

2023 Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program



THE DRUM MAJOR ESSAY COLLECTION

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

Pennsylvania
Legal Aid | **50**
YEARS
Network

TO THE CLASS OF 2023

PLAN, Inc. remains committed to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program, which serves as an invaluable pipeline for nurturing diverse, exceptional talent within our Network. At PLAN, we embrace students who reflect a rich mixture of racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities, religions, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, diverse abilities, and languages. Within our Network, our people are our most valuable asset. It is through the collective efforts of these remarkable individuals that we not only thrive, but also make a profound and lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

This summer, you were selected as the best and brightest students recognized for your innovative perspectives on serving our clients and fostering a culture of inclusion and allyship among us. Your presence has brought a fresh perspective and renewed energy to our work.

As a token of appreciation for your extraordinary efforts this summer, we are pleased to present you with the 2023 Drum Major Essay Collection. We hope that this serves as testament to how your dedication and talents uplifted vulnerable individuals and empowered them to regain control over their lives. We sincerely appreciate everything you have done to facilitate access to justice and foster stability within families and communities across Pennsylvania.

Our Network is proud to welcome you as esteemed members of our community. We are confident that wherever your journey leads, you will emerge as exemplary leaders who embody and promote our mission and values and help to shape a better future for all those you serve.



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DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY,
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HUMANITY AND THE PATH TO JUSTICE

“...[E]verybody can be great, because everybody can serve”.

In the Drum Major Instinct Sermon, Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds his congregation of the power of the ego in love, service, peace, and justice, so long as the ego is not “distorted and perverted”. Building on Dr. King’s sermon, I believe that maintaining a healthy ego requires profound humility. Humility is a practice which allows us to connect with others and understand their needs so we may better serve and advocate. Humility empowers us to look to our past to inform our future, without assuming that we do not have any lessons to learn. Humility gives us the grace to recognize our own capacity for human error and commit to accountability. Humility teaches us to not solely prioritize our own needs and lives, to look past our own desire for greatness for the betterment of the larger community.

This summer, I have the privilege of observing and supporting the hard-working staff at Community Legal Services (CLS) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a group of individuals who regularly exercise profound humility as legal advocates for Philadelphians. As an intern with the Homeownership and Consumer Rights Unit, I work with a small group of attorneys and paralegals to support individuals defending against debt collection cases and managing student loan debt. Debt collection defense work in Philadelphia requires resilience and humility in equal measure. CLS clients frequently experience shame and endure ongoing trauma with respect to debt management and managing finances. As a result, clients can come in with financial or legal goals that appear on the surface contradictory to their best interest but are in reality informed by years of personal experience.

Defendants in debt collection actions also face unique challenges in the court system. Defendants are often not properly served with notice and may not even know a judgment has been entered against them until their bank account has been garnished years after a hearing took place. If a defendant makes it to

the courthouse, they must navigate a complicated court system with minimal support. In Philadelphia, most small claims debt collections hearings take place in “Courtroom 5”, a judge-less hearing room designed to be the “people’s court”. In reality, defendants are left unsupported to navigate municipal court and left alone to handle debt collection attorneys. These attorneys often compel defendants to enter precarious and predatory judgments by agreement.

The first few weeks were challenging not only because of the fast pace of learning, but also because I wanted to take away each client’s emotional pain around debt and debt collection. I listened firsthand to the struggles ordinary Philadelphians were regularly experiencing when trying to make bills, meet basic needs, or put themselves through school. I observed the day-to-day issues clients faced while navigating a complicated municipal court system that does not support defendants. I witnessed debt collectors and attorneys for plaintiffs callously disregard clients from marginalized communities. Some clients turned down referrals to other free financial or legal services because they did not want to discuss their financial situation with another person, even if that meant turning away an opportunity for support.

My supervisor, Lelabari Giwa, helped me understand that the client’s goals define the best service I can provide. Even if I feel as an advocate that those goals could potentially create additional complications in the long run, the client has a right to make their own informed decisions for their life. I came to understand that my desire to remove another’s pain around debt and debt collection was driven by my own unchecked ego, my own desire to “right a wrong” without having any right or authority to do so. During client calls and interviews, I asked clients what their priorities were, asked how they were feeling about the case, and tried to prioritize their needs through the litigation process. I drafted responsive pleadings, made referrals to other organizations for financial and legal support, and helped negotiate settlements, all with the client’s priorities and experience in mind.

I want to devote my legal career to helping people navigate the many barriers in the American legal system and advocate alongside clients for systemic changes to improve those systems. This community-driven, trauma-informed justice work must be shaped by humility. Martin Luther King, Jr. notes in his sermon about what he would like to leave as his legacy: that he “tried to give his life serving others”, “tried to love somebody”, “tried to be right on the war question”, “tried to love and serve humanity”. At this early phase of my career, I wish to set out a similar intention for who I want to be remembered as by my community: that I tried to have the humility to listen and learn from my peers, to ask for help, to make mistakes and take accountability, to lead when called to do so, and to follow others’ advocacy — all done “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”.



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JUSTICE AND TRUTH: AN INWARD REFLECTION

You don't have to have a college degree to serve. (All right) You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. (Amen) You only need a heart full of grace, (Yes, sir, Amen) a soul generated by love. (Yes) And you can be that servant.

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

In a world riddled with injustices, we often turn to those responsible for perpetuating them. And I must admit—one of the primary motivations behind my decision to attend law school was the belief that becoming a lawyer would provide me with the greatest opportunity to lead and counterbalance these injustices.

I would be lying if I said that the current “J.D. Candidate” title has not offered me a set of privileges I did not have as a local community organizer. But as I listen to Dr. King’s Drum Major Instinct speech on the human ego, I am forced to reflect on my legal journey thus far. Dr. King reminds us to look calmly and honestly at our “desire to be out front... desire to lead the parade...desire to be first” because those egos perpetuate the injustices we are currently fighting. Like Dr. King, when it is all said and done, I do not want to be recognized for arbitrary accolades but rather for the meaningful connections I formed with people and my dedication to service.

This summer, I had the privilege of interning with the Community Justice Project (“CJP”). Among the many privileges I have experienced at CJP, one particular experience stands out: a site visit to encampments.

At these encampments, I engaged in conversations and interviews with people experiencing homelessness. Through these meaningful conversations, I realized I gained more wisdom and understanding than any statute or legal research could provide. Through their lived experiences and unique perspectives, these remarkable people became my teachers in ways that surpassed any knowledge I could offer in return. I did not recognize the importance of their teachings at the time, but in retrospect, I wish I could have recognized and acknowledged it.

So, this brings me back to Dr. King's quote, "You don't have to have a college degree to serve... you only need a heart of full grace [and] a soul generated by love... and you can be that servant." In our roles as servants, it is important to recognize that they are servants in their own right, too. They share their vulnerabilities, sparring future generations from facing the same challenges and ultimately lightening our burdens ahead. They may not know the made-up legal jargon or have the fancy clothing or economic mobility that those in the legal field enjoy, but their power is no less significant.

One valuable life lesson that has resonated with me is the wisdom shared by a former college professor of mine. She taught me the power of our words and how it correlates to our perceptions of life. She advises against the saying "being a voice for the voiceless." You may ask, "Why?" Because they have a voice. Our responsibility is to give them the courage and platform to use that voice.

As cliché as it may sound, life is a puzzle, and "every piece fits together to create who we are, what we do, how we feel. Every experience shapes us into where we will eventually become." Everyone has a purpose and a role to play in society. We must elevate each other and work together to combat the injustices our communities face.

I am forever indebted to the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network and the Community Justice Project for affording me my first legal internship and welcoming me with open arms. I am inspired by their commitment to action and not just mere words.

In conclusion, echoing the words of Dr. King, I urge us all to "be there in love and justice and in truth and in commitment to others so that we can make of this old world a new world."



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DRUM MAJOR FOR UTILITY RIGHTS

“Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. (Amen) Say that I was a drum major for peace. (Yes) I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter. (Yes) I won't have any money to leave behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind. (Amen) And that's all I want to say.”

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

On February 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a sermon on “The Drum Major Instinct.” The Drum Major Instinct is our human instinct to lead, to be seen, and to march at the front of the parade. This instinct is a powerful motivator but has the unfortunate potential to drive us towards destructive paths. Instead, Dr. King advocated that this instinct to be ‘first’ should not be directed towards personal superiority and dangerous disregard for others’ rights. Instead, he urged us to channel this instinct to leading the way in love, peace, and service to others.

As a third-year law student at the University of Iowa College of Law, I am honored and grateful to be a MLK, Jr. Summer Intern at the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP). By working for PULP, I’ve had the amazing opportunity to witness the Drum Major Instinct firsthand. Dr. King stated that he desired to be a “drum major for justice,” and PULP fully embodies that aspiration within the context of utility law. Every day, PULP’s staff and attorneys lead the way of love and commitment, harnessing the Drum Major Instinct by converting the desire for leadership and recognition into a drive for public service. PULP’s passionate advocacy and their tireless work is a testament to Dr. King’s vision of service-first leadership. While watching the

attorneys and the staff work, the scope of justice that Dr. King envisioned truly dawned upon me. I realized that equal access to utilities was a critical part of this justice - a warm house and a cooked meal were rights, not privileges.

During my time at PULP, I worked on drafting comments for the proposed 2024 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Plan. LIHEAP is a federally funded program designed to assist low-income households in managing their energy costs, providing financial aid to eligible households for energy crisis like utility termination, energy bills, and weatherization. LIHEAP is especially crucial during the end of the winter moratorium, where many families face utility termination due to nonpayment. The program tries to ensure that low-income families are not forced to choose between heating their homes and paying for basic necessities like medical care, clothes, and food. However, the current sections of the program added with the ever-changing elements of LIHEAP year after year creates hurdles to its application process and places undue burden on the very individuals that it aims to help.

With the guidance and help from PULP's amazing attorneys and staff, I drafted my comments with enthusiasm. In recognizing the need towards modifying the LIHEAP policies, we brainstormed recommendations to make LIHEAP a stronger tool for Pennsylvania's low-income consumers. After we submitted formal comments to the Department of Human Services and I testified at the LIHEAP public hearing, I could not help but feel the strong sense of pride to PULP's shared commitment to serving low-income households. Each team member at PULP lent their individual strengths, and within them was the Drum Major Instinct – channeled not into a race for personal recognition but into the harmonized rhythm of serving others.

In his sermon, Dr. King stated, "Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice...for peace...for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter... But I just want to leave a committed life behind...And that's all I want to say." Working at PULP made me realize that being a Drum Major is not about the money or the luxuries that we may have. Instead, it's about the impact we make, the lives we touch, and the legacy of commitment we leave behind as we advocate for affordable utility and energy services for all. My work at PULP was akin to leading a parade, as Dr. King advocated for, not for applause but to ensure that the most vulnerable among us are not sidelined or silenced.

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PRACTICING COMPASSION AND EMPATHY

Say I was a drum major for justice;
Say I was a drum major for peace;
Say I was a drum major for righteousness;
And all the other shallow things will not matter.

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

My parents immigrated to America over thirty years ago. Despite living in America for over thirty years, their knowledge of the legal system is next to nothing. As a first-generation law student, I realized I didn't want to practice law for money nor for prestige. My goal was and still is to help people – people like my parents who struggled to navigate the legal system because of their limited proficiency in English. With this goal in mind, I found myself drawn to legal aid because I believe everyone deserves access to legal representation and access to justice.

This summer, I had the privilege of interning at Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA) in the Family Law Unit. PLA provides free legal services to low-income and marginalized individuals. I was responsible for conducting intake interviews, drafting letters of advice, drafting paperwork, and preparing clients for their upcoming hearings. I also had the opportunity to represent a few clients of my own in Family Court with a supervising attorney.

My internship at PLA has been a transformative experience for me. I learned a lot of substantive law but more importantly, I learned a lot about myself and what kind of future lawyer I want to be. My professor once said there are no wins or losses when practicing family law. These particular words resonated with me as I worked with low-income and marginalized individuals this summer. Often, the legal system does more harm than good for legal aid clients. While I desired to help my clients obtain the outcome they deserve, it was usually not realistic or possible.

I had several clients this summer that left a lasting impact on me. One case involved a client seeking to regain custody of her seventeen-year-old son. The case had a long history of Child Protective Services' (CPS) involvement. My client's son was placed with the child's paternal grandmother. My client was convinced her son was being abused while in his grandmother's care. She called CPS and the police to conduct a welfare check, but these investigations never yielded anything substantial. The biggest issue, in this case, was the child's age. Once he turned eighteen, the courts would no longer get involved. After I spoke with multiple attorneys in my unit, it became clear that my client didn't have any legal remedies left. I remember feeling so anxious having to be the one to make that phone call and deliver the bad news to my client. It was no surprise when my client became extremely upset by the news and yelled at me over the phone. I felt overwhelmed with emotions as soon as the phone call ended. I felt like I failed, that I let my client down. I was also hurt that my client was upset with me. But after speaking with my supervising attorney, I reflected on the call and realized that this wasn't about me. As Martin Luther King, Jr. stated in his Drum Major Instinct Sermon, we must harness the instinct to be praised otherwise it could cause our personality to be distorted.

Working with low-income and marginalized individuals means realizing that our clients have a million problems, and we are only able to help them with so much. Sometimes we are one of their million problems. It is also important for us to not take their anger or yelling personally.

We have to look at the bigger picture and practice compassion and empathy. Sometimes it may feel like there are never any wins and that people don't appreciate your help. But we can't let that get to our heads nor bruise our egos. We have to remember that we are champions for justice, peace, and righteousness and that all the good work we do never goes unnoticed.



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ON THE FRONT LINES

No matter what you do in this life, aspire to be a Drum Major. “Be a Drum Major for justice... be a Drum Major for peace... and be a Drum Major for righteousness.”

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

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered the Drum Major Instinct Sermon on February 4, 1968. In that sermon, Dr. King calls us all to aspire to be “Drum Majors.” As I reflect on Dr. King’s sermon, I believe that a “Drum Major” is a community member who puts themselves on the front lines to be of service to others. When an individual commits to being a lawyer, they commit to being on the front lines as a “Drum Major”. Or rather, ideally, all lawyers should aspire to be “Drum Majors.” The legal field, no matter what area of law you practice, is rooted in the spirit of service. Effective lawyering itself requires selflessness and zealously representing your clients within the guidelines of the law.

I was inspired to attend law school because I felt that I could use my natural talents and learned skills to place myself in a position to help others. I have always loved helping others. The feeling of making someone’s life better, even if it is something small, is a feeling that is irreplaceable. When considering attending law school, I thought about all the people who can have life changing breakthroughs if someone is just willing to give them a chance and give them a voice. There are so many underserved communities who can benefit from attorneys who use their resources, knowledge, and expertise to help them solve their problems. It is important for underserved communities to have their voices heard, as they are often silenced due to a lack of resources. This understanding of the lack that individuals in underserved communities face and the barriers that arise when seeking legal services is what inspired me to consider public interest and legal aid service.

This summer, I have the privilege of interning at MidPenn Legal Services (MidPenn). MidPenn practices in the areas of Family Law, Unemployment Compensation, Landlord/Tenant Law, and more. I aspired to intern at MidPenn this summer with the hopes that I would get a full picture of what it is like to work at a public interest law firm that provides free legal aid to the community. I am not disappointed. So far, I have been exposed to legal aid culture, case management, client management, court decorum, and much more. I enjoyed working with supervising attorneys who are wise and skilled in niche areas of law. Each of the attorneys in my office gave me gems that I will take with me throughout my career. I am truly grateful.

Throughout my time at MidPenn, I have fallen in love with custody. At first, I was nervous about working primarily with custody due to the stories that I heard from individuals who practice Family Law. Not only have I found the area of law interesting, but it has also created a sense of purpose for me this summer. When I reflect on what motivated me to practice law, I know it is something intrinsic that pushes me to work to make a positive difference in the lives of others. This summer, I have been reminded of that motivation. Working closely with the clients to quickly resolve their issues has given me a purpose to look forward to going to work each day.

Many of MidPenn's clients seek services at a time in their lives when they are facing an immediate crisis. One of my most memorable experiences was successfully helping a custody client obtain an emergency petition. The client was very happy and overjoyed. The client had little hope that they would see their child again. MidPenn gave this client their last string of hope. Many of MidPenn's clients have very emotional legal issues like matters that involve their livelihood, shelter, children, and families. While not all cases have successful outcomes, when you are able to have success or make a positive impact on someone's life, it is an amazing feeling that ought to be cherished.

The most gratifying aspect of my work at MidPenn involved direct client work. When I began law school, I knew that no matter what area of law I practiced, I wanted it to involve direct client work. I love client phone calls and client meetings. Not only can I help these clients with their legal matters, but I can also connect with them human being to human being. Some of our clients just want to be heard, as they often feel alone, abandoned, and disregarded. One tool that I remember to implement each time I interact with our clients is to be empathetic and open to listening. Many of our clients had very complex and interesting stories. I enjoyed meeting a variety of people with different stories.

In the Drum Major sermon, Dr. King quoted from the Bible, "But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." Dr. King believed that the greatest thing that a human being could be is a servant. I agree. As an attorney, whether you are working in a larger law firm, working in a legal aid firm, working in-house, or working in politics, it is important for all attorneys to be servants to others and aspire to give back where you can. As I enter my third year of law school, I look forward to graduating and securing a legal opportunity where I can continue to be of service to others.

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THE GREATNESS OF SERVING OTHERS

Accolade. Achievement. Recognition. As attorneys and law students, we aspire to have our contributions praised and recognized by our peers. Many of us wish to lead, guide, and shape the laws of our country. We all desire to be great. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would agree, there is nothing wrong with this desire to lead or be great, as long as we use it to help others. Dr. King discussed this need to be great in his Drum Major Instinct sermon. He begins with a story of the apostles James and John from the Gospel of Mark. As the story goes, James and John asked Jesus if they could sit next to him in Heaven, as his left and right hand. They wanted positions of glory, not because they wanted to serve the world, but because they wanted recognition. They wanted to be important. Although one could see this as a selfish request, Jesus did not condemn them or become upset. Instead, Jesus told them this was not something he could give but something they must earn by serving others. Although I am not religious, I believe Jesus had the right idea.

However, this also should not be taken to the extreme. A famous political slogan used by two conservative politicians also claimed "greatness" as their goal. Unfortunately, their "greatness" is different from the ideals Jesus espoused. In their pursuit of greatness, they ignored many communities and only served those that supported their agenda. They often left behind minorities, the LGBTQIA+ community, and those of a different religion. Fortunately, some have followed this call of servitude and continue to help all the communities around them. The Pennsylvania Health Law Project (PHLP) is one such group.

Unfortunately, unless you are an incarcerated individual, healthcare is not a constitutional right. However, it is a human one. Access to free or affordable healthcare is necessary to ensure a healthy nation and a growing economy. Through the Affordable Care Act and Pennsylvania's adoption of the Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) program, many Pennsylvanians may receive Medicaid coverage and related services. Although an individual may receive

these benefits, there are still many hurdles that individuals must go through, including bureaucratic issues and human error. PHLP helps clients navigate this system through counseling and representation in grievance and fair hearing procedures. Although I have not had the pleasure of representing someone in a grievance or fair hearing, I helped several families across Pennsylvania receive the care they need. Two such examples stick out.

One client called after they lost access to their Medicaid. After the Public Health Emergency ended, Pennsylvania began its "unwinding" of the continuous Medicaid coverage that began during the COVID-19 pandemic. To maintain coverage after the unwinding, COVID-maintained individuals must send renewal paperwork to prove their financial or medical eligibility. In this client's case, they were deemed financially ineligible. The client was frantic and confused as to why it would end. After examining the paperwork, I realized that the County Assistance Office misidentified and miscalculated their income. This simple mistake caused the client to miss several appointments as they could not afford any of the deductibles. Moreover, this simple mistake likely happens to many Pennsylvanians who need help understanding eligibility requirements and do not know to call PHLP or a local legal service organization for help.

The other case that comes to mind involves a paraplegic client. The client was denied Personal Assistance Services (PAS) hours, even after demonstrating medical eligibility. The client's paraplegia affected every aspect of their life. They could not eat, bathe, groom, or use the toilet by themselves. Their friends and family feared what would happen if they were left alone. The client needed all the hours they could get, and the Managed Care Organization (MCO) failed to approve the PAS hours after losing the client's paperwork. I am working with the MCO to get them the requested paperwork, but the process is extensive and taking longer than it should. In the meantime, the client cannot get the services they understandably need. Unfortunately, this example is part of a systemic issue. MCOs will often try to reduce or deny hours even when the issue arises as a result of their actions.

Cases such as these have reinforced my desire to advocate and reform our current policies, particularly those that have the most damaging effects on the vulnerable. Although I have a strong drum major instinct, I know that that instinct will not guide me onto a path where I only look after myself and those like me. Rather, this instinct will guide my advocacy for systemic change and the less fortunate. It currently guides me toward a path of public service. Although this path may not lead me toward recognition or honors, it will guide me toward a fulfilling life, one filled with justice, love, and service.



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MARCHING TO THE BEAT OF A BETTER WORLD: BECOMING A DRUM MAJOR FOR JUSTICE

Working with low-income tenants at Neighborhood Legal Services has been an eye-opening and life-changing experience, laying bare the inequities in our system and further catalyzing my drive to advocate for those the system works against. Throughout my summer, I had the privilege of working directly with clients—they placed their trust in me to help them in some of their most stressful moments. It was a humbling experience, reminding me that there is always more to learn and that the work of public aid lawyers is some of the most important work that can be done. The attorneys I worked with are truly drum majors of justice, leading the way for a new generation to march to the beat of a better world.

One thing that I appreciated the most about this summer was how hands-on it was. I interviewed clients, negotiated with landlords, wrote appeals, and filed motions. This work felt concrete and direct, with high stakes for everyone involved: filing a motion wasn't another step in a process, but a way to make sure someone still had a roof over their head. At one point, I helped someone file a motion at the Department of Court Records. This motion would help a client stay in their home, preventing them from becoming homeless and giving them time to find a new place to stay. A law school classmate walked by who was shadowing someone who worked in the building. We exchanged brief hellos, and he went on his way. But I noticed that my back was a little straighter and it felt as though my chest was swelling with a sort of pride. Something about my classmate seeing me help a client made me glow—what was this?

And then I realized: this is the drum major instinct that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke about so eloquently. The desire to be out front, to be recognized, and to accomplish. As Dr. King put it: “we like to do something good. And you know, we like to be praised for it. Now if you don't believe that, you just go on living life, and you will discover very soon that you like to be praised.” This desire lives in all of us and it can manifest in many different ways.

In our field, the prestige-obsessed legal profession, it often presents as a compulsive interest in school rankings, Big Law, salaries, and other ways to signal that you've made it. Letting this instinct run amok and undirected, Dr. King says, can be dangerous and pernicious. But that instinct can also be harnessed for good, channeled into positive work that makes a meaningful impact in people's lives.

Dr. King says that service to others, and doing good for the sake of doing good, are the best ways to channel this drum major instinct. If you want to be recognized, then be recognized for making a positive difference, for being a drum major for justice. For me, that means doing work similar to what I did this summer: working with people to navigate difficult systems, helping them assert their legal rights, and hopefully finding a way to improve their lives. If I commit myself to such service, then perhaps I can be known as a great lawyer. Dr. King noted that he particularly likes this idea of greatness, the kind that comes from service to others, because it "means that everybody can be great."

There is still an element of the drum major instinct that I must be vigilant of, even as I channel that instinct into public service. It can lend itself to feelings of superiority and exclusivity. It can twist the way we see the world, convincing us that because of our accomplishments or our work, we are better and more important than those around us. This too is dangerous and pernicious, and it can still manifest itself in public service. The point of doing good and serving the public is to put good into the world, not to elevate oneself in some moral competition. But the drum major instinct may try to convince me that pursuing a life of justice makes me great in a way that sets me apart, puts me above. This is simply not true—after all, in service, "everybody can be great." Just because the work I want to do—the work that public interest lawyers do—is important, doesn't mean that I myself am somehow more important than my peers. Truly harnessing this instinct means guarding against that kind of thinking and understanding that the work is its own reward.

Because, as nice as it is to be recognized, it's nicer to recognize that you are spending time helping people who need it. As nice as it is for peers and clients to see your hard work, it's nicer to see the fruits of that labor. And as nice as it is to be acknowledged, it's nicer to acknowledge that you are doing what you can to pursue justice. Knowing this now will help me navigate a complicated legal world to hopefully make a positive difference.

I've learned quite a lot this summer: legal writing skills like preparing an answer, client skills like interviewing and advising, doctrinal skills like landlord-tenant law, and life skills like coping with difficult work. But at the end of the day, one of my most valuable lessons was discovering my drum major instinct and learning how to use it for good. Hopefully, if I apply the lessons I learned from my supervising attorneys and Dr. King, I can truly become a drum major for justice and a drum major for peace.



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GREATNESS AND THE TRADITION OF SERVICE

In Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermon *The Drum Major Instinct* he shares with us his definition of greatness. His definition of greatness goes as follows. Those who are great are "first in love..., first in moral excellence, [and] first in generosity;" and "[those] who [are] greatest among [us] shall be [our] servant." Everybody can be great because everybody can serve others; all you need is "a heart full of grace" and "[a] soul generated by love." We all ought to develop a kind of 'drum major instinct' that pushes us to achieve this form of greatness.

King came to this definition of greatness as a participant in Christianity: an ancient spiritual tradition that could be found about 2,000 years ago in a small town in rural Palestine. King took part in a branch of this ancient spiritual tradition which is now known as the Black Social Gospel. The Black Social Gospel was developed by Black U.S. Americans: "a people who have been terrorized, traumatized, and stigmatized...for 400 years," and yet "loved... justice in such a way that they taught the nation and the world something about love." King was a part of this tradition which included the work of others like Howard Thurman, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, and Pauli Murray. Note that the work of the women listed here are prime examples of a 'drum major instinct' rightly oriented toward the greatness King described, yet their names tend to go unsung due to the unchecked and distorted version of the 'drum major instinct' held by King and other men of their time, which manifested as a 'look-at-me' instinct.

Although I cannot profess to believe in all of the doctrines of Christianity, I find myself inspired by the Black Social Gospel's 'tradition of service' and its definition of greatness. While there are many traditions and philosophies in the world that uplift and inspire service to others, it behooves me to recognize that I personally owe a debt of gratitude to the Black Social Gospel tradition in particular, because it brought about many of my own freedoms. As an aspiring member of the legal profession, I am honored to be a Martin Luther King, Jr. Intern for the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network which, in the legacy of King, also defines greatness as being of service to my fellow human beings.

As I am sure you have noticed, King's definition of greatness is not the definition generally held today in the United States of America. The dominant ethos in the U.S. is that greatness includes material wealth and dominance over others. This understanding of greatness is not new. It is an idea we inherited from the British Empire, Rome, Egypt, and Babylon before us. The idea that wealth and dominance reflect greatness has manifested in different ways in this country's history.

In the 1880s, a prominent English sociologist named Herbert Spencer introduced an idea called 'social Darwinism' which became popular in academic circles. Social Darwinism asserted that only the strong and shrewd ought to survive in society and that the socially "unfit" ought to be left without aid. As a matter of natural course, the weak would be weeded out of society and the U.S. American population would become greater and greater over time. This became a major rationale for laissez-faire economics in the United States in the 20th century and can still be felt today in social attitudes, policies, and political philosophies. The doctrine of 'social Darwinism' stems from the common definition of greatness, which considers dominance over others to be a virtue.

In 1970, University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman pushed the popular idea that the social responsibility of businesses is to increase profit only. Friedman argued that if a business has shareholders, it is immoral for its executives to make socially conscious considerations because they would be doing so with other people's money. Friedman would go on to win the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1976. By the 1980s, "greed is good" became a popular motto. You might recall this motto from the movie *Wall Street* (1987), which became a "cult phenomenon on business school campuses" and "define[d] a financial era." These cultural developments are a manifestation of the common idea that material wealth is a defining feature or indication of greatness.

This summer, we Martin Luther King, Jr. Interns join King, Baker, Murray, Hamer, Thurman, Michelle Alexander, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Lani Guinier, Brian Stevenson, Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith, Shawn Boehringer, Carolyn Johnson, Michelle Terry, and many others in a tradition that says, "no!" to the common, avaricious, individualistic, and self-serving notion of greatness. Our program's namesake, despite all of his human flaws, aspired to live up to this tradition by dedicating his life to the struggle against the materialistic, and domineering conception of greatness.

While the common definition of greatness considers grand buildings made of marble and glass to be desirable and the product of virtue, persons that live in the same tradition as King, 'the tradition of service,' see the tragedy in marble walls as a travesty of greatness.

While those who hold on to the common definition of greatness consider the everyday lives of the impoverished and downtrodden to be the result of the impoverished person's own lack of virtue, the tradition of service recognizes the societal origins of suffering and lifts up the flourishing and the dignity of the downtrodden to the forefront of concern. Said in the ancient style, one who lives in the tradition of service hears the blood of the vulnerable crying from the grand marble walls and recognizes the infinite value in the lives of the downtrodden. The tradition of service holds that the greatest human beings are those who dedicate their lives to helping the poor, releasing those held captive unduly, and lending aid to the oppressed. Greed is not good, service is good.

This summer, I worked under the supervision of Managing Attorney Michelle Terry at the Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania's (LASP)-Chester Office. I worked on various types of cases including landlord-tenant, unemployment compensation, bankruptcy, and child custody. During my time in Chester, I saw the ugly result of avarice, which in this country is still too often seen as a virtue. One example that stuck out to me most was when a landlord charged a tenant over \$1,000 per month (more than two-thirds of the tenant's monthly income) to live in an apartment with faulty electric wiring and a carbon monoxide leak. I aspire to hold myself accountable to the tradition of service, therefore, I refuse to believe that that landlord was engaging in virtuous behavior.

So, as you can see, in the face of claims that I ought to make as much money as possible to the glory of material culture, I cannot be moved nor persuaded to do so without regard for the lives of others. To do so would be to make a butchery of my conscience and a mockery of the best of the human condition. Therefore, this summer, I chose to work for legal aid.

When one works in the tradition of legal aid, they work in the law world and must be as cunning as a snake. Yet, to work in legal aid, one also has the opportunity to be as gentle as a dove towards their clients. This requires courage and discipline, and I feel that legal aid work has been a great way to develop both in myself.

Legal aid work is valuable beyond measure because it preserves the best ideals of love and justice against the cult of vulgar materialism and domineering greatness. It is my great honor to be a part of the legacy of both King and legal aid and, hopefully, to have made my humble contribution.

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YOU CAN BE GREAT, TOO

“You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. (Amen) You only need a heart full of grace, (Yes, sir, Amen) a soul generated by love. (Yes) And you can be that servant.”

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

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. earned great renown for being one of the most impactful men in U.S. History without being a U.S. President. His life exemplified that you don't need a title to serve. Dr. King's legacy was so great that he earned a federal holiday in White America – a day that's not only observed in America, but in many other countries around the world. Although the color of his skin deemed him powerless during his prime in America, his intellect was so powerful that he had to be assassinated. Dr. King was a drum major for justice, peace, and righteousness.

Dr. King's “Drum Major Instinct” sermon highlights the importance of serving others and abolishing the human desire of superiority and exclusivism. In fact, Dr. King provides a new definition for greatness through a biblical reference, Mark 10:43 – “But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.” In other words, one who desires to be a great leader must also be a great servant. My favorite aspect of the biblical (and Dr. King's) definition of greatness is that it can be achieved by anyone notwithstanding race, gender, or success. You can serve others – for free.

Through PLAN's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program, I had the ability to work with racially and economically diverse groups with varied experiences and perspectives. At the beginning of the summer, PLAN's Poverty Law Orientation Training reinforced my knowledge of the

injustices of our capitalistic society. Unfortunately, in America, one's socioeconomic status and race is relevant to achieving justice.

This summer, I looked forward to using my legal research and writing skills in a meaningful way – to provide service to individuals who need it the most. My experience with Southeastern Pennsylvania Legal Aid (SPLA) gave me a platform to provide support to low-income citizens in civil matters where a basic human need (or multiple human needs) is at stake. I enjoyed preparing pre-hearing memos for clients seeking public assistance to achieve economic security. Becoming familiar with a client's life experiences, including extremely traumatic ones, allowed me to understand the complexity of systemic injustice.

Working with clients also allowed me to understand unemployment through a different lens. Originally, I had the same bootstrap mentality that society pushes on disadvantaged citizens – that when you're in a pit, it is your responsibility to build yourself a ladder to escape. But how can this be possible when you have no tools, education, or guidance to build anything? Through interacting with clients at SPLA, I have learned that some circumstances really are out of anyone's control and have the power to negatively impact one's whole trajectory in life.

An unfortunate event or traumatic injury can create a pit that has no escape. For example, I prepared a pre-hearing memo for a client who suffered a traumatic brain injury after a tragic accident that resulted in long-lasting symptoms including memory loss, headaches, anxiety, and depression. Although sufficient medical records existed to prove his impairments, his social security disability benefits were ceased. The reason given for the cessation was because his brain injury "improved", however, as the medical records exemplified, his neurological and psychological impairments were far from normal. Nevertheless, the Social Security Administration still expected him to secure and maintain employment. The world now expected him to maintain financial stability with no governmental assistance.

Dr. King wanted to be remembered not by his achievements, but by his commitment and dedication to serving others. To serve, Dr. King stated, "You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love." I, too, aspire to serve others and will do so through my future legal career and volunteer service. I am dedicated to becoming an attorney and eventually mentoring future generations of black pre-law and law students. Relentlessly, I will seek greatness through service and love like Dr. King.

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DEDICATING THE DRUM MAJOR INSTINCT TO THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

Whenever I think of a “drum major,” my mind takes me to an HBCU football stadium during halftime. I see young men and women immaculately dressed in pristine marching band uniforms, holding their instruments or flags, and waiting at attention, all but one individual – the drum major. I see the drum major marching onto the field with high knees and sharp hand movements. The drum major commands everyone’s attention, including the band, people in the stands, or even online viewers. The drum major is aware of all the eyes and palpable anticipation but is completely unfazed. As the drum major marches, the unique uniform for the role is on full display, consisting of a distinct headpiece, a decorated mace, and a cape. But perhaps the most important element a drum major wears is confidence – confidence in self, confidence in the group of people he or she is about to lead, confidence in the band’s preparation, and confidence in the goal.

In his sermon “Drum Major Instinct,” Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., extracts the essence and qualities of a drum major and unexpectedly pairs it with a conversation documented in the Biblical book of John that took place between Jesus and two of his disciples. The two disciples in this account were brothers who asked Jesus to allow them to sit by his side when they make it to heaven. After reading the biblical passage, King cautioned the audience on rushing to label their act as “selfish.” King said, “Let us look calmly and honestly at ourselves and we will discover the same desire for recognition for importance, and to be first. We have some of the same ... qualities – an “instinct,” a drum major instinct, to be out front to lead the parade, be first.”

Unfortunately, the drum major instinct that accompanies life’s travelers on their journeys toward greatness is often misused in ways that hurt others. This is why Jesus redefined “greatness” for his disciples.

King illustrated the definition by saying, "He who is greatest among you shall be a servant. That's the new definition of greatness. It means everybody can be great because everyone can serve. [You] only need a heart full of grace, soul generated by love, and you can be that servant." King later in his sermon emphasized there's nothing inherently wrong with wanting to feel important and be great, calling it a "basic impulse and drive for human life." King said Jesus's message was simple: "You want to be first, great, important, significant? You ought to be. Reorder priorities. Don't give up instinct, it's good if used right. Don't give it up. Keep feeling the need for being first, important. I want you to be first in love, moral excellence, generosity."

This makes me think about the various service-centered examples of a drum major and the drum major instinct I've witnessed during my time as a summer intern at the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP). I've seen it through clients who have shared stories of helping fellow incarcerated men or women with their legal cases. I've seen it through the attorneys at PILP who leave no stone unturned when developing litigation strategy on behalf of clients experiencing various constitutional violations. There's always an uphill battle, extra hurdle, and heavier burden for those who are incarcerated or detained when attempting to seek remedy or relief from constitutional violations.

For PILP, there's no constitutional right or basic human need that's too small or trivial. Sometimes the ask is seemingly very simple, such as wanting crutches for an incarcerated person with a physical disability. Other times, the ask requires numerous, time-consuming bureaucratic steps to be completed by the incarcerated person before an attorney can step in as a legal advocate. These asks include proper medical care for the diabetic, for the person with opioid use disorder, to the person wanting gender affirming care. The asks also include religious accommodations, relocations due to overcrowding, or damages from injuries sustained from use of excessive force from prison officials. Infused within PILP's mission and felt in their actions is a key principle: when there are important issues at stake, staying in a perpetually uphill fight could yield just and rewarding outcomes.

When the odds are continuously stacked against you, it would be in one's best interest to employ the drum major instinct. If a marching band drum major does not match the looming battle, perhaps reflecting on its historical roots would be enough to muster courage. Tracing back to 1650, British Army drum majors were members of the "Corp of Drums" or "Fife and Drum Corps" with a royal appointment of Drum Major General. Drum majors appeared on the land that would become the United States of America during the

Revolutionary War by the Continental Army. During that time, drum majors were part of the infantry and had the duty of conveying orders during battle with drums. There are vast differences between HBCU marching bands performing at halftime shows and Homecoming tailgates, and a drum major serving in the infantry as a new nation fight for sovereignty and independence. However, they both have the title of “drum major.”

My drum major instinct pulls me toward the pursuit of justice. I have felt the call to join those who take up arms through civil rights litigation. During my time at PILP, I have been exposed to various levels of civil litigation from client interviews and depositions, all the way to preparing for and delivering appellate oral arguments. Each opportunity has deepened and affirmed my desire to be a drum major in this field. My internship has shown me where to pick up parts of my drum major uniform and learn drills to prepare for the battle ahead. I’m not quite battle ready on paper – I need to finish school and pass the bar – but I’m all in. And where my confidence falls short, the advocates from PILP and PLAN’s legal aid network have demonstrated that we’re all in this together. We’re all learning and adapting to new laws and societal landscapes. However, when there are important issues at stake, sitting on the sidelines is never the answer. Whether on a battlefield or a football field, a small legal aid office or even the Supreme Court of the United States, the drum major instinct must be used to champion justice with a heart full of grace and soul generated by love to achieve the ultimate distinction of greatness.

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The Martin Luther King, Jr. Program is made possible through generous funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania IOLTA Board, and the invaluable support of private sponsors. Their investment enables us to cultivate a new generation of leaders who embody Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of equality, justice, and compassion. If you share our commitment to creating a brighter future and want to make a meaningful impact, we invite you to show your support. Scan the QR code or visit our website.



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