advisor on research to Ambassador Susan Rice, Ambassador Samantha Power, and Ambassador Nikki Haley at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

At present, as Chief Access, Diversity, and Fairness Officer (CADFO) at the Trial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Dr. Scruggs oversees the Trial Court's policies and practices related to access and fairness, diversity, equity, and inclusion for 6,700 employees plus thousands of court users statewide. In her role, she heads the Office of Access, Diversity, and Fairness (OADF), which serves as an umbrella over six departments and offices that directly report to her, including: 1) Court Records and Transcripts; 2) Court Services and Law Libraries; 3) Access to Justice and the Court User Experience; 4) Alternative and Online Dispute Resolution; 5) Language Access; and 6) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. These departments ensure that court users have access to interpreters, transcripts, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations, tangible legal resources and mediation while providing various trainings and collaborating across departments to enrichen the Trial Court workforce's professional experience and development. In total, approximately 300 employees (union and non-union members) and contractors are under the supervision of Dr. Scruggs.

In addition to having published peer-reviewed articles and book chapters addressing family violence, elder abuse, sexual exploitation, displacement, and state violence, Dr. Scruggs has a Ph.D. in African Diaspora Studies with emphasis on public policy, gender, women and sexuality studies from the University of California, Berkeley. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and was a Ford Foundation Fellow, Rotary Ambassadorial Fellow, Fulbright Scholar, and American Field Service high school foreign exchange student.