

Celebrate **30**
YEARS

2022 Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program



THE DRUM MAJOR Class of 2022 Essay Collection

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

Pennsylvania
Legal AID Network

July 27, 2022

To the 2022 Martin Luther King, Jr. Interns:

It is truly remarkable to be celebrating the 30th anniversary of PLAN's Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program. The program was conceived at a time when today's discussions of racial equity and justice were – as Dr. King might put it – merely a “dream.” Special thanks to all of you for playing a special role in the continued success of this program.

We are pleased to present you with the 2022 edition of **THE DRUM MAJOR**, which is a small token of appreciation for your efforts this summer.

Through your work during the past ten weeks, you have touched the lives of many clients who have nowhere else to turn. You learned how to use your skills to make equal justice a reality.

For this, we thank you. Wherever your paths may lead you, we hope that your experience here will be an inspiration and a reminder of how you can make a difference.

Very Truly Yours,



Max Laun, Esq.
Interim Executive Director



Very Truly Yours,



Arlene A. Marshall-Hockensmith, Esq.
Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and
Belonging



Class of 2022 Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Interns



TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:

SALEM AMARE

William & Mary Law School

JAMELIA GRAHAM

Penn State Dickinson Law School

AMIRA EL SAWI

*University of Pittsburgh
School of Law*

ABRAHAM LAMPTEY

Penn State Dickinson Law School

NNEOMA T. IBE

Widener Commonwealth Law School

BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:

AVERY COVINGTON

Widener Commonwealth Law School

IMAN KONEY

Widener Commonwealth Law School

MYLON MEDLEY

*Villanova University
Charles Widger School of Law*

COOPER TOWNSEND

*Villanova University
Charles Widger School of Law*

MOISES TONOC BONILLA

*University of Pittsburgh
School of Law*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2022 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DRUM MAJOR ESSAY COLLECTION

Planting Seeds of Service	4
<i>Salem Amare, Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania</i>	
The Utility of Law	6
<i>Avery Covington, Pennsylvania Utility Law Project</i>	
The Importance of Moving Beyond “Good” and “Bad”	9
<i>Amira El Sawi, Community Justice Project</i>	
The Beauty of Serving from the Background	11
<i>Jamelia Graham, Pennsylvania Health Law Project</i>	
My Dream of a New World: Checking My Drum Major Instinct at the Bar	13
<i>Nneoma T. Ibe, Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Aid</i>	
Finding Your Purpose	15
<i>Iman Koney, Regional Housing Legal Services</i>	
A Drum Major for Equity and Social Justice: Finding Myself Through Service	17
<i>Abraham Lamptey, North Penn Legal Services</i>	
Witnessing Hearts Full of Grace	19
<i>Mylon Medley, Justice at Work</i>	
Greatness	21
<i>Moises Tonoc Bonilla, Northwestern Legal Services</i>	
Today I Choose Ramen	24
<i>Cooper Townsend, Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project</i>	



Salem Amare

William & Mary Law School

JD Candidate 2023

contact: sbamare@wm.edu

Host Program: Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania

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.

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

PLANTING SEEDS OF SERVICE

Dr. King so fervently delivered in his sermon, the Drum Major Instinct, that there is a deep ambition within all of us “to be important, to surpass others, to achieve distinction, to lead the parade.” This ambition is especially prevalent in the legal community, where there is an instinct to be the very best, at the very front, receiving all the accolades and all the praise. Yet one must ponder, what is the point of such instinct, if not to be used for the betterment of society? My drive and pursuit to become an attorney has always stemmed from a deep desire to serve the underserved. Like Dr. King, I wish to be remembered for my acts of services rather than any distinctions or honors. For me, a life well-lived is a life filled with serving others.

This summer, I had the privilege of working with the Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania (LASP) in Doylestown. I split my time between their dependency office and domestic violence office. LASP aims to provide quality legal representation to low-income and vulnerable people in Bucks County and surrounding areas. My experience working for LASP was nothing short of amazing. Coming from Virginia, I was nervous about moving to a new state for the summer and getting acclimated to a new environment. My nerves were calmed after meeting my new colleagues, most of whom have dedicated their careers to being public servants.

Because my time was split between the two offices, I obtained a dynamic and immersive experience in two different areas of the law which sometimes overlapped. Some of my work involved conducting legal research, writing memoranda, interviewing clients, and observing legal proceedings. My experience came full circle when I began representing

clients in court who were seeking Protection from Abuse (PFA) Orders or in dependency proceedings, pursuant to my certification under PA Rule 321.

I have worked in various public service capacities but my time with LASP certainly stood out. Not only did I have the responsibility of listening to the struggles of parents who so desperately wanted their children back and to the survivors of abuse seeking PFAs, but I was also entrusted with representing their voice in the court of law. Perhaps my personal experience of receiving quality pro bono legal representation made me understand the importance of the work done by legal aid. Perhaps it is the awareness I hold that attaining legal knowledge is privilege and power in this country. What a waste it would be for me to harbor such immense knowledge without using it to empower those who are indigent and marginalized.

I look around our legal community and see so many attorneys with untamed and unchecked drum major instincts, upholding elitism and a better-than-thou mentality. While they possess knowledge of the law and are adorned with recognitions, they fail to use even a mustard seed of that knowledge in service of those who need it most. On the other hand, throughout my time in law school and working for LASP, I have had the privilege of working with some of the most dedicated attorneys who use their drum major instinct for good in service of others and in the pursuit of justice.

It has been my privilege to work as an MLK, Jr. Legal Intern. There is no better experience that I could have envisioned for myself. Recognitions fade away. Honors fade away. Distinctions fade away. In the end, we all ought to be remembered for how we served others as those acts of service will always live on in the lives of the people we encounter.

A circular portrait of Avery Covington, a young Black man with short, dark hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a patterned tie. The portrait is set against a grey background and is framed by a thick red border.

Avery Covington

Widener Commonwealth Law School
JD Candidate 2024

contact: arcovington-bryant@widener.edu

Host Program: Pennsylvania Utility Law Project

James and John approached Jesus and said, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” (Mark 10:13 KJV Bible)

THE UTILITY OF LAW

Our nation has changed. COVID-19 has caused our national and governmental systems to be tested to the point of exposure and revelation. The epidemic revealed the most vulnerable persons of our society. Amid high rates of the virus raging in our most vulnerable cities, the world has also been exposed to and impacted by the deepening racial divides in our nation. Whether racial, financial, or social status- these divides became even more evident with the disparity of care witnessed among the peoples suffering. These events exemplify a blatant reality – our nation needs help.

In these United States of America, citizens need care that is unjudged, unbiased, and without guile or ulterior motive. As an emerging first-generation-law-student, the events surrounding my pursuit of a law degree propelled my devotion to serve others. Pursuing this law degree amid extreme poverty in our nation, racial inequities on the rise, and the thickening political divides has given me the tenable resolve that the legal education I am receiving cannot be for selfish ambition.

In 1963, Dr. King passionately delivered his Drum Major Instinct speech where he implored us to consider servitude and humility over empty ambition. One of the church’s greatest hymns declares that “If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living will not be in vain.” Indeed, as we participate in the 30th anniversary of the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network’s MLK, Jr. Summer Internship Program, I am reminded of this epilogue derived from the heart of this great example of a servant of mankind.

Dr. King’s life was dedicated to the advancement of our nation through lifting the most vulnerable among us – not just the Blacks among us. Dr. King’s work has lasted through generations, as we remember his timeless soliloquies that hit the core of our beings. To touch the conscience of a nation, Dr. King did not use force, aggression, or violence. His greatest weapon was his words. The power of his expression – wordsmithing the realities of racial, social, and economic inequities – with his heart and mind to every verb

spoken. The 'Drum Major Instinct' sermon, preached in the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, has become an echo of the maxim of a servant. Here, he addressed the congregation with the theory of the Drum Major Instinct.

Dr. King quotes the biblical account of Jesus and his two disciples James and John. These disciples were seeking to understand their position in the upcoming glory that Jesus would prophetically declare. These disciples, who have been given a name throughout the biblical context as the "Sons of Thunder", attempted to secure their seats among the greatest. Jesus later educated them with this wisdom, "The greatest among us would be those that serve."

This is a powerful revelation. Those who are of the most valuable among us, are those who take the seat of the least. Our society does not prioritize the power of servitude. Capitalism, pop culture, and other influential mediums champion greatness no matter how it is obtained. Jesus argues a countercultural sentiment. The rebuke in this lesson is not that we should not be great. However, greatness is devoid, empty, and shallow if it is not anchored in servitude. Dr. King refers to this ambition as one that is "ambition in love."

The Drum Major Instinct describes one's desire to become important – even needed or necessary. It is an analogy referring to the role of a Drum Major within an ensemble of instruments. The role of the Drum Major is to lead the marching band in its path and rhythm. In his speech, Dr. King further encourages us to become "Drum Majors for justice. Drum Majors for righteousness." The clarion call made by Dr. King was to set the tone for people in leadership for justice.

This summer, I had the privilege of working with some of the purest examples of "Drum Majors." As an intern at the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP), I was able to be a colleague with powerful attorneys who manifest a genuine humility and sure knowledge of their purpose. For over three decades, PULP has worked tirelessly to advocate for Pennsylvanian's utility needs. I witnessed the commitment and devotion of all the staff members to making utilities affordable, our environment safer, and legal advocacy obtainable.

There is one experience that will remain etched in my professional identity. In June, I shadowed the Executive Director, Liz Marx, on a community conference call for climate change. There was so much diversity on the call. People from all walks of life committed to one vision – the protection of Pennsylvania's environment. Although the conference was not lengthy, the empathy for persons being affected by climate change was readily felt. This impacted my heart. To see the diversity of thought meld to understanding, to blending, to agreement was phenomenal. In that one meeting called for one purpose, I witnessed legal expertise skillfully wielded as a tool for a positive, powerful purpose in the community. I was astonished. Liz was literally a Drum Major. All eyes were on her and they heard every word she said. I saw myself, clearly, and was empowered as never before.

Lawyers have the legal education to establish justice in various areas of leadership. The law has given us the power to advance our society. Whether "good or bad", the law can be

considered the mirrored representation of our moral compass. As lawyers we have been afforded an opportunity to change the world through analogy, wordsmithing, and legal analysis. Our advocacy can provide freedom to those who are wrongfully bound. The gift we have been given should not be taken lightly.

In closing, there is still one question that remains. What is the utility of law? What is the usefulness of lawyers? There must be a greater purpose for lawyers. Philosophers would answer this question with considerations of moral limitations and societal order. Clients would reply with the obvious, to have their legal disputes resolved. Other attorneys would say, to interpret the law for the benefit of clients. However, I believe that the utility of law is simple – to benefit others. If we are to be Drum Majors as attorneys, we must consider our work to go beyond our selfish ambitions. We must earnestly desire our lives to be dedicated to selflessness and love.

This experience has caused me to begin my march, my Drum Major march.



Amira El Sawi

University of Pittsburgh
School of Law

JD Candidate 2023

contact: amira.elsawi@pitt.edu

Host Program: *Community Justice Project*

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOVING BEYOND “GOOD” AND “BAD”

When I began the application process for a 2L summer position, I applied to positions with the hope to gain invaluable professional experience. When I accepted my position as an MLK, Jr. Summer Intern, I was confident that I would achieve this goal, expecting to learn practical skills through legal aid work. What I could not have dreamed of are the ways in which this internship has served as a catalyst for introspection beyond a professional context.

Truthfully, as I concluded my second year of law school, I felt jaded over the future of our country. I have become increasingly aware of the role that the legal field holds in perpetuating injustices against our country's most vulnerable communities. Admittedly, the fire within me that has long fueled my soul towards a career in justice was nearly extinguished by the end of my 2L year, as I began to consider that it's imprudent to envision a just America: then I arrived in Harrisburg for the MLK, Jr. orientation and training. Sitting in that rustic conference room surrounded by nine other like-minded law students, I was quickly reassured that this uphill battle we face in creating a better America is not only possible, but that it is more than likely to be successful. As I made my way back to Pittsburgh to start my internship with my host organization, CJP, I realized that my short time in Harrisburg had already revitalized me with a necessary sense of hope in our future, as well as the humility necessary to integrate myself in Pennsylvania's boundless legal aid efforts.

What particularly stood out to me from Dr. King's Drum Major sermon was his reflection on the request James and John made to sit on either side of Jesus on Mount Zion. Of course, this part of the sermon instilled in me the fact that there is no room for ego in public interest; but, more importantly for me, I have found this to represent the importance of seeing people for more than they are at their worst moments, instead choosing to see the humanity in everyone. To me, the Drum Major Instinct means making the conscious choice to see people not as “bad,” and not even to see people as “good”, but instead to see them as human.

In keeping with the humble spirit MLK, Jr. preached about in his Drum Major sermon, I believe that my specific accomplishments from this summer are not important. Although

I am sure my experience with CJP has been unique, at the end of the day, we are all part of Pennsylvania's legal aid community and we all share a similar mindset geared towards achieving justice for vulnerable communities. But my time with CJP has put the Drum Major Instinct to the ultimate test as I had the opportunity to provide legal support to various people on the outskirts of marginalization. By learning to hone in on this Drum Major Instinct that I already had within myself, I put my personal judgements aside, moving past the "good" and "bad" dichotomy to ensure that my efforts towards increasing access to justice are impartial and therefore legitimate. Although I provide legal support to people whose actions I personally do not agree with, I feel privileged to have put my own personal beliefs aside to serve the greater purpose of fighting for a more just America for everyone.

As I wrap up my 2L summer, I am incredibly eager to use the lessons I learned through this internship in a lifelong career of increasing access to justice for our most vulnerable populations. As I prepare to start my final year of law school, I am comforted knowing that I am part of a larger community of emerging lawyers—one that is more than capable of achieving widespread justice in America. I would not have believed this was possible without my experience as an MLK, Jr. Summer Intern.



Jamelia Graham

Penn State Dickinson Law School
JD Candidate 2024

contact: jdg5989@psu.edu

Host Program: Pennsylvania Health Law Project

THE BEAUTY OF SERVING FROM THE BACKGROUND

This summer has taught me long-lasting lessons about working at the Pennsylvania Health Law Project. Having the opportunity to assist uninsured and underinsured people with their medical assistance needs has been fulfilling despite its difficulty. Beyond learning and applying the skills gained through training and my law school's practical courses, immersing myself into the Legal Aid system better showed me the practical application of the law. At the end of this program, I learned three important lessons about practicing law.

First, I realized that while Pennsylvania is certainly on the right track in terms of Medicaid expansion, there are still numerous holes in the system that fail individuals consistently. Pennsylvania is one of the states that decided to expand Medicaid for their residents. I am from a state that did not opt for this expansion. Getting to see Medicaid expansion in action re-invigorates the possibility that every United States resident can have affordable or free health insurance, as is their right. Unfortunately, the system created in Pennsylvania still has multiple blind spots that do not accommodate everyone. For example, Pennsylvania partners with Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) across the state. While this partnership can foster dignity amongst participants, these MCOs are insurance companies who are concerned about making a profit, and work to deny services they deem unnecessary. I found myself frustrated with the system as consumers had to fight for the coverage needed to live full, productive lives.

It was disheartening to see a state create space and funding for these programs and simultaneously gatekeep consumers from using these programs to receive care. PHLP, thankfully, partners with consumers, the MCOs, and different state agencies to try and address the main concerns of consumers. This takes place in the realm of the Consumer Subcommittee and Community HealthChoices Meetings, where PHLP acts as a policy advocate. Throughout this internship, I was able to see policy work in action attempting to rectify these situations.

Second, I learned that practicing law requires finding creative, innovative solutions to client issues. But, most importantly, attorneys must possess empathy for each client's needs and struggles. In the past few weeks, I tried my best to help clients to the best of my

ability, many of whom came to PHLP looking for answers to help them navigate the medical assistance system. Working with these clients helped me to understand that there is no one size fits all, nor is there only one way to get the answers clients seek.

These experiences encouraged me to use my creative side and find innovative solutions to client issues. For example, two of the clients I had the pleasure of working with were a mere \$2.00 away from being eligible for a different program. This \$2.00 meant a world of difference in terms of additional coverage services. I found satisfaction in working with my supervising attorneys to find an innovative solution for these clients. However, after it was all said and done, I realized the gravity of the situation. These clients, who were Medicaid recipients for years, were about to lose their coverage over \$2.00, an amount of money that is trivial to some and yet has major consequences in terms of care for many people. While the creativity and innovation of the law and working to get people care is admirable, practical application of theory humanizes the law in a way I did not expect. Clients are real people, rather than faceless hypothetical or case excerpts. This internship experience helped me to remember that there is a person behind every number and a life behind every issue. Working with PHLP clients showed me the drive required to practice law in a legal aid setting. While there may not be enough time or resources to dedicate to cases that I have now in this small area, my purpose is to serve clients to the best of my ability.

Finally, and most importantly, I learned the true value of serving in the background. In Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Drum Major sermon, he redefined greatness for his congregates. It means more than recognition for accomplishments; greatness lies in service to others. Service comes in many forms, but my internship with PHLP showed the many forms of service. My previous work was grassroots advocacy in a rural community which was what I considered service. This internship showed me how the law can work to be effective outside the legislative field. And like Dr. King advised his flock, I am even more committed to using my drum major instinct to fight for those whose voices are silenced by larger entities.

My overall goal for my career is to work in public health policy to promote health equity across different racial, socio-economic, and financial disparate groups. Over the course of this internship, I worked with numerous clients who need health care, a right that should be promised to all United States residents. Some of their heartbreaking stories and complex situations could be made simpler by policy changes to standardize Medicaid systems across the state and can be applicable nationwide. Working to advise policy is an uphill battle, as is most work in legal aid. However, my commitment to service will prevail over the difficulties of this line of work. As I move forward in my legal career, I will remember my time with PHLP and the definition of greatness, which should be carried in the hearts and minds of all members of the legal profession.



Nneoma T. Ibe

Widener Commonwealth Law School

JD Candidate 2023

contact: ntibe@widener.edu

Host Program: Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Aid

Yes, Jesus, I want to be on your right or your left side, not for any selfish reason. I want to be on your right or your left side, not in terms of some political kingdom or ambition. But I just want to be there in love and in justice and in truth and in commitment to others, so that we can make of this old world a new world.

– Martin Luther King, Jr. The Drum Major Instinct

MY DREAM OF A NEW WORLD: CHECKING MY DRUM MAJOR INSTINCT AT THE BAR

There is much to be said about an individual who is willing to look past themselves to uplift and to serve others. Dr. King's Drum Major Instinct sermon is powerful for many reasons, but his deduction that this instinct is what sows destruction in the world could not have been any more correct. His prediction of what will come of America if the instinct is not harnessed, that the backbone of its power would be broken, has come to pass. We are in the year 2022, and this country, which was once a country lauded by both its residents and nonresidents, has fallen so far that I am unsure whether it can rise to the same greatness again. We have been grappling with, among many other things, school shootings, police brutality, civil unrest, baby formula shortages, rising sea levels, an unending pandemic. Dr. King said the drum major instinct is not wrong, but in the wrong hands, in the hands of corrupt individuals, it can have a devastating effect.

After listening to that sermon, I asked myself: do I possess this drum major instinct? Do I have a desire to be first, to be out front, to lead the parade? I do. It was never something I thought about, just something I find that I do subconsciously and the reason for every decision I make. But that's the point, isn't it? It is this instinct that set me on my path towards becoming an attorney. Dr. King also said, "[y]ou don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve." However, to whom much is given, much is expected, and Dr. King made clear that "whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all." This is the principle I believe all attorneys should follow. As individuals who not only possess college degrees, but can also make our subjects and verbs

agree, surely, we must also hold ourselves to that servant standard. It is our duty to help, to advocate, and to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. It is our duty to do all these things because we CAN do all of these things.

This summer showed me our humanity and that everyone is just doing the best they can with the cards they have been dealt. I mourned for parents losing their children to the system, while also being frustrated when those same parents do not seem to show any interest. I was outraged when events did not go in our favor, but I also shared in the joys of doing work that matters for people who believe that they don't matter. I did a lot of reading and research this summer and I often found myself asking why? Why have we not yet perfected this system? Why are we still operating with the mentality of the worst-case scenario? Whenever the Court makes a decision, the Court being one man or woman (or several men and women), is the decision truly based on the best interests of the weakest individual or the wronged individual? Or is it in the best interest of that one individual or few individuals who make(s) the decision. I understand no one wants to be the person to make a wrong decision and something bad happens. But what if something good happens? What if we afforded our fellow humans more grace? Would that make any difference in this already broken world?

I don't know how we will ever be able to plug all the leaks in this world before all our problems eventually break the dam and cause unimaginable erosion to the dreams we've built. However, I dream of a new world, like Dr. King. A world where all individuals can look past themselves and see that the way forward has always been together. Greed has no place in this new world, nor does ego, pride, and apathy. This new world will uplift the people, rather than disenfranchise them. This new world will be filled with individuals, like Dr. King, who are drum majors for justice, drum majors for peace, and drum majors for righteousness. I hope to God I can be one of these individuals and that when it is my turn, I will check my drum major instinct at the bar and focus not on the fact that I am officially an attorney, but that I have been called to do a great service – to contribute to building this new world.



Iman Koney

Widener Commonwealth Law School

JD Candidate 2023

contact: igkoney@widener.edu

Host Program: Regional Housing Legal Services

The drum major instinct can lead to exclusivism in one's thinking and can lead one to feel that because he has some training, he's a little better than that person who doesn't have it. Or because he has some economic security, that he's a little better than that person who doesn't have it. And that's the uncontrolled, perverted use of the drum major instinct."

But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. (Amen) That's a new definition of greatness.

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

FINDING YOUR PURPOSE

On February 4th, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a sermon known as the Drum Major Instinct at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. I resonated with many parts of his sermon, however, the above-mentioned quotes spoke to me the most.

As a first-generation law student and college graduate, I will be the first attorney in my family. While studying for the LSAT, my main motivation was money. Making money to give back to my family was my only end goal I could see to my lawyer dreams. As a first-year law student, I was a workaholic. I had tunnel vision for my big law dreams, so I took on EVERYTHING. I felt like a failure if I did not take every opportunity presented. The only future I could see for myself was one full of possessions and materials. I quickly realized how that type of work would fit into my goals for money but did not consider how it would impact my personal life. I needed to confront my selfish goals and reassess my plans for my JD.

As Dr. King mentioned, it feels great to be praised and bring honor and pride to my family. However, with pride comes a sense of self-worth. I noticed that I was tying my educational accolades with how I valued myself. I really noticed this as I progressed through my second year of law school. My family members began to ask me what my plans were for my JD. I felt a loss of self, because up to now, I always had a plan. But I had no answer. I did not know what I wanted to do with my JD post-graduation.

Dr. King's sermon embodied the exact conversations I had with myself at that time. I want to be more than an attorney; I want my life to be about more than just making money. I want to be a drum major. I want my life centered around being a drum major for justice, for peace, and for righteousness. I do not want to live a shallow life where money and materials are the only things that bring me happiness. I aspire to be a great person like Dr. King which comes with a lifetime of genuine servitude for others.

My lifetime of servitude began when I met Arlene, discussed with her my current love for property law, and began my summer placement at RHLS. It is almost hard to believe that this internship was remote because of the amazing connections that I made with the incredible staff at RHLS. At this nonprofit law firm, my love for property law and humanitarian efforts were put to practical use in so many ways. I conducted a variety of legal research regarding low-income housing tax credits and learned so much about affordable housing and community efforts to fight homelessness. I sat in on several meetings with the programs' Board of Directors and other organizations covering topics like housing for formerly incarcerated persons, diversity and inclusion efforts, and community benefits agreements to combat gentrification. RHLS provides legal assistance on how developers can apply for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, a tax credit that provides 90% of the affordable housing in Pennsylvania. RHLS serves communities that I am very passionate about as a black woman. I found the courage to use my voice at RHLS because the staff listened to me and took my ideas into consideration. I found a love for the work done by non-profit law firms and the selfless people that embody them. I come out of this experience having more of an idea of what I would like to do with my JD, without tying it to my self-purpose.

My experience with this sermon, Arlene, PLAN, and RHLS has changed my philosophy and mindset. Money is still a motive, but it does not define my dreams anymore. Genuine greatness does. I do not want work to be the biggest part of my life, I do not want my identity to be a lawyer. This will only lead to exclusivism in my thinking that I am better because of my occupation or education, and this is an uncontrolled, perverted use of the drum major instinct.

Instead, I realized that through every future milestone I reach, whether it is receiving my JD or becoming a mother, I want to always remain Iman first. I always thought my dream job was to be an attorney, but I realized that I do not have a dream job at all. That is a capitalistic trope forced on us since childhood.

My dream is to live. My dream is to enjoy life, make countless memories with my family, and engage in meaningful work that changes people's lives for the better. My dream, my purpose, is to be a drum major.



Abraham Lamptey

Penn State Dickinson Law School

JD Candidate 2024

contact: allamptey22@gmail.com

Host Program: North Penn Legal Services

A DRUM MAJOR FOR EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: FINDING MYSELF THROUGH SERVICE

Lawyers lead. Lawyers advocate. However, the instinctive desire to lead from the front and be seen can result in a self-serving feeling of superiority that does not inure to the benefit of others. As a human-focused endeavor, legal advocacy thrives on prioritizing meeting the needs of the underserved and bringing smiles on their faces. It is noteworthy that in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermon entitled "The Drum Major Instinct," he asked the congregation to remember him as one who gave his life by serving others. He insisted that "...if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice." Dr. King's emphasis on the importance of leading a life in the service of the vulnerable to ensure social justice aligns with my goals for pursuing a legal career and specifically my summer internship experience. I decided to pursue the MLK, Jr. Summer Internship Program with a legal services organization because of my interest in using my knowledge and skills to serve and protect the rights of vulnerable members of our communities.

The two-day PLAN MLK, Jr. Poverty Law Training set the tone for an enriching experience during which I gained practical knowledge about working in legal services and serving the needs of low-income populations. The training sharpened my awareness of the important work to be done in the interest of those who could not otherwise afford legal representation. It also gave me the confidence that I had both a duty and the potential to contribute to helping diverse people navigating the social and legal justice system. The sessions taught me the importance of open-mindedness, intercultural awareness, respect, and empathy when engaging with clients. It became apparent to me that this requires a genuine interest to help the people involved to resolve issues that affect their daily lives and wellbeing. In addition, I gained knowledge about the role of trauma-informed advocacy and vicarious trauma, professionalism, and professional responsibility in achieving social justice for the populations we serve. This wealth of knowledge shaped my contribution to the work of advocates I collaborated with on client matters.

As such, I was impacted and inspired by the various life-changing success stories achieved by the advocates at NPLS during my internship, particularly in housing matters. Although the United States Constitution does not provide a constitutional right to

housing, having shelter is a fundamental human need which ensures security, privacy, and a sense of dignity for all persons. For this reason, the ability to help clients maintain shelter over their heads brought me a great sense of fulfillment. For example, I worked with an advocate on an eviction matter involving a pregnant woman who was nearing her expected delivery date. The landlord provided the requisite notice of eviction to the client to vacate the premises at the end of her lease. However, the client's pregnancy and health condition necessitated a delay in her moving from the premises since it was close to her expected time of delivery. She also needed some time for postpartum recovery. The advocate creatively sought to utilize her protected status as a pregnant woman under the Fair Housing Act and her health condition as a temporary disability to request a reasonable accommodation on behalf of the client. This was impactful for me because the client was able to maintain her housing and live safely without jeopardizing her health.

Two other impactful advocacy successes also marked my internship experience. The first involved seeking a change in a client's living situation by requesting a reasonable accommodation from the housing provider. The goal was to enable the client to maintain herself and improve her mental health. The client experienced harassment and threats to her personal safety. By intervening on behalf of the client, she could live free of infringements on her right to safety and personal integrity. I also had the opportunity to work on an assignment related to an eviction case in which the landlord had sued the client for non-payment of one month's rent and late rent fees for two months. The claim amount was more than \$3,000 which was largely due to the landlord assessing a daily late fee charge of \$60. Nonetheless, our research and the attorney's persuasive advocacy resulted in a reduction to \$900. This was an impactful success story for me because it provided a substantial financial relief to the client who would have been saddled with an exorbitant debt.

These experiences heightened my interest in advocating for the vulnerable and ensuring they have adequate legal representation to protect their rights and live in dignity. As Mahatma Gandhi opined, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Losing myself in the service of others demands that I channel my drum major instinct into being the voice of the voiceless; the feeling of wanting to be seen into working alongside the disadvantaged to access social justice. My desire to lead in the legal field has unfolded through prioritizing the legal needs of the needy, rendering life-transforming service to the underprivileged and thereby letting the success stories spur me on to do more. For these reasons, my summer internship has been fulfilling because without leading from the front or being seen, I still contributed to meeting the critical needs of others and shared in their joy. In emulating Dr. King, if it must be said that I am a drum major, let it be said that I tried to help the vulnerable enjoy their rights!



Mylon Medley

Villanova University
Charles Widger School of Law
JD Candidate 2024

contact: mmedley@law.villanova.edu

Host Program: Justice at Work

WITNESSING HEARTS FULL OF GRACE

Slavery still exists in the United States of America. While the emancipation proclamation ended slavery in the U.S. nearly 160 years ago, and Juneteenth – the celebration of the last slaves who were freed two years after the proclamation was issued – is now an official federal holiday, vulnerable individuals are still subjected to involuntary servitude through human trafficking. Plantations and cotton fields have been substituted for fruit and vegetable farms, restaurants, and landscaping companies. Slave masters now look like small business owners and family-owned enterprises.

Instead of being sold, chained, and transported across the Atlantic Ocean like the enslaved West Africans in the Middle Passage, victims of trafficking are brought to the United States – or recruited while visiting this country – with promises of financial independence, housing stability, lawful entry, and perhaps a pathway to citizenship. The latter is the vulnerability that keeps many people enslaved to their traffickers. Victims are made to feel less than human simply because they are not United States citizens. The unbalanced power dynamic leads those with unscrupulous intentions to exploit, coerce, and harm the people they have trafficked for their own gain. The results include fear and isolation, permanent injuries, and psychological trauma.

As someone whose existence in this country is directly due to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, it is deeply troubling to know that the same evils that held generations of my people in bondage are still dehumanizing and oppressing those who are only looking for opportunities to better themselves and their families. My internship experience at JaW opened my eyes to the reality that trafficking of persons, specifically labor trafficking, is more prevalent than many realize. Trafficking does not have to look like scenes from the blockbuster film, “Taken,” nor does it require groups of people to meet the classification. A single person can be trafficked and made to believe they are defenseless when their traffickers withhold their pay, refuse to give breaks for meals, or inflicts physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

This is where the incredible advocates at JaW step in. For decades, JaW has represented low-wage and immigrant workers when they are victims of wage theft, employment discrimination, and labor trafficking. Many times, there are opportunities to

apply for specific visas that grant lawful immigration status when clients have been victims of crimes or labor trafficking. At times during my internship, it has been difficult to comprehend how a person could instinctively be so exploitative of vulnerable people and communities. How can these traffickers rationalize their behavior and cruelty?

In his Drum Major Instinct sermon, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. shared how to properly direct one's energy when the basic human instinct – a drum major instinct – of longing for greatness and distinction over others drives ambition. King suggested that Jesus gave a new definition of what it means to be “great” when two of his disciples expressed a desire to sit at his side in heaven. They wanted the distinction of being near Jesus, indicating a level of superiority. However, Jesus said, “the greatest among you will be your servant (Matthew 23:11). King added, greatness is not a self-imposed title or distinction, it is earned through fitness of character. “This means everyone can be great, because everyone can serve,” continued King, “you only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love, and you [too] can be that servant.”

I have been privileged to witness hearts full of grace and souls generated by love every day as I assisted JaW's efforts for their clients. The advocates and staff handle each client with the humanity and care they deserve. I asked one of the lead attorneys how she keeps from getting emotional in front of clients whenever they share their heart wrenching stories. She told me, “I remember I can do something about it. I went to law school to get the skills to do something about it.” This deeply resonated with me because of my path to law school. I pivoted to law from a nearly decade-long career in communication and journalism because I wanted more skills to respond to the injustices in our society, especially toward the most vulnerable populations.

I aspire to be a champion for justice, righteousness, and peace. I want to use my drum major instinct in love, justice, truth, and commitment to others. I believe my 10-week long experience with JaW will have a lasting effect on how I utilize my skills for others as I progress in my legal career. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to play a small part in this important work thanks to the PLAN MLK, Jr. Summer Internship Program. The advocates at JaW and their clients have forever changed my life. I hope to use the lessons and perspectives I learned to become the best change agent I can be with a drum major instinct that is forever and firmly rooted in love and justice for others.



Moises Tonoc Bonilla

University of Pittsburgh
School of Law

JD Candidate 2024

contact: moisestonocbonilla@gmail.com

Host Program: Northwestern Legal Services

"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 . . . you must earn it . . . recognize, he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That is the new definition of greatness . . . everybody can be great because anybody can serve . . . you only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

GREATNESS

Dr. King's ambition that an individual can be "great" is difficult to achieve and even more challenging to keep. In his sermon, Dr. King urged his constituents to be servants to those who were less fortunate. To be a servant to those who are less fortunate is to walk alongside them. Each advocate who chooses to walk alongside the less fortunate understands that the journey is an uphill battle, where society, legislation, and policy may try to derail those who seek justice. Dr. King told us, however, that it is possible to be "great." Anyone can be "great." The MLK, Jr. Summer Interns and the advocates at Northwestern Legal Services demonstrate what it takes to be "great."

When I met the other MLK summer interns in Harrisburg, the call to serve had everyone motivated to begin the orientation program and their respective summer internships. As each intern gave their reasons for why they wanted to work with PLAN, what they were looking forward to this summer, and their aspirations beyond the summer, their drum major instinct was on full display. Each MLK intern is "great"; each intern shows a genuine passion for improving other peoples' lives while working at their respective agencies. Each intern cares about putting themselves out and doing good in their respective communities. Each intern cares about every other intern's well-being and I am ecstatic that the MLK, Jr. interns will carry the drive to be "great" going into their respective careers.

The advocates at Northwestern Legal Services (NWLS) are also "great." Each advocate I worked alongside brought out the best of their drum major instinct. Their number one priority was and remains the well-being of their clients regardless of any obstacles the advocates might face. It is awe-inspiring to see that the effort given by each advocate to

achieve the best outcome for their client. For example, my supervising attorney met with a client at 2:30 p.m. on the day before the client's grievance hearing. If the client went to the grievance hearing without adequate representation, they would have certainly been evicted a week later. At the beginning of the intake, my supervising attorney was unsure how to help the client. However, by the time the meeting wrapped up, she scheduled herself to represent the client at their grievance hearing at 10 a.m. the following day. Another NWLS advocate had a client who qualified for Social Security benefits in 2021 but did not receive any payments. The client made numerous calls to the Social Security Administration (SSA), but the SSA always left the client benefit-less. The advocate called the SSA and let them know of his client's situation. That phone call resulted in the client receiving payments a couple of days later. Both are examples that stood out to me because, at the outset, it seemed that the client would only receive advice and counseling from the advocates. The advocates, however, gathered their resources, made the clients their top priority, and produced satisfactory results for their clients.

The advocates at NWLS provided me with an opportunity to help to try to put their clients in the best position possible. I was fortunate to have access to their intakes, attend Unemployment Compensation (UC) hearings, and observe other matters between them and their clients (with their client's permission). I helped NWLS advocates to research potential issues for their UC hearings, draft 3301(d) divorce complaints for clients seeking a divorce, and produced memorandums to keep other advocates updated on my supervising attorney's caseload. I appreciated having the ability to ask questions knowing that the answers would be informative. The advocates at NWLS set the groundwork for me to try to be "great" like them.

Being "great" comes with the challenge of the advocates communicating with their clients that there is not much that they can do to help. Although the advocates at NWLS do as much as they can to deliver satisfactory results for their clients, there are times when the available options for a client are dissatisfying. For example, in an eviction case, the client was faced with two difficult choices: either the client could try to obtain a Last Chance Agreement, but still live at a property with toxic management (management told the client to stop asking them for help after a neighbor yelled racial slurs to her and her kids), or, risk being evicted by the Magisterial District Judge and be faced with the challenges of an unfavorable housing market. As my supervising attorney told me, "I really do feel for my client. I wish I had something better to say, but it's the reality of the situation, and it is not a great situation." It is challenging to feel that one is "great" when one may have to tell a client that the reality of their situation is not favorable to them. Nevertheless, the NWLS advocates still took the time to listen to their clients, gather information, discuss the case with other advocates, and build a case with hopes that they can deliver a favorable outcome for a person whose entire life has been full of unfavorable outcomes.

Ultimately, to be "great" is to serve. Each client I interacted with was grateful for the work done by both NWLS and other PLAN advocates. Clients are genuinely happy when an

advocate calls to check up on them and understand when an advocate informs them of an unsatisfactory update. Clients at NWLS have dealt with adversity throughout their entire lives. Repeatedly, they are told no. The advocates at NWLS always extend their arms and put their best foot forward to say yes or try to get a client a win. I hope that myself and the other MLK interns will be able to continue the trend of extending our hands into our communities and be “great.”



Cooper Townsend

Villanova University
Charles Widger School of Law
JD Candidate 2023

contact: ctownsel@law.villanova.edu

Host Program: *Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project*

“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.

TODAY I CHOOSE RAMEN

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s sermon, the Drum Major Instinct, while relevant at the time of its delivery almost fifty-five years ago, remains eerily germane today. Dr. King’s sermon sought to warn the congregation of dangers identified as both universal and oft promoted. The Drum Major Instinct as described by Dr. King, is visible in every facet of human life. The “instinct” drives us to succeed not only in the classroom or the boardroom, but also promotes the accumulation of symbols that show others our economic wealth. Dr. King is clear that the existence of the Drum Major Instinct is not inherently problematic; in fact, he argues that it is a powerful gift we are all given and must learn to harness for the promotion of love and justice.

I am writing this essay, six short weeks before entering the final year of law school and the recent legal events are suspended in the uncomfortably saturated summer air. My internship this summer served many roles to me as both a growing student of law and as someone concerned with the health of our country. I was welcomed into the specialized office of the PILP by an overwhelmingly helpful and well-seasoned staff. Admittedly, I was intimidated by the academic and professional credentials of the attorneys and staff at PILP. They are an elite team of wildly intelligent and accomplished staff; they are all of that, without the oppressive elitism many times present in environments with similarly educated individuals.

I arrived on the first day of law school with the intention to learn the law and use that knowledge to improve the lives of others. I was not naïve enough to believe that I could or would singlehandedly change the trajectory of the world, but I hoped to leave a small mark on the righteous wall of history. I soon realized that remaining committed to serving and pursuing just results for clients that exist on the margins, can be quite challenging. Law

school is a cost in every meaning of the word. I realized though, that what Dr. King said all those years ago, applied more than I ever imagined.

Dr. King does not ask us to abandon our drive to be the very best, no. He simply asks us to recognize the engine that moves us and to steer our powerful gifts towards rewards that nourish souls. We may be asked to choose between fulfillment of our spirits and deposits in our bank accounts. It is not the Drum Major Instinct that created the need to choose; the imperative is manmade. In the United States, we live in a system that generously compensates work that produces wealth for others, entertains us through sport, or helps us to escape reality through television and film. Attorneys often fall into the first category through work performed at firms for businesses and sometimes wealthy individuals.

We are not always asked to choose between two mutually exclusive paths. Indeed, some find a way to work in a field they find fulfilling while also earning enough to live and eat three meals a day. I recently spoke with a law school friend who is interning at a large firm this summer. We exchanged stories about our work and what we have enjoyed in our respective positions. Amazingly, or maybe not so, I found that I enjoyed my summer internship much more than that of my classmate who is being paid more than 500% of my summer stipend for the same ten weeks of work. The experience I gained at PILP is unlike any other: I ingested more constitutional law (thankfully law that does not currently have red flags when Shepardized) than in an entire semester; I worked on briefs that have been submitted to federal court; I attended a federal court hearing; I observed numerous depositions; I had unparalleled access to my supervising attorney (who was always willing to teach); and I contributed to assisting vulnerable individuals with serious needs.

On the first day of my summer internship with PILP, I met the entire Philadelphia team. I was welcomed warmly over a lunch of Chinatown ramen, consumed in nearby Franklin Square Park. There was a brief fountain show in the park accompanied by the song, "Motownphilly" by Boyz II Men. We all kind of chuckled, surprised by the impromptu fountain display, only feet from the tables we selected.

I remembered one of the days I volunteered with PILP last fall when I helped to staff the class action hotline used by class members housed in the Philadelphia Department of Prisons. I spoke with an incarcerated individual who had not been able to speak with his very pregnant girlfriend because he was not let out of his cell in over a week. They were also not receiving mail regularly and he just wanted to know that she and the baby were healthy. He was despondent and I did everything I could to assure him that I heard him and that I cared. I think for the duration of our call, all nine minutes or so, he felt a human connection which was all I could offer in that moment. After that call, I cried for him and the many like him that were hurting and felt like no one cared to know about any of it.

I share this story with you because my decision to attend law school and pursue a career in public interest was not instantaneous nor without conflict. It is truly a decision I make every day. Dr. King knew this and urged us to continually choose the path that brings us to love and justice and generosity. Some days we eat ramen, and on others, we cry.

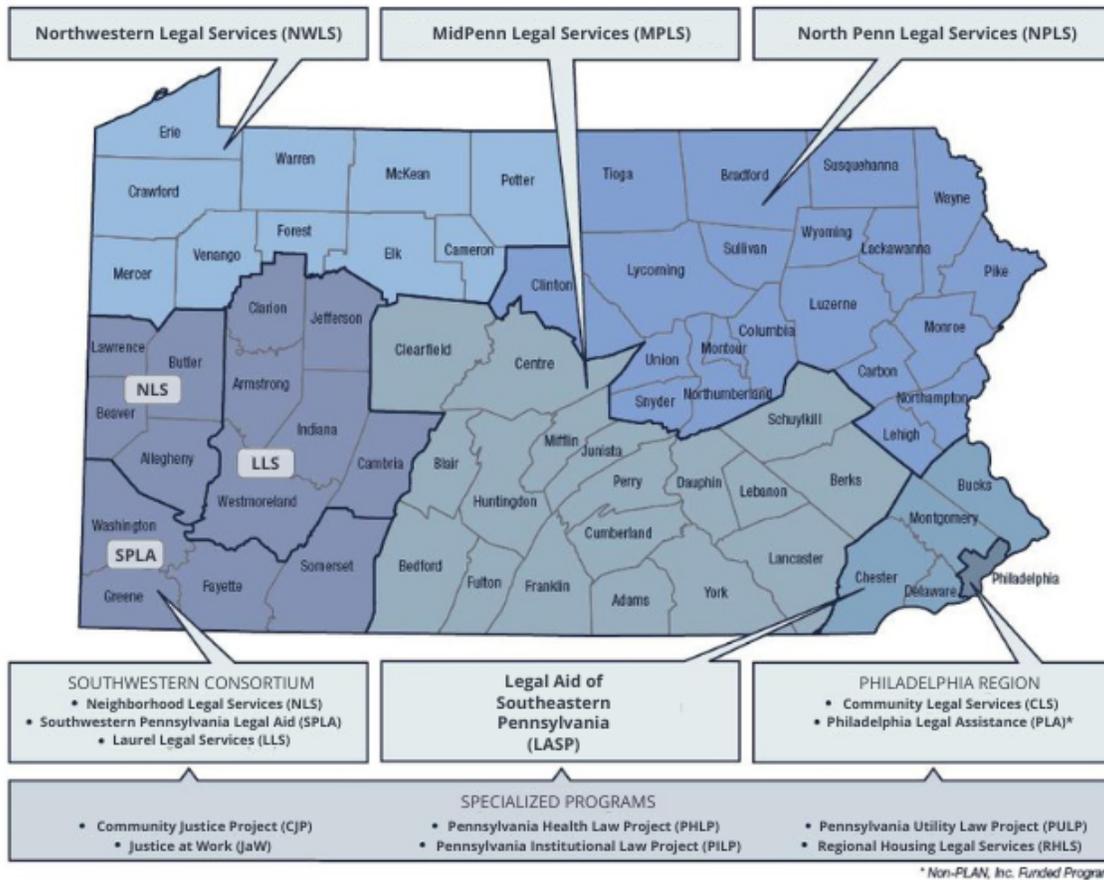


The class of 2022 interns wrap up the final day of their poverty law orientation training. Among them is Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith, Esq., who oversees the MLK, Jr. Summer Internship Program.



Initiated by the Pennsylvania Legal Services Black Caucus, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program has provided mentorship to more than 400 law students since its founding.

PENNSYLVANIA LEGAL AID NETWORK



To learn more about our MLK, Jr. Summer Internship and Fellowship Programs or to donate, please visit our website at www.palegalaid.net/internships-fellowships.

You may also contact:
Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith, Esq.
 Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
 1-800-322-7572, ext. 216
amarshall-hockensmith@palegalaid.net

Funding for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Program is provided by the Pennsylvania IOLTA Board, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and the generous contributions of private sponsors.

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, Inc.
 Louise Brookins Building
 118 Locust Street
 Harrisburg, PA 17101
www.palegalaid.net