

Pennsylvania
LegalAid Network, Inc.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship and Fellowship Program

Summer 2021 Newsletter



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

Class of 2021 Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Interns



Top Row, Left to Right: Nicole Bennett, Penn State Law; Sharai Bryan, Penn State Law; Malisa Dang, Penn State Dickinson Law; Gobrielle Francis, Widener Commonwealth Law; Kayla Gonzalez, Widener Commonwealth Law.

Bottom Row, Left to Right: Brittany Griffin, Widener Commonwealth Law; Madelyn Snyder, Penn State Dickinson Law; Gabrielle Tock, Penn State Law; Cooper Townsend, Villanova Law; Octavia Williams, Pitt Law.

Summer Internship Program Update

This year marks the 29th anniversary of our successful MLK, Jr. Summer Internship Program. Initiated in 1991 by the Pennsylvania Legal Services Black Caucus, this program is designed to promote and support minority attorneys' work in the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN) programs across the Commonwealth. To date, PLAN has hosted a total of 392 law students.

The goal of our internship program is to instill in future attorneys a lifelong commitment of providing access to justice for all individuals, regardless of their ability to pay, and to promote diversity within PLAN's programs. Ten paid internships are awarded each summer to law students who participate in legal services work over a 10-week period. Our interns engage in unique situations through which they can better understand the special legal issues faced by those who live in poverty and low-income communities. In turn, they provide valuable services to PLAN clients.

Due to the current public health crisis, PLAN programs remotely hosted ten interns. In May 2021, our interns and invited guests participated in a one-and-a-half-day poverty law training. At the end of the ten weeks, our interns participated in an internship wrap-up training, and completed an essay about their summer experiences to be included in our internship program's annual Drum Major Essay Collection. The collection is made available at our recognition reception and also shared on the PLAN website.

You can read this year's essay collection on our website at: <https://palegalaid.net/internships-fellowships>. If you would like to request a physical copy of the Drum Major Essay Collection, please visit: <https://bit.ly/3clsj8d>.

Fellowship Program Update

This year marks the 17th anniversary of our MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program. In 2003, an evaluation of the MLK, Jr. Summer Internship Program revealed that while the internship experience had been a very positive one for PLAN, Inc., law students, clients, and programs, the goal to enhance cultural and ethnic diversity within PLAN programs was not fully realized. In response, PLAN, Inc. created the MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program.

In partnership with a sponsoring PLAN regional or specialty program, law school graduates and new-to-practice attorneys are hired for two-year fellowships. Our fellowship program is intended to support and promote new lawyers who are interested in long-term public interest careers. MLK, Jr. Fellows are assigned mentors and supervised by experienced attorneys. Salary and benefits are determined by the host program. In addition, MLK, Jr. Fellows are eligible for up to \$11,000 of loan repayment assistance during the two-year fellowship period.

Meet Our Newest MLK, Jr. Fellows

Congratulations to our 2021 MLK, Jr. Fellowship Recipients Amy Chin-Arroyo, Ricardo Brown, Devyne Byrd, and Dominique Wiggins. On July 1st, Devyne joined the staff of Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania. In August, Ricardo and Amy will join the staffs of the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, and Justice at Work respectively. Dominique will begin work at Community Legal Services in September.

Amy Chin-Arroyo



Amy, former MLK, Jr. Intern, Class of 2019, received her JD in May 2021 from Temple University Beasley School of Law and graduated with a B.A. in English and Spanish, International Studies Concentration from Williams College. Her work at Justice at Work (JaW) will involve providing high quality direct legal assistance, community education, and advocacy on behalf of eligible clients with a focus on handling cases involving employment-related issues, immigration matters, landlord-tenant matters, and consumer protection matters.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: Amy, welcome back to PLAN in your new role as an MLK, Jr. Fellow. Please share with our readers why you decided to apply for our fellowship program.

Amy Chin-Arroyo: I applied for the MLK, Jr. Fellowship because I had a wonderful experience as an MLK, Jr. Summer Intern at Justice at Work (JaW) in 2019 and plan to pursue a career as a public interest lawyer in Philadelphia.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: What are you most excited to learn more about or do in your fellowship role at JaW?

Amy Chin-Arroyo: I am excited to learn from seasoned attorneys and continue advocating for immigrant workers at JaW.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: What are some of your interests/hobbies outside of the law?

Amy Chin-Arroyo: In my free time, I enjoy reading, watching food and cooking shows, and playing with my daughter at the park.

Ricardo Brown



Ricardo received his JD in May 2021 from Wake Forest University School of Law and graduated with a B.A. in Political Science and English Writing from the University of Pittsburgh. His work at the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP) will involve litigating cases on behalf of incarcerated and institutionalized individuals, primarily in federal court, on statutory and constitutional civil rights claims. He will conduct visits to prisons and institutions to meet with clients and monitor the ongoing conditions of confinement. He will also work closely with the PILP legal team and clients to investigate and develop potential cases and develop relationships with community partners.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: Welcome, Ricardo, to the MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program. Please share with our readers why you decided to apply for our fellowship program.

Ricardo Brown: In law school, I became interested in the idea of doing work for people in our jails and prisons. I got involved in the development and implementation of a bail fund and committed myself to doing this work upon graduation. When I saw the MLK, Jr. Fellowship opportunity offered by PILP, it felt like a perfect fit to continue this jail and prison work in a meaningful way.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: What are you most excited to learn more about or do in your fellowship role at PILP?

Ricardo Brown: I am excited about everything, frankly. However, I would have to say that I am humbled by the prospect of hearing and telling the stories of people behind bars.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: What are some of your interests/hobbies outside of the law?

Ricardo Brown: I am fairly 'outdoorsy' so anything that has me outside is a good thing. I am currently trying to find good places to go kayaking or to practice my archery skills.

Devyne Byrd



Devyne received her JD in May 2019 from the University of Virginia School of Law and graduated with a B.A. in History from Houston Baptist University. Her work at Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania (LASP) will involve representing clients facing issues regarding public benefits, consumer law and bankruptcy, employment, expungements, housing, family law, protection from domestic violence, and other cases as assigned.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: Welcome to the MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program, Devyne. Please share with our readers why you decided to apply for our fellowship program.

Devyne Byrd: I applied for the MLK, Jr. Fellowship program because I have always had an interest in legal public service and using my education to uplift my community.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: What are you most excited to learn more about or do in your fellowship role at LASP?

Devyne Byrd: I am very excited to dive deeper into learning the tools of public interest and what it takes to listen to and advocate on behalf of my clients. In particular, I hope to gain experience in client communication and practical trial skills. As I continue through my career, I want to make sure I have the building blocks to successfully reach and defend my clients. I would like to be able to assist holistically and the communication experience I have already gained through LASP has taught me to work through barriers that poverty and crisis erect. I am so grateful that I am able to continue to learn these important lessons because of the fellowship.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: What are some of your interests/hobbies outside of the law?

Devyne Byrd: My hobbies include traveling and creative writing, which for me go hand in hand. As I explore the world and immerse myself in different cultures, I gain a broader perspective on life and language that I am able to channel into my writing. Eventually, I hope to publish a novel. But for right now, I submit short pieces to small literary magazines.



Dominique Wiggins

Dominique received her JD in May 2021 from Duquesne University School of Law and graduated with a B.A. in Psychology and Spanish from Rider University. Her work at Community Legal Services (CLS) will involve representing clients in both public housing and private landlord-tenant matters.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: Welcome to the MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program, Dominique. Please share with our readers why you decided to apply for our fellowship program.

Dominique Wiggins: I applied for the MLK, Jr. Fellowship because I always wanted my legal career to be centered around empowering underserved communities, especially communities of color. Working in CLS's Housing Unit will give me the opportunity to do just that while also working on current issues facing communities across the country such as widespread eviction prevention in light of Covid-19.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: What are you most excited to learn more about or do in your fellowship role at CLS?

Dominique Wiggins: I look forward to being mentored by experienced public interest lawyers, learning more about the public interest world, and working on important policies affecting Philadelphia and Pennsylvania communities.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: What are some of your interests/hobbies outside of the law?

Dominique Wiggins: Aside from my legal interests, I love to dance! I can break into a random dance at any given moment. In my free time, I also enjoy baking, going to the beach, and spending quality time with my family and friends. As an advocate for self-care, I frequently indulge in taking care of and styling my hair, spending time outdoors, and, most importantly, maintaining my spiritual health. I enjoy participating in community service events and working with and mentoring youth communities.

Current MLK, Jr. Fellow Continues to Shine

In our previous newsletter, we introduced you to Shalisa Brunson. Shalisa, a former MLK, Jr. Intern, Class of 2019, began her fellowship at Philadelphia Legal Assistance in August 2020.

Shalisa's work involves helping low-income individuals throughout Philadelphia preserve their homes while stabilizing families and neighborhoods in the process. She will also represent clients facing a variety of tangled title legal issues arising out of probate, adverse possession, and fraudulent deeds.



Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: Shalisa, you are entering into the second year of your fellowship. Boy the time has flown by so fast! I would like to update our readers on your fellowship experiences thus far. Please share with our readers your most memorable case to date.

Shalisa Brunson: My most memorable case to date is actually my very first trial! I was able to collaborate with my supervising attorney on an adverse possession case and prepare witnesses for trial. The case involved one family who has lived in a property for more than two decades and honestly believed the house belonged to them. The family however, did not have a recorded deed. The last record owner seemingly sold the property some years later and the new person he sold the property to had a recorded deed. This prompted an ejectment suit from the new "owner." However, the family who lived in the property for over 21 years arguably met the elements of adverse possession. This case is memorable to me, not just because it was my first trial, but because the family that we helped lives in a neighborhood where some of my family lives. Although the outcome is yet to be determined, it felt good trying to help this family keep their home and it reminded me why I absolutely love my job.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith: What makes the MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program a valuable experience to you?

Shalisa Brunson: I have learned so much about the law and myself since starting this fellowship. I have worked on many different types of cases and I did not realize there were so many housing issues that could arise! I think that this program is important because it allows new attorneys a chance to learn the law while doing substantive legal tasks. The fellows also help so many disadvantaged people. I am so proud to be a part of this program.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellowship Graduates

In 2019, we introduced you to DeJonna Bates, Queenette Echefu, and Kyle Watson. Each of them complete their respective fellowships in August 2021. We are happy to share that all will continue their employment as permanent staff attorneys at Community Justice Project, North Penn Legal Services, and Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Aid, respectively.

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Congratulations DeJonna, Queenette, and Kyle on your graduation from the MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program! You were all wonderful additions to our program and we are very excited to know that you will remain a part of the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith

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DeJonna Bates
MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program Graduate
Class of 2021

I have enjoyed the opportunity to make a difference in a community that is often ignored. This fellowship has allowed me to improve language access for the Limited English Proficient community.

Queenette Echefu
MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program Graduate

Class of 2021

I acquired an immeasurable amount of knowledge from my fellow colleagues that has been a stepping stone for my legal career as a young attorney. I enjoyed learning and developing expertise in specific areas of law. This fellowship program allows young attorneys to gain practical experience and develop professional relationships while providing a valuable public service. It is an excellent way to start a legal career.

I got to network with like-minded people and have built long-lasting relationships. I am forever grateful for this fellowship program and look forward to my future at PLAN.





Kyle Watson

MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program Graduate

Class of 2021

I enjoyed the opportunity to work directly with clients facing crises related to housing, custody, domestic violence, or loss of public benefits and working to obtain positive resolutions on their behalf. I was also grateful for the opportunity to work directly with Arlene and the other MLK, Jr. Fellows and benefitted so much from their input and support throughout the fellowship.

The MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program is an excellent program for new attorneys to receive guidance and support as they start their careers in public interest law.

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith, Esq.

Administrative Officer

Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith, Esq. oversees the MLK, Jr. Internship and Fellowship Programs. She has led the programs since 2014.



**ON BEHALF OF OUR STAFF, BOARD,
AND PROGRAMS, WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR CONTINUED COMMITMENT
TO LEGAL SERVICES.**

Fellowship Program Success

We are extremely pleased with the success of the MLK, Jr. Fellowship Program. Since its inception in 2004, 29 lawyers have been placed as fellows with PLAN legal aid programs and scores of other former interns have entered other public interest careers. The Fellowship Program is an integral part of PLAN, Inc.'s goal to initiate new lawyers into public interest law careers. PLAN, Inc. partners with a sponsoring regional or specialty legal services program and pays 50% of the Fellow's salary, benefits, and student loan assistance up to \$5,500 each per year of the two-year fellowship. Salary is commensurate with that of the sponsoring program.

In the past fiscal year, PLAN programs handled over 73,500 client cases, saving their homes from foreclosure, protecting them from domestic violence, securing health insurance, establishing custody stability for children, and helping clients in many other ways.

The Fellowship Program has a proven track record of launching minority law students into careers as public interest lawyers and legal aid attorneys and has generated a reliable recruitment pool for legal aid organizations. PLAN, Inc. appreciates the financial support and sponsorships it receives from Pennsylvania law firms, businesses, and individuals to help support this program. PLAN, Inc. does not realize any of these sponsorship funds, but funnels them directly to the salary and benefits of our fellows. PLAN, Inc. also appreciates the financial support of this program from the Department of Human Services and the Pennsylvania IOLTA Board. Our goal is to place at least two fellows per fiscal year. You can help by donating to our Fellowship Program. Contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by the law. On behalf of PLAN, Inc., we thank you for your support.

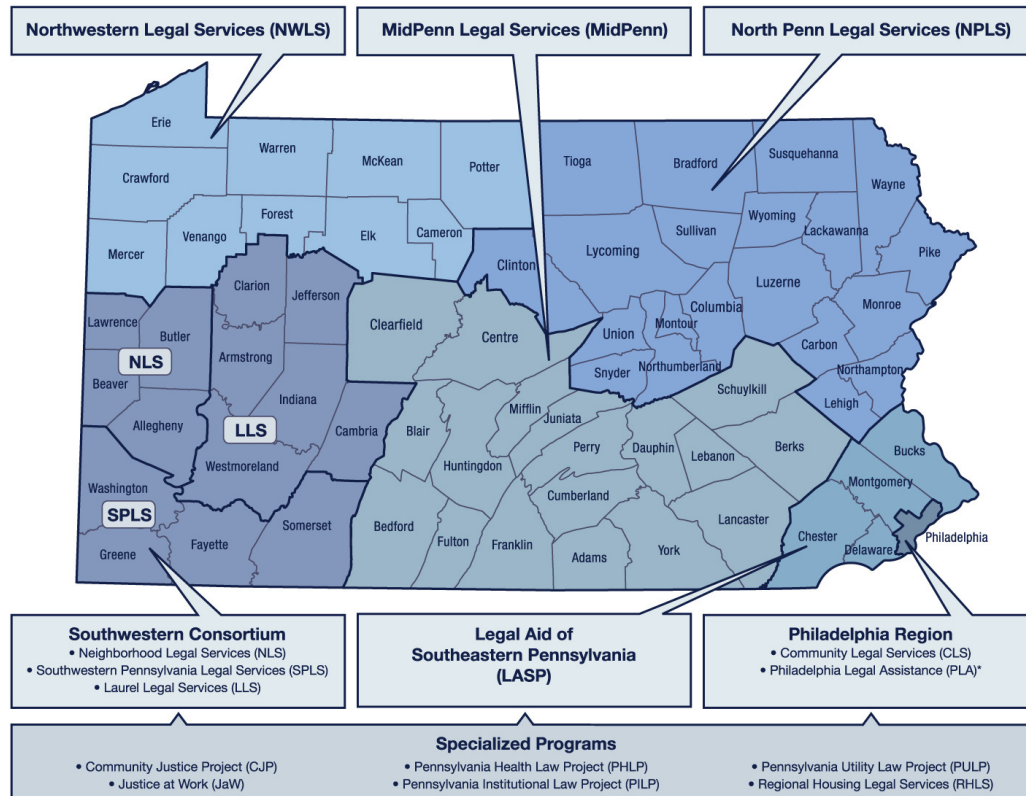
Thank You

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PENNSYLVANIA LEGAL AID NETWORK



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