

Biography of Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald

Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald Bio Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald has devoted her life to the pursuit of justice and equality for all. As Director of the Children's Defense Fund's Southern Regional Office, Oleta has placed special emphasis on education, including early childhood education, children's healthcare access, and breaking the insidious cradle to prison pipeline pattern, which is all too prevalent in communities of color. Oleta is the Regional Administrator for the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative for Economic & Social Justice (SRBWI). SRBWI operates in 77 counties across the Black Belts of Alabama, Southwest Georgia and the Mississippi Delta. She is also the principal for an innovative project, the Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) Initiative, which has operated in more than 12 Mississippi school districts. Oleta's distinguished public service career began long before she assumed her position at Children's Defense Fund. In 1993, Oleta became President Clinton's appointee as White House Liaison and Executive Assistant to Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy. Later, she was named the Department's Director of Intergovernmental Affairs where, among other things, she worked on tribal governmental issues and coordinated the Administration's long-term recovery of Midwestern states affected by The Great Flood of 1993.

Ms. Fitzgerald serves on the boards of The Center for Education Innovation, Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative; is a member of the Stennis Institute of Government advisory committee and a member of the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative Executive Committee and on the advisory boards for Excel by 5, NEA Foundation, Rural Assembly, Philander Smith College Justice Project, and Mississippi Building Blocks. Ms. Fitzgerald received honorary membership to Pi Alpha Alpha, the National Honor Society for Public Affairs & Administration from Mississippi State University in 1999. She contributed to the Covenant with Black America introduced by Tavis Smiley, and numerous news stories by the New York Times, Huffington Post, the BBC, National Public Radio, Commercial Appeal and NBC National and local affiliates as well as other broadcast and print media. Ms. Fitzgerald is the proud mother of four children, Rashida, Yusef, Layla and Joi.