



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

*Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963*

Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Summer Internship and Fellowship Program

Pennsylvania  
**Legal Aid** Network, Inc.

# THE DRUM MAJOR

## Class of 2020 Essay Collection



*"Make a career of humanity, commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country and a finer world to live in."*

*– Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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July 29, 2020

To the 2020 Martin Luther King, Jr. Interns:

These are quite extraordinary times and from what we have heard from our programs, you have risen to the occasion! Each year, we ask our MLK Interns to write an essay in an effort to capture in words, the experiences they have had during the summer. We are pleased to present you with the 2020 edition of **THE DRUM MAJOR**, which is the collection of these essays.

Through your work during the past ten weeks, you have touched the lives of many clients. Our programs and clients are better because of your service. You learned how to use your skills to make equal justice closer to a reality.

For this, we thank you. As you continue your law school career, we hope that this summer increased your desire to serve others and seek justice for those with nowhere else to turn.

Very Truly Yours,



Patrick Cicero, Esq.  
Executive Director



Very Truly Yours,



Arlene A. Marshall-Hockensmith, Esq.  
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### **Learning to Be a Drum Major for Justice**

Embodying Dr. King's Drum Major sermon, I, too, want to be a drum major for peace and a drum major for righteousness. I, much like Dr. King, want to be remembered for trying to love and serve humanity. This summer, I had the pleasure of working with the Pennsylvania Health Law Project (PHLP). Their mission is to help Pennsylvanians in need get the healthcare that they deserve. They truly believe in their mission. I worked with attorneys and staff who truly embody the idea of being drum majors for righteousness and for justice. Every staff member has a passion for healthcare access in a way that is inspiring which motivates me to want to make a change in any way that I can and be a part of something bigger than myself. Individually and collectively, PHLP staff embody the programs motto: working to help clients in any way that they can. Although my summer experience was brief, I will carry my experiences for the rest of my life.

Nationally, we are seeing an uprising of people who have been systemically oppressed and have not had their concerns heard. We are also living through a pandemic that is disproportionately affecting people of color and exposing shortcomings in our healthcare system. It is no secret that our healthcare system was built in a manner that leaves out those who cannot afford to pay. We live in a country where people are quick to think of themselves and not others. The pandemic truly exposed how dangerous it is to be self-serving. In a time when it is easy to think of yourself, it is important to be a drum major for justice. As Dr. King said, "But this is why we are drifting. And we are drifting because nations are caught up with the drum major instinct. I must be first. I must be supreme. Our nation must rule the world." We put on a front that we are the best country or that we are first, but we neglect our own people in numerous ways. This front we put on only hurts our own citizens in ways that truly prevent this country from being all that it can be.

This summer, I got the opportunity to work with clients from all walks of life who share a common denominator: they were struggling to navigate the healthcare system. They came to PHLP with a variety of issues ranging from eligibility for Medicaid to more complex issues involving coverage of specific issues. I got the opportunity to help defend medically fragile children when their Medicaid insurance company tried to reduce their in-home services. I also got the opportunity to help seniors and people with disabilities keep medically necessary home care services so that they can continue to live independently rather than in a nursing home. In a time where companies are trying to save a dollar, it was powerful to be able to help someone use their voice to advocate for themselves or

loved ones. I was able to watch and help the staff attorneys be drum majors for change as we advocated for the needs of each client. I was able to be a drum major for justice by helping my clients enforce their rights by helping to give them a voice.

Two experiences that impacted me the most were conversations that I had with clients that didn't necessarily have to do with their health issues at hand; at least, that is what I thought at first. As we got into deeper conversation, I quickly realized that a lot of health disparities are rooted in systematic racial inequalities. The majority of these problems loop back together, either directly or indirectly. My first client was raising two young, black, special needs sons with violent tendencies. I, too, have a family member with autism so we were able to speak openly about the "not-so-pretty" side of disabilities. In the disabled and/or special needs community, children with violent tendencies are often cast aside. These children, more often than not, are young black children. This is harmful in a number of ways. These children are typically left out of parental support groups. Services for these children are fewer because there are not supports to "handle" them. We live in a world where the first thing people tend to notice about you is the color of your skin. This is already potentially harmful for all people of color but even more so if you have special needs and are non-verbal. In the United States, we have an issue with access to non-police resources for welfare checks and services for individuals in crisis, which creates potentially life-threatening situations for these individuals. Listening to this client share her stories, I found ways to relate because I am an older sibling of a young black boy with autism. The fears that we shared are very common for families of children with special needs. It is a very real fear for families and parents that they may find themselves in a situation in which they need to call the police, but fear the police may escalate the situation. This fear is very reasonable as we have a lack of resources for special needs individuals and those with mental illness diagnoses.

My second client was an older woman who feared not only about her healthcare, but about being black in America. She expressed concerns about leaving her house to get the care that she needed. The fear she expressed is a fear shared by many people of color across this country and it affects many aspects of their lives. Through my internship, I had the opportunity to attend a panel on the intersection between disabilities and black womanhood. The topic of discussion was how racism, for various reasons, is a public health issue. Mainly, the stress associated with racism takes a toll on the mental and physical health of people of color. When you add being woman and a disability, it deepens the stress, thus deepening the effects. These client experiences pushed me to find the strength to be a drum major for justice, peace and righteousness. I empathized with their experiences and it deepened my commitment to want to make a difference. Most importantly, it deepened my insight into the complex intersection between racial injustice, sexism, and access to healthcare.

As Dr. King said, "as a nation we are drifting." It is time that we come back together as a nation and work to fix the issues that we are facing. The United States has a lot of work to do to ensure that this country cares for all and does not neglect its most vulnerable populations. Given the current struggles of

this country, it is an important time for me to be a drum major for peace, righteousness, and for justice. Much like Dr. King, I want to be remembered as one who tried to give her life to serving others. This summer experience has showed me that there is more work to be done in this country and, with the right forces behind me, I can make a difference. There are many systemic issues in this country. I, myself, cannot take on every issue; however, as a drum major for change, I can inspire others to do the same.

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*But that isn't what Jesus did; he did something altogether different. He said in substance, 'Oh, I see, you want to be first. You want to be great. You want to be important. You want to be significant. Well, you ought to be. If you're going to be my disciple, you must be.' But he reordered priorities. And he said, 'Yes, don't give up this instinct. It's a good instinct if you use it right. (Yes) It's a good instinct if you don't distort it and pervert it. Don't give it up. Keep feeling the need for being important. Keep feeling the need for being first. But I want you to be first in love. (Amen) I want you to be first in moral excellence. I want you to be first in generosity. That is what I want you to do.'*

*– Martin Luther King Jr., The Drum Major Instinct*

### **The Pursuit of Greatness as a Change Agent**

Since working as a legal intern for Community Legal Services (CLS) in the Family Advocacy Unit (FAU), I have felt sadness and anger at how destructive the child welfare system is to Black families in Philadelphia. Through trainings and assigned research, I have learned that black children in the United States are racially disproportionately represented among children referred for maltreatment, substantiated as victims, and entering foster care. This occurs not because Black families are more likely to be neglectful and abusive than white families, but because implicit bias shapes how child welfare and collaborating system professionals (i.e. doctors, teachers) see Black families. Research shows that many of the Department of Human Services (DHS) investigators who go into Black homes not only bring their racial biases, but their poverty-based biases with them. It is scary how race and poverty have been criminalized in the child welfare system. This is wrong. It is unfair. There needs to be change. The FAU is a significant force that seeks to change the child welfare system through family defense law and policy development.

In the FAU, I have witnessed an interdisciplinary and collaborative team model made up of attorneys, social workers, and peer advocates who work together and share a common goal of reunifying families broken by the child welfare system. Through working in FAU, I have learned that family defense law is not glamorous. It requires the daily fighting of a difficult war that forces passionate and creative people to problem solve and find solutions to many unpredictable, unfair, and biased decisions. Every day, the FAU team fights tirelessly with the expectation of winning each case, unhindered by their losses.



As a result of my summer experience, I have grown as a child welfare advocate. The FAU attorneys challenged me to analyze case law with ingenuity and develop strong defenses in support of reunification of children to their families. My compassion for others increased through asking questions and listening to the stories of diverse, resilient clients who share one commonality, an intense desire to do whatever is necessary to regain custody of their children. Three days a week, I attended FAU community meetings that exposed me to a world of passionate and informed brainstorming sessions that ranged from developing new approaches on integrating racial justice into client advocacy to abolishing and then reconstructing the child welfare system.

The FAU attorneys have a distinct awareness of their significance as change agents in Philadelphia. Each year, the FAU attorneys provide citywide trainings to attorneys and judges focused on racial justice, cultural sensitivity, and family defense advocacy. The FAU attorneys recognize the importance of their position, a distinct awareness that if they stop fighting on behalf of their clients, no one will fight for their clients. One of my supervisors admitted to me that, sometimes, she experiences burnout, but she said to me, “I find this system so angering that the anger keeps me fueled up to fight.”

In Martin Luther King, Jr.’s last sermon, entitled “The Drum Major Instinct,” he exhorts us to find importance and significance through service. He encourages us to cultivate the instinct of striving for greatness but to let this instinct be driven by the pursuit of becoming “first in love,” “first in moral excellence,” and “first in generosity.” I am inspired by the FAU’s pursuit of greatness on behalf of serving disadvantaged families traumatized and downtrodden by the child welfare system. However, the FAU does not strive for greatness alone. I had the privilege of attending an interagency partnership meeting, led and facilitated by the FAU, which addressed the intersectionality of the child welfare system and the criminal justice system.

Since working in the FAU, I am consciously aware of the privilege and opportunity bestowed upon me as a Black Caribbean-American woman pursuing a law degree. In 2019, a recent report from the National Association for Law Placement confirmed that only 1.73% of attorneys are black women. I am a rarity and I carry the instinct for greatness and significance, not for self-grandeur, but for bringing transformative justice to disadvantaged children and families through law and policy.

Working closely with my supervisors has shown me that, as an attorney, pursuing this instinct for greatness on behalf of others requires a tenacious spirit. There will be times that, despite my best efforts to defend a client, I will lose. However, my supervisors have shown me that failure is never defeat. One of my supervisors said to me, “Even though, I lost this case, it will help us to learn how to win for the next family.” Failure is never final.

I am grateful to be a part of the legacy of the PLAN Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program. It gives me great pride to be a part of a cohort that is pursuing public interest law to serve disenfranchised communities. I am grateful for Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith’s efforts to provide my cohort with resourceful preliminary trainings before our internships started. This was a great benefit.



Despite doing this program in the midst of the coronavirus, this experience has been life changing. Beyond passion, I now have a clearer vision of how I will be a change agent that makes a tangible impact in public interest law to provide children and families access to justice.

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### **Harnessing the Drum Major Instinct**

We all have a desire to be praised. During his Drum Major Instinct sermon, Martin Luther King, Jr. eloquently described how this innate instinct dictates how we assess our self-worth. During my summer internship with Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS), I had the opportunity to work with people with drastically different circumstances from one another. My experience with clients taught me that people in need are always looking for more than advice. People often also seek reassurance that things will be okay. This concept was reflected in the late Dr. King's sermon when he pondered the relationship between people's need for praise and the expectations that they set for themselves. This often creates a self-crisis where a person's ego does not match their reality.

Through my summer internship, I learned that this self-crisis often follows people during times of distress. For example, I had numerous clients who researched their own legal issues. While they understood what law impacted them, they did not understand the law in practice. Their personal "Drum Major Instinct" drove them to tell me how to handle their case. However, I had to assess what was practically best for them. Until recently, I, too, believed that law-in-practice worked the same as a law-in-theory. It is hard for law students to understand how the countless cases we read for our classes may have been handled in the real world. Through my experience working at NLS, I have learned that much more happens behind the words memorialized on the pages of a book. I used the technique of validation to reach my clients. A simple, "I understand your situation is difficult," made the clients more receptive to the advice that I provided to them. This, again, goes back to the idea that a person's desire to be praised can sometimes be self-harming. Everyone has an ego. It is natural for someone to want to solve the problems in their own lives. In a position where people rely on you for their livelihood, it is important to control your natural desire to be praised. My job was not to be praised. Often in this line of work, praise is rare. However, I could not let a lack of praise stop me from fully engaging with my clients to figure out the best solution for them.

At NLS, I only advised my clients. It was important for me to fully commit to them and their situation. My commitment had to be done without expecting validation that I was doing a great job, because their case was not about me and my feelings. It was about helping my clients and making sure that they were okay at the end of the day. People in stressful situations do not contact lawyers because it's fun. It's because they are in one of, if not, the toughest moments of their lives. They are merely in need of direction. In practice, there is so much more that goes into effectively representing a client. An

understanding of legal theory does not provide a catch-all solution when dealing with clients during highly stressful times. Taking the time to hear clients' full stories makes them want you to help them. It also provides a service to them that is arguably just as important as the legal representation. Listening and empathizing with clients creates an impact on their lives that lasts longer than any resolution to their dispute.

In closing his sermon, Dr. King urged his congregation to focus not on his achievements, but his service to others. Just as law-in-practice works differently from the law-in-theory, a person's achievements on paper is less reflective of their impact on a person's life than the actual connection that was made during the process. Regardless of my performance at NLS as compared to the other interns, I know I have made a positive change in many of my clients' lives. Focusing your drum major instinct to give validation to yourself for helping others will not only give you peace, but it will also help your client cope with their situation. At the end of the day, no matter the situation, we all want to be praised and desired. Sometimes, the best thing you can do for a person is to give them praise. It may be enough to help them through their hard times. This was the most important lesson that I learned during my time at NLS. I hope to continue to be able to touch people's lives through the medium of law. As Dr. King said, "Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter."

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*I'd like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody. I want you to say that day that I tried to be right on the war question. I want you to be able to say that day that I did try to feed the hungry. And I want you to be able to say that day that I did try in my life to clothe those who were naked. I want you to say on that day that I did try in my life to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity.*

*- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr*

### **I Did Try in My Life to Visit Those Who Were in Prison**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his Drum Major Instinct sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, on February 4, 1968. In this sermon, he acknowledged the fact that all people have the same basic desires for recognition, for importance, for attention, and to be the first. He calls this desire the “drum major instinct.” The drum major instinct can be used in two ways, one way makes people live above their means which is destructive; the other way lets people serve which leads to greatness. Dr. King chose the second way. He wanted to be a drum major for justice, peace, and righteousness. He wanted to leave a committed life behind.

Legal aid provides services to the underprivileged people of our society. It is an excellent way to practice the “drum major instinct” of Dr. King. As an intern of the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Program, I had a great opportunity to serve justice, peace, and righteousness. I interned at the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP), a part of the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network. The PILP is a nonprofit legal aid organization working for the civil rights of people incarcerated and institutionalized. PILP continues to help incarcerated people during the pandemic and monitors COVID-19 conditions in prisons and jails. I would have visited clients if COVID-19 hadn’t happened. Even though I worked remotely, I engaged in a lot of work that helped to protect the civil rights of PILP clients.

My first assignment at PILP was to make a case chart regarding whether transgender (Gender Dysphoria) is a qualified disability under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). While I care about the LGBTQ group rights, there were lots of things that I didn’t know about them. The case chart helped me to better understand gender dysphoria from a medical perspective and better recognize the change in society’s acceptance of transgender people. When I read the 2018 Drum Major Essay Collection, I found an essay written by Supriya Philips, a 2018 MLK PILP Intern. She talked about a PILP case involving the

Prison Rape Elimination Act. The client, a transgender inmate, was singled out and subjected to an invasive search for the sole purpose of determining gender identity. The case advanced the treatment of transgender individuals in detention facilities. I am currently working on a case that deals with the medical treatment of a transgender inmate. I am touched to know that PILP continues to work on transgender inmates' rights and advances the treatment of the transgender inmates in different aspects through litigation.

I used my "drum major instinct" to serve PILP's clients whose civil rights were violated. I have worked at PILP for eight weeks so far. During my internship, I conducted legal research on transgender issues under the ADA, an 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment issue as it relates to transgender medical care, and compensatory damage issues of ADA claims. I drafted a memo on a transgender issue under the ADA, reviewed discovery documents, and drafted a discovery insufficiency letter. By doing these assignments, I helped a transgender inmate who was denied appropriate medical care and accommodations, an inmate who was denied accommodations for his pain and inability to walk, and a female inmate who was put in a medical isolation cell for one month while she was pregnant. Her labor was induced before her due date because of prison administrative reasons. Throughout her labor and postpartum hospital stay, she was shackled. I believe that I tried "in my life to visit those who were in prison," like Dr. King required of himself.

I'm using my "drum major instinct" to learn how to better to serve society. Aside from learning specific legal skills, I also learned a lot from attending conferences, webinars, and networking events during my internship. I learned about different kinds of legal work by attending pre-trial conferences, mediations, intake meetings, client calls, etc. I met other interns and attorneys from other PLAN programs via online networking events. Dr. King believed service to society leads to real greatness. In my opinion, learning leads to better service.

The drum major instinct is the desire to be recognized, be important, and to be the first. Using the drum major instinct to be a servant to society is the path to greatness. I appreciate how the MLK Program and PILP lead me to this path. I will use my legal knowledge, my passion, my heart full of grace, and my soul generated by love to keep serving society.

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### **An Unprecedented Experience**

The spread of COVID-19 has changed the world as we know it. International travel came to a standstill. The airline and cruise industries suffered near irreparable damage. Schools and universities closed months early. Businesses were forced to close their doors. Unemployment reached an all-time high. Social distancing, face masks, quarantining, and hand sanitizer suddenly became important parts of life. Working from home became the norm. We realized that doctors and grocery store clerks were important and essential workers. Physical contact became taboo. Coughing was weaponized. Amid an unprecedented global pandemic, we were also plunged into a long overdue second civil rights movement focused on recognizing and fighting against the injustices Black people have faced for centuries and continue to face today.

Uncertainty and fear gripped the nation as the spread of a deadly virus forced our country to shut down. Then, passion overtook Americans as we fought against racial inequality, police brutality, and violations of our First Amendment rights. The first seven months of 2020 have been a whirlwind of emotions and life-altering changes to society as a whole.

When I accepted my summer internship at Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS), I was excited to learn more about the legal aspects of establishing sustainable and affordable housing developments in urban areas. I was excited to return to Philadelphia, the city where I served as an AmeriCorps VISTA member for an entire year before heading off to law school. What drew me to RHLS was the organization's mission to help create sustainable communities with safe and affordable housing for low-income families in Pennsylvania. I was also interested in gaining more experience in transactional legal work.

Due to travel restrictions and business closures brought on by COVID-19, my internship was converted to remote work. No longer would I have an opportunity to get reacquainted with the city that I loved nor have a physical presence at my host program. Remote work brought its own set of challenges, from lack of in-person interaction with RHLS attorneys to limitations on the type of work assigned to me. At first, I was discouraged and jaded. I believed that any work that I'd be doing from my living room all the way in Iowa City, Iowa would not make much of a difference or have a meaningful impact on RHLS' important work.

*"Keep feeling the need for being important. Keep feeling the need for being first. But I want you to be first in love. I want you to be first in moral excellence. I want you to be first in generosity. This is what I want you to do."*

*— Martin Luther King, Jr., The Drum Major Instinct*



This quote inspired me to continue to persevere despite all of the obstacles. In Dr. King's Drum Major Instinct sermon, he explained the drum major instinct. This instinct is the constant feeling and effort to do better and be better, sometimes to the point of destruction. However, oftentimes it can help one to create a big, impactful change. We, even as legal interns, have the ability to harness our drum major instinct and create impactful change. I need to keep feeling the need to be first. It was important to me to make the most out of this wonderful opportunity and learn as much as I could. If I didn't put myself first, I would have lost sight of this goal and become consumed by all of the obstacles. I need to be first in generosity. I have skills that can help further the important work that RHLS is doing. I could help RHLS help others if I continued to be generous and not allow the idea of a remote internship diminish the quality of my work nor the strength of my dedication.

I learned quite a bit throughout my internship. I learned information about the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and how it is applied to housing development projects, not only in Pennsylvania, but in different states across the country. Through a legal research project, I learned about mass evictions and no-fault evictions which occur when a landlord decides to take a rental property off the market for a variety of reasons, including to move into, renovate, or sell the property or because the property is entering foreclosure. I was surprised to learn about the number of tenant rights and their variances by state. While these types of evictions are not the fault of tenants, some states provide these tenants with very little protection. In other states, tenants have many rights which makes the eviction process much more difficult. I had the opportunity to work on research projects in partnership with the American Bar Association (ABA) Journal of Affordable Housing. I also worked on a few research projects that allowed me to dive into several Pennsylvania Statutes and hone my statutory interpretation skills.

Affordable housing suddenly became a hot button issue as COVID-19 spurred record unemployment all over the country. When people were no longer able to afford rent, governors across the nation attempted to control the damage by introducing eviction moratoriums and encouraging landlords to work with their tenants when collecting rent. The federal government gave its acquiescence to eviction moratoriums through the CARES Act to provide some reprieve to every American that rented in a qualified building. These drastic steps made me realize just how important access to affordable housing is as well as the role of RHLS in the development of buildings used for affordable housing. Sure, my internship experience was not exactly what I was expecting but I was able to learn so much through my experience at RHLS.

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*“Make a career of humanity, commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.”*

*- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr*

### **Making a Finer World to Live In**

The above-mentioned quote was a part of Dr. King’s speech during the March for Integrated Schools on April 18, 1959. The quote contains one of the many lessons Dr. King gave to us. Lessons that are needed now as the whole country is suffering the consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Over one hundred and thirty-five thousand people have lost their lives in the United States alone. Millions have lost their jobs and are at risk of either losing the homes they own or being evicted from their rental homes. Now, more than ever, society is in need of legal aid organizations and lawyers who can provide quality, free legal assistance.

During this unprecedented time, I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to work this summer at Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA). Undoubtedly, it was difficult for PLA to switch from seeing clients in-person in their centralized office to “remote” representation. However, PLA was able to continue to provide legal assistance to its clients in need and integrate its legal interns into the different substantive units remotely that worked effectively and cohesively. It was an unforgettable experience for me.

I interned in PLA’s Consumer/Housing Unit (CHU). The CHU concentrates on preventing low-income homeowners from losing their homes. In addition to the MLK Poverty Law Training organized by Ms. Marshall-Hockensmith, I was impressed with PLA’s detailed training and supportive staff. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to participate in hearings due to court closures. Twice a week, I participated in the Save Your Home Philly hotline. I also participated in the CHU’s weekly case distribution meetings to discuss new cases and assignment as well as strategies for overcoming systemic challenges for the client. I conducted legal research that included defenses to actions in partition including whether unclean hands is a defense to a partition claim and the circumstances under which a court must refuse to order the sale of the property and instead require the partition of the property in kind. I learned how to research and obtain documents from the Office of the Register of Wills, how to determine if a writ of execution has been issued a client, whether there is a sheriff’s sale scheduled, and various tools for calculating how much a property is worth.

I learned about the ever-changing mortgage relief and forbearance programs that are being rolled out at rapid speed to prevent pandemic victims from losing their homes. I also learned the details of the newly created Pennsylvania Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program. Using funds allocated from the Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund, the Governor and the legislature dedicated \$175 million to provide financial support to renters and homeowners impacted by the pandemic. The CHU conducted many meetings in order to find the best ways to expand the number of persons who can benefit from this program and save their homes.

A PLA paralegal suggested the CHU read and discuss *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, a book written by Richard Rothstein. It was an interesting way of learning about the history of residential segregation in the United States. As the president of the NAACP Legal Defenses and Educational Fund points out, “American landscape will never look the same to readers of this important book.” Now more than ever, it is the moment to say, as Dr. King said "Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice, say that I was a drum major for peace, I was a drum major for righteousness, and all the other shallow things will not matter." The work done by PLA will keep people in their homes and will serve as a little step in making the world a finer one.

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### **Greatness Through Serving Others**

*“[B]y giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great, because everybody can serve... You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant.”*

*– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

The words that reverberated at Ebenezer Baptist Church that day still hold water now when the world needs servants the most. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. explained in his Drum Major Instinct speech that each and every one of us has this innate desire to have attention and to be the most important. We all, like the drum majors, wish to lead and be heard so we can gain distinction and notoriety. But, with that desire comes the disillusion of the ego, straying those away from the true meaning of greatness and a more fulfilling idea of importance. Some attorneys fall into this fallacy by using their knowledge and education to just make the most money and buy the fanciest things. But there are other attorneys who follow a different beat and make their way towards the greatness Dr. King spoke of 52 years ago.

Luckily, my time at Justice at Work (JaW) gave me the chance to work closely with attorneys, paralegals, and staff that live to serve and lead their lives as drum majors for justice. I must admit that I was nervous about working remotely and wondered how my experience at JaW might be different as a result of COVID-19. However, my worry disappeared when I saw the effort made by JaW to ensure that their interns felt included and comfortable. My time at JaW proved to be an extremely rewarding experience that taught me the true meaning of the message that Dr. King delivered years ago. JaW focuses on providing legal aid to low-wage immigrant workers. Their work ranges from providing legal representation and community education to immigrants and migrant workers on their legal rights. Even when JaW cannot help, they make sure to refer their client population to other non-profit organizations with the same goal: to serve.

JaW's work goes far beyond serving their clients as they also empower their own clients to serve in their community. A JaW attorney launched the Voces de Trabajadores/Voices of Women at Work (Voces) project in 2012. Their goal was to provide working women with information on discrimination, sexual harassment, rape, intimidation, and other workplace abuses. The project created an opportunity for clients to serve and give back to their community and to protect women facing troubling situations at work. JaW recently developed the Promotora Program. The program consists of four, highly trained community leaders that serve their community by providing education and support to their peers and

individual survivors. I believe that these two great programs will continue to expand and serve their communities for many years to come thus paving the way towards justice within the workspace for immigrant and non-immigrant women.

JaW is full of amazing attorneys who serve clients who are not their own. For example, while I was working on a case, I read a deposition where a JaW attorney zealously defended a witness of their client that was being grilled about his immigration status by opposing counsel. Even after opposing counsel made it clear to JAW's attorney that she had no reason to defend the witness since she was not his attorney, she felt the need to serve and ensure that his rights were still protected. Her selfless act to defend the witness encouraged him to stand up against the unreasonable questions being asked of him at the deposition. The attorneys here inspire me to work as fiercely as they do so, I too, can better serve the community when it's my turn to handle cases.

A case that impacted me the most involved me assisting a client with her personal statement to obtain her U-Visa. She worked at a mushroom farm and endured years of sexual harassment and abuse by two co-workers and a supervisor. As she described her sexual abuse I saw how, even years later, she was still disturbed by what she faced in silence. At the height of the assault, she described how alone and vulnerable she felt. She described how she couldn't report what she experienced to anyone because she would have been disciplined, or even fired, by the very supervisor that was sexually abusing her. But even through the fear, she found the strength and reported what she had endured to an investigator. As a result of her bravery, she qualified to get immigration relief and has the opportunity to remain in the United States with her three children. I was inspired by her fortitude and strength to continue pushing towards justice. I saw, firsthand, the importance of the work non-profits like JaW provides to clients who may not have another opportunity to be vindicated.

Working at JaW gave me the opportunity to work with clients, attend immigration and employment workshops, write legal memos, and receive constructive feedback on my work. JaW prepared its interns by including us in their staff meetings and giving us "brown bag" days to learn about client interviewing techniques, legal writing and research practices, and affidavit writing. They have been molding me to become a better law student and future lawyer so that I can work diligently towards righteousness and justice.

This internship has solidified my desire to work for a non-profit and commit to serving the underserved post-graduation. The work done by JAW is fulfilling and meaningful as their goal is not to make the most money, but to positively impact as many lives as they can. Attorneys have the privilege of serving others in an extremely delicate and important aspect of their lives. I am grateful to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program for the opportunity to serve clients in this impactful stage of their lives while working at JaW. The best part of it all was working with like-minded individuals who embody the drum major instinct of serving others for justice. It has been an honor to work alongside diligent and wonderful staff that are making this world a better place through their acts of service one case

at a time. I will carry the lessons I have learned through this internship so I, like Dr. King, can leave behind a committed life towards peace and righteousness.



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### **Another Drum Major for Justice**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermon, *The Drum Major Instinct*,<sup>1</sup> continues to inspire me through my second summer as a participant in the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network's Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Internship Program. In the wake of George Floyd's death, it's a harrowing reminder of how the issues of racism, classism, and poverty discussed therein still pervade American society at all levels. Dr. King's words are, sadly, as relevant today as they were in his lifetime.

*The Drum Major Instinct* asks us to consider how this "instinct" – the desire to feel superior to others – lies at the core of such issues. A never-ending pursuit for status, accolades, and wealth encourages us to minimize others' accomplishments, or far worse. It also leaves us unfulfilled. By focusing on *building lasting relationships* instead, we can find meaning and purpose through service to others and redefine the concept of American "greatness" in doing so. Dr. King reminds us that all of us, individually, must make incremental progress towards creating a more equitable society through our small acts of service. By understanding and uplifting one another, we can begin to eliminate artificial barriers based on ethnicity, gender, upbringing, and income in our communities so we may be judged only by the "content of [our] character."<sup>2</sup>

I am incredibly thankful that MidPenn Legal Services (MPLS) allowed me to return to their Clearfield County Office as a certified legal intern with the MLK Internship Program to, once again, contribute to Dr. King's vision in my own small way. As a rising 3L inundated with information about post-graduate salaries, repaying student loans, and studying for the bar exam, it's easy to lose sight of why many of us studied law in the first place: to help others navigate the legal system; reduce the inequalities engendered by it; and achieve "justice" for our clients. Serving as a certified legal intern at MPLS has been an opportunity for me to pursue this fulfilling work and gain the invaluable skills that I will need to practice in a public interest role following graduation and licensure.

My experience as a certified legal intern in the MLK Internship Program has taught me much of what law school could not. By allowing me to work with clients seeking Protection From Abuse (PFA) Orders from start to finish, my supervisor, MPLS staff attorney Doug Campbell, helped me become an

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Drum Major Instinct" Sermon Delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church (Feb. 4, 1968) (transcript available at <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/drum-major-instinct-sermon-delivered-ebenezer-baptist-church>).

<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" Speech (Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C., Aug. 28, 1963).

effective *advocate* beyond my knowledge of the law. Interviewing victims of domestic violence about the horrible abuse that they endured requires a delicate balance of sensitivity, supportiveness, skepticism, and straightforwardness that is almost impossible to learn from reading a legal text or participating in a classroom exercise. Counseling these plaintiffs requires actively listening to the facts of their case, organizing that information into a compelling narrative, and thoroughly explaining how the law may apply to their case – even if the expected outcome seems unfavorable. Law school cannot possibly prepare us for how frustrated, confused, and fearful our clients often are in these circumstances. It cannot realistically convey the seriousness of the consequences to our clients if we do not prepare for their hearings to the best of our abilities. Our clients, their children, or their family members may be violently attacked if we do not help them obtain final PFA orders against their abusers. The stakes in these cases are quite high despite the fact they’re straightforward to argue, legally-speaking.

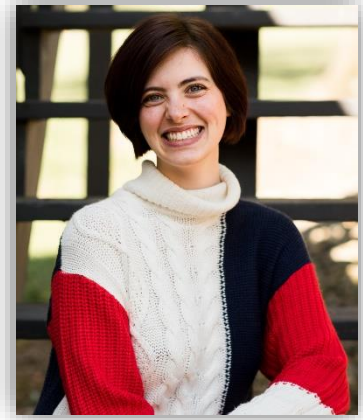
Representing PFA clients with Doug’s guidance has not only helped me learn how to better respect clients, but how to conduct myself with integrity in negotiations and hearings at the courthouse. I have experienced how being patient, helpful, and forthright with defendants, opposing counsel, judges, and court staff can bolster one’s credibility and even turn the tide of an otherwise “weak” case. We can accomplish so much more as advocates if we make people *want* to work with us rather than revert to the adversarial mechanisms of the legal system. Leaving a PFA hearing with a settlement agreement favorable to my client following pleasant conversations with opposing counsel is a much more fulfilling “win” than a ruling from a judge. Testifying and being cross-examined about the abuse that they endured is traumatic for many of our clients. All that should matter is whether our client was satisfied with the relief granted, as Doug always says.

By far, the best part of my experience of working at MPLS these past two summers has been representing clients regardless of their low incomes. Only allowing the opportunity to seek “justice” to those that can afford a private attorney naturally creates an unjust system. Similarly, when a particularly legal strategy depends on how much a client can afford, a client’s options are arbitrarily limited, and the quality of their legal representation suffers as a result. Taking a case without these inherent constraints is a relief to everyone involved. In many cases, MPLS’ clients are living well below the poverty line. Paying for an attorney could literally force them into financial ruin. This is not the justice system that Dr. King envisioned. Cases should be decided on their merits, not the budgets of those arguing them.

Many of Dr. King’s remarks in *The Drum Major Instinct* still resonate with me. Public service is not necessarily the career path that yields the most prestige or wealth, as Dr. King reminds us. I will likely not be able to afford the same cars, homes, or vacations as my peers entering Big Law will enjoy. But I believe I will be doing good work for good people, and that inspires me to stay the course. Through my efforts, I hope to play a small (but growing) part in eliminating the numerous barriers in the justice system resulting from the intersection of race, class, and poverty in America. I certainly look forward to what opportunities may become available to me following my 3L year with the skills and knowledge that I’ve

gained from the 2020 MLK Internship Program. Hopefully, I, too, can become “a drum major for justice” in the legal profession.

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### **Tending Dr. King's Freedom Flower**

2020 has been an extraordinarily strange year. Our nation is situated in one of its most perilous moments, facing multiple social, economic, political, and health crises. Our national status quo has been shattered, and we are left asking what comes next. We are living through a paradigmatic shift; what we will do with this opportunity for growth and change is yet to be seen. In the midst of this change and uncertainty, I was enrolled in my second semester of my 1L year at Penn State Law.

In December 2019, I secured my Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) internship opportunity at the Community Justice Project (CJP) before the devastating effects of COVID-19 had made themselves apparent. Businesses across the country soon ground to a halt. Many of my colleagues and friends lost their jobs or had summer internship opportunities cancelled. Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN) never stopped. PLAN and its member legal aid providers worked tirelessly as “boots on the ground” to secure civil rights and privileges for our communities early on throughout the COVID pandemic and surrounding crises. Virtual trainings were arranged with speakers from across the state via Zoom to teach our intern cohort the inner workings of Pennsylvania poverty law. CJP arranged weekly Zoom meetings and partnered with Carnegie Mellon’s CREATE Lab with whom we worked virtually to build an eviction tracking database during the pandemic moratoria period.

More impressive than their adaptability and efficient technology solutions, however, is the characteristic mindset that each PLAN attorney and staffer demonstrated. In my first weeks with CJP, I struggled with what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. termed “a superficial, dangerous optimism.” I would dive into projects with zeal, until I realized that the issue was far from clear cut and the potential remedies not as advantageous for our clients as I might have liked. Admittedly, it was hard not to lose steam on projects that were slow to develop, or where the effects of my work not readily apparent. Often times, projects felt Sisyphean -- particularly in 2020, with a conservative leaning Supreme Court and an administration that is hostile to social support programs. Yet, like David against the Goliath, CJP’s mindset is never defeatist or cynical. When our virtual COVID eviction tracking project discovered multiple violations of the county moratoria that were too late to help, CJP did not give up but instead pivoted our research into a tool to successfully advocate for advantageous administrative case handling by the local magistrates. Judges were contacted in regard to active cases filed during the moratoria, and those

that were withdrawn, settled, or discontinued were marked as administratively closed, effectively removing them from the public docket and from risk of effecting tenants' future housing applications.

The lesson of CJP and similar legal service providers is that every step toward empathetic social change is a step worth taking, even if the effect cannot be felt in the moment. When our efforts are met with resistance, it would be far easier to accept symbolic victories or to lay down and accept "such is life." However, real change comes from creative persistency and understanding that our personal efforts are but one ripple in a wave of social change and advocacy. I am honored to work and train with dedicated legal aid providers and attorneys that understand the importance of this humble work. I defer to Dr. King's words in saying, "*the plant of freedom has grown only a bud and not yet a flower.*" Real change will take time quietly caring and tending to before any real result can be appreciated, but like a flower, the bloom will be worth the wait.

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### **March to the Beat of Your Justice Drum**

A passion for justice led me to this internship, but the experience that I had this summer solidified my purpose as to why I was placed on a journey to enter legal services. I am honored to have been selected as a Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Intern. This opportunity has given me the chance to cultivate my skills and obtain knowledge in a program that has a focus on achieving socio-economic equality through legal means while also enhancing cultural and ethnic diversity in the legal field. The man that this internship program is named after embodies what it means to be a servant leader and is a permanent symbol of inspiration for a justice-driven society.

On February 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached his last sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church before his assassination two months later, delivering explicit and profound commentary on the state of society that could easily be just as relevant if preached today in 2020. Weaving in the subjects of white supremacy, racism, economic injustice and war, Dr. King framed his message around the concept of the “Drum Major Instinct,” a basic human desire to want to be first and have a great sense of recognition. He stated that this impulse has dangerous consequences, if it is rooted in exclusivity and the need to feel superior over others to make oneself feel important. His conclusion was that this instinct is the result of many injustices and prejudice among humanity, but when one prioritizes this impulse to be “first in love...moral excellence...and generosity,” the drive to become significant in these areas result in becoming a great contributor to the betterment of humanity.

Dr. King’s sermon strikes a resounding chord with me as I reflect on my time with the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP), the designated statewide specialized project of the non-profit Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN) which provides representation, advice, and support in energy and utility matters on behalf of low income customers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had a unique experience as I was working remotely throughout the entire internship. Because there was a level of disconnect that I was not used to and had to learn how to participate as an intern solely from a computer screen, I had to internally reflect on how I was going to gain fulfillment without leaving the four walls of my home office. The majority of my work focused on policy, particularly surrounding Pennsylvania’s Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and seeing how to creatively think of solutions that would benefit the energy and utility needs of individuals living in poverty. This “behind-the-scenes” participation highlights the admirable selflessness of those who engage in this type of advocacy—as every



single conversation I had with the PULP attorneys and staff involved placing the client as top priority and what we could do to eliminate, or at least alleviate, their sense of vulnerability.

This unprecedented time highlights a value that I believe those in the legal profession need to assimilate; a focus should always first be about the client and we as advocates are a vessel and mouthpiece to achieve their wants and needs in the best way that we possibly can. While being remote, I learned the power of just allowing your work product to speak for itself. Throughout the internship, I was communicating and working with people that never interacted with me in person. They did not know what I looked like nor my name. In this new normal of heavily relying on technology for connection, there was little to no recognition or acknowledgement of myself as a personality. In the legal field, we are conditioned to make a great first impression through our appearance, our demeanor, or our interpersonal skills but that was eliminated for me, except for the limited interaction through Zoom calls, as most of the judgement came from how well I completed my assignments and tasks. To echo Dr. King's profound words, "True greatness comes not by favoritism, but by fitness...it must be earned." The distance I felt at the beginning of my internship eventually shifted my thinking. It allowed me to acknowledge that the fuel for my motivation was this unexplainable, burning desire within to achieve equality for all and did not come from any praise that I did or did not receive.

COVID-19 and its effects places this "Drum Major Instinct" in a perspective that might not have been as evident had our lives continued as they previously had. For most, if not all of us, our routines came to halt or were dramatically altered, and we were forced to give attention to more substantive matters to evaluate if certain processes and systems are beneficial for all members of society. But just as Dr. King did not only discuss the negative results of the "Drum Major Instinct", neither will I, because along with the tragic effects that have occurred in our world this summer, a movement has strongly emerged with a loud voice to demand swift and sweeping change when it comes to the unfair treatment of minority, poor, and vulnerable populations –particularly concerning racial justice and the historic mistreatment of the Black community. I am glad to be involved in public interest work during this time of awakening and to participate in thorough discussion on how to combat oppressive forces in society.

Early on in my internship, PULP along with Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS), released a joint statement in response to PLAN's Call to Action, to condemn the persistent racism within and violence perpetrated by our justice system—specifically following the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by police and the murder of Ahmaud Arbery by private citizens. As an intern, it was a beneficial experience to add my own contributions to the statement and examine the construction process. As a Black woman, who is heartbroken at the repeated injustices against my community, I was both greatly impacted and impressed on how quickly but with meticulous intent everyone worked with each other to craft a powerful statement, and to even explicitly state that the current systems of beliefs surrounding access to housing and utilities have racist foundations. I will forever appreciate PULP's

transparency and awareness in knowing that their mission to achieve economic justice cannot and will not be accomplished without them being a source of active anti-racism.

Being a Martin Luther King, Jr. Intern during a global health crisis and great social unrest was not anything that I could have predicted but it is still a huge honor to serve. The woes of society when it comes to equality has been greatly exposed now more than ever and it is evident that we need to emulate Dr. King's desire to be known as a "drum major for justice, peace, and righteousness." With a specialty area like energy and utility matters, I was unsure at first as to how I can bring my passion for social justice into my work this summer. As I began to learn, I realized how interconnected every area in the legal field is and how the treatment of vulnerable populations is critical in determining overall societal advancement. I thank PULP and PLAN for embracing me as an intern and for gifting me the opportunity for a rewarding experience in my legal journey. My sense of purpose has been reaffirmed--to use the "Drum Major Instinct" for good, dedicating my life to making sure that I am giving a sense of recognition and empowerment to those who do not generally receive it, because their livelihood depends on it.

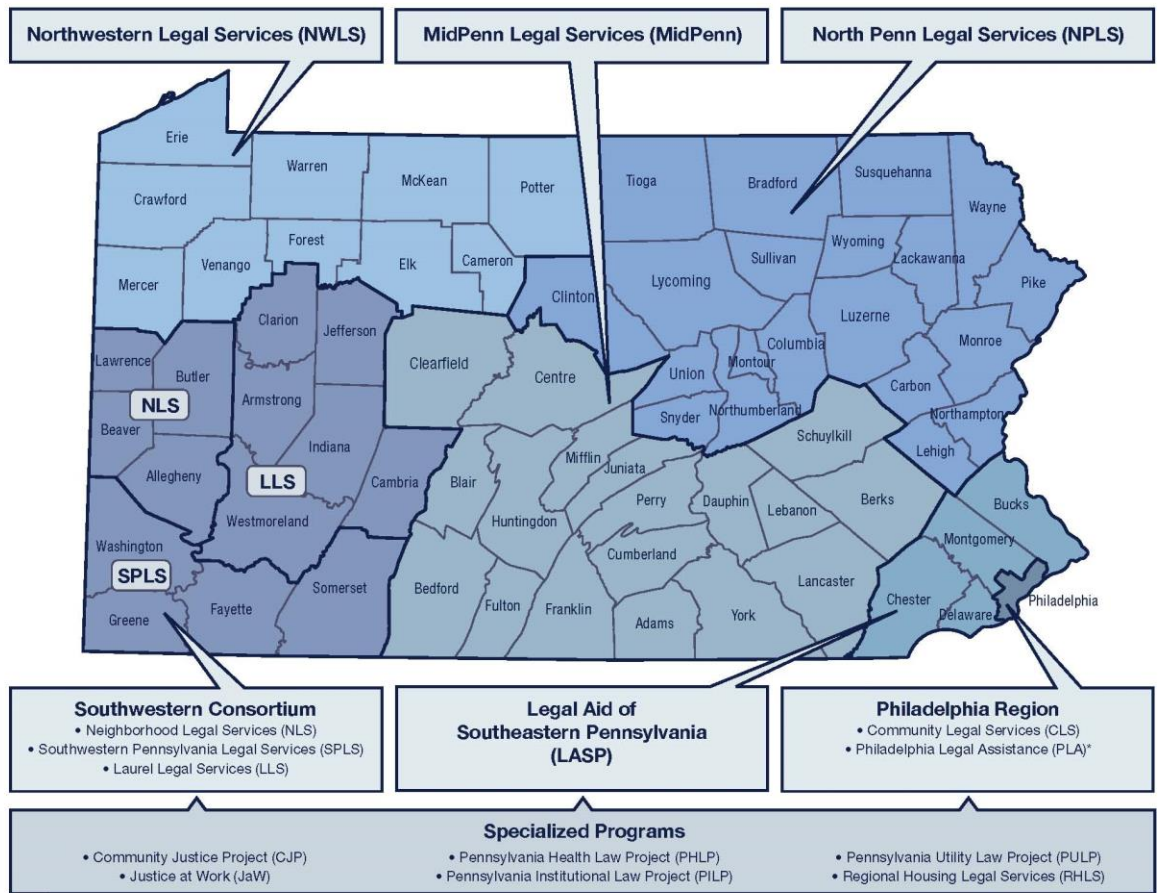
## Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program

### Class of 2020



**Top left to right:** Zane Gates, Jason Sullivan-Halpern, Jessica Maharj, Kendra Barr, and Bingran Li.  
**Bottom left to right:** Juliana Muhaj, Gabrielle D. Tock, Ashley G. Reyes, Sharai V. Bryan, and Iman Woodyard.

# PENNSYLVANIA LEGAL AID NETWORK



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