

# Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship & Fellowship Programs

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2023 NEWSLETTER

Pennsylvania | **50**  
**Legal Aid** | YEARS  
**Network**

# Dear Friends & Colleagues

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This year, we proudly celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network. Since 1973, our Network has been providing free legal services to low-income Pennsylvanians and victims of domestic violence, underscoring our commitment to fostering justice and transforming lives.

Over the years, we have taken intentional steps to foster a more diverse and inclusive workforce to improve client services. However, no program has been more instrumental to these efforts than the Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program.

Founded in 1991, our internship program pays tribute to Dr. King's legacy by promoting diversity and inclusion in legal aid work. It was initiated at a time when conversations about racial justice and equity were merely a dream, as Dr. King might have said.

Since the inception of our internship program, over 400 law students have been awarded placements, including me, a graduate of the Class of 2005.

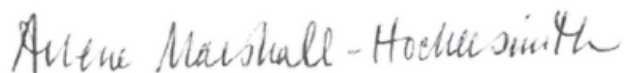
In 2004, our programming was expanded to include a post graduate fellowship program. To date, 30 fellows have been hired as attorneys through the program, some of whom are still with our Network.

This year, in celebration of our momentous 50th anniversary, we invited Edith Benson, one of the instrumental figures who helped to establish the Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program, to be our Keynote Speaker at our annual internship reception held on July 26, 2023. Her presence at this year's celebration brought a wealth of experience, wisdom, and insights from her journey as an advocate for justice and equality.

I would like to close by thanking all those who helped to support this year's summer interns, especially our training partners and mentors for offering their time and expertise.

But the continued success of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship and Fellowship Programs depends not only on those within our Network, but our community partners, funders, donors, and you, our readers. If you would like to help with the continued success of our programs, please consider donating. Your contributions, which are tax deductible, will support the successful legacy of these programs. As always, thank you to all who continue to support our efforts.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter!



**ARLENE MARSHALL-HOCKENSMITH, ESQ.**  
**DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY,**  
**INCLUSION AND BELONGING**



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# Martin Luther King, Jr.

# Summer Internship Program

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Each summer, ten first- and second-year law students are awarded placements at the legal aid organizations in our Network. Through a curriculum that encourages self-reflection, personal growth, and building a professional network, our internships provide law students with valuable legal work experience that allows them to learn about the unique challenges faced by low-income and marginalized communities in Pennsylvania and prepares them to be thoughtful, compassionate advocates for justice.

Every year, the internship program kicks off with a two-day poverty law orientation training at our office in Harrisburg. The training aims to equip interns with a comprehensive understanding of various legal areas they will encounter during their summer experience. It also provides practical insights into networking, professionalism, and building essential attorney skillsets.

Among this year's attendees at the training were Class of 2023 Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Interns, twelve IOLTA Fellows, and one Equal Justice Works Fellow. Over the ten-week period that followed, interns gained valuable, hands-on experience under the guidance of mentors.

This summer, interns worked both in-person and remotely at legal aid programs across the state where they interacted with clients, conducted initial client interviews, and attended client meetings, hearings, trials, and administrative proceedings.

At the conclusion of the internship program, interns are required to complete an essay about their experiences, which is compiled into a volume called the Drum Major Essay Collection. Each summer, these essays are presented by students and made available to guests at our annual reception. The collection serves as a testament to their journey as well as the impact of their work.

# Meet the Class of 2023

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## **Neeraja Aravindan**

**Community Legal Services of Philadelphia**  
Rutgers Law School ('24)



## **Mariama Barry**

**Community Justice Project**  
Penn State Dickinson Law ('25)



## **Hosu Chang**

**Pennsylvania Utility Law Project**  
University of Iowa College of Law ('24)



## **Winnie Chen**

**Philadelphia Legal Assistance**  
Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law ('24)



## **Andrea Faulknor**

**MidPenn Legal Services**  
Penn State Dickinson Law ('24)



## **Celina Flores**

**Pennsylvania Health Law Project**  
Penn State Dickinson Law ('24)



## **John "JP" Leskovich**

**Neighborhood Legal Services**  
University of Pittsburgh School of Law ('25)



## **Davis Logan**

**Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania**  
University of Wisconsin Law School ('24)



## **Kamia McDaniels**

**Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Aid**  
Widener University Delaware Law School ('24)



## **Mylon Medley**

**Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project**  
Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law ('24)

# Speaker Spotlight: Edith Benson, Esq.

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Edith Benson was born with aspirations of becoming a medical doctor. However, her path took a significant turn when she discovered the influential work of the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, who served as the NAACP's lead counsel during the Civil Rights Movement. Inspired by Marshall's impact, she decided to pursue a career in law with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of others.



In 1974, Edith earned her degree from Case Western Reserve University, marking the start of an extensive legal journey centered on helping those in need. Throughout her career, she assumed various notable roles, including founding Executive Director of the Legal Aid Telephone Intake Service in Columbia, South Carolina, and Executive Director of the Delaware County Legal Assistance Association in Chester, Pennsylvania. She has served as a staff attorney and Litigation Director at Northwestern Legal Services, a staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, and Office Manager for the late Louis Stokes, a prominent politician, attorney, and civil rights advocate.

During her time at Northwestern Legal Services, Edith worked closely with several individuals to establish the Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Program, with the goal of promoting diversity among attorneys within the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network and strengthening the Network's capacity to effectively serve its client community.

Now retired from her legal career, Edith remains steadfast in her commitment to serving those in need. She is a member of Peter's Cathedral in Erie, Pennsylvania, where she serves as a Eucharistic minister and lends her support to meaningful programs such as the Day of Caring and the Bishop's Breakfast. In addition, she serves on the board of St. Patrick's Haven, an organization dedicated to supporting homeless men in Erie.



# Thank You

## TO OUR MENTORS & TRAINING PARTNERS

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The cornerstone of our program's success lies in the comprehensive training and mentorship that we provide throughout the ten-week summer internship experience.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the following supervisors and training partners, who have graciously shared their time and expertise this summer.

### **MENTOR SUPERVISORS**

CAROLINE BUCK  
MATTHEW FELDMAN  
PAM FLECK  
LELABARI GIWA-OJURI  
CAROLYN JOHNSON  
BARBARA KERN  
MARISSA LAWALL  
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NICK MATASH  
KATY MCKEE  
JAIME MULLIGAN  
RIA RIERIRA  
SARAH ROBINSON  
ANGEA RUAN

### **TRAINING PARTNERS**

AMY CHIN-ARROYO  
BRANDON COPELAND  
RYAN CUMMINS  
QUEENETTE ECHEFU  
BRIAN GORMAN  
JAMIE GULLEN  
MARISSA LAWALL  
ELIZABETH MARX  
NICK MATASH  
ROCHELLE MCCAIN  
WILLIAM MCLAUGHLIN  
KADEEM MORRIS  
JANE NYLUND  
RIA PEREIRA  
RACHEL PINSKER  
RHODIA THOMAS  
DAVID KELLER TREVASKIS  
MARSHA WHITE-MATHIS  
DOMINQUE WIGGINS

# Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellowship Program

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellowship Program is an integral part of our Network's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Initiative, and our fellowships provide aspiring attorneys interested in long-term public interest positions with invaluable mentorship and support.

The initiative collaborates with a regional or specialty program within our Network to hire recent law school graduates and newly licensed attorneys as full-time staff attorneys for a two-year fellowship. Fellows are assigned mentors and supervised by experienced attorneys. In addition, our program offers participants loan repayment assistance during the fellowship period. Fellowships are not restricted to the two-year term, but rather intended to help diverse law students build a solid foundation for their careers.

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## MEET OUR NEW FELLOW: ESTEBAN RODRIGUEZ

Meet Esteban Rodriguez, who became our newest Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellow after joining the staff at Regional Housing Legal Services in July. Esteban received his JD from Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law ('22).



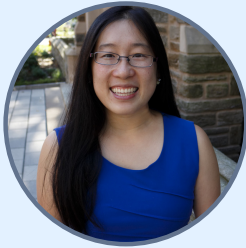
Prior to his fellowship, Esteban served as an Assistant City Solicitor in the Philadelphia Law Department's Labor and Employment Unit. During law school, he clerked for the Honorable David R. Strawbridge, US Magistrate Judge for the Eastern District, was a staff editor of Temple Law Review, and interned at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia.

Esteban said that he applied for the fellowship program, "because of the opportunities for mentorship, support, and networking, that are so valuable for early-career attorneys." He said the aspect that he is most excited for is getting to know the client base and expanding his transaction legal skills.

# Congratulations to our Graduating Fellows

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In 2021, we had the pleasure of introducing Amy Chin-Arroyo and Dominique Wiggins to you. They embarked on their respective fellowships at Justice at Work and Community Legal Services of Philadelphia, which will conclude this August. We're delighted to share that both have graciously accepted offers to continue as staff attorneys with their programs post-fellowship. Congratulations to both!



## **Amy Chin-Arroyo, Esq.**

### **Justice at Work**

Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law ('19)

"The fellowship program has been a great source of support to me as a new lawyer. The loan repayment assistance program has made it financially feasible for me to pursue a career in public interest law. As the first attorney in my family, and one of few Asians working in public interest law, it has been inspiring to meet and learn from other BIPOC lawyers."

## **Dominique Wiggins, Esq.**

### **Community Legal Services of Philadelphia**

Duquesne University School of Law ('21)



"As a first-generation lawyer, I am thankful for the support of this program. I am also grateful, because it provided me with a pathway for my career. When I first started my fellowship, Community Legal Services of Philadelphia was not in the process of hiring staff attorneys. Now, I am about to begin that position having already gained two years of experience doing great work for Philadelphia tenants."

# Meet Our Rising Stars

Our fellowships aim to help diverse law students establish careers in public interest law, and our program has a proven track record of generating a reliable recruitment pool for legal aid organizations, especially those in our Network.

To date, 30 fellows have been hired by our legal aid programs as attorneys, some of whom are still with our Network. This year, we are delighted to feature two such individuals, both of whom are quickly emerging as shining stars within our community: Marissa Lawall & Kadeem Morris.

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Marissa began her journey with our Network as part of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Internship Class of 2017. That same year, she received her JD from Penn State Dickinson Law ('17) and was accepted as a Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellow at the Pennsylvania Health Law Project in 2018.

Five years later, Marissa is now a Supervising Attorney at the program. In that time, she has also amassed an impressive number of professional achievements, including being honored with the Monroe E. Trout Legal Medicine Award for Excellence from Dickinson Law in 2018, and the Hon. Sylvia H. Rambo Recent Alumna Award from Dickinson Law in 2022. She served as Board Member for Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley in 2022, and currently works as an Adjunct Professor in Legislative Advocacy, Nonprofit/Legal Aid at Dickinson Law.

Like Marissa, Kadeem received his JD from Penn State Dickinson Law ('17). Following graduation, Kadeem was awarded a placement with our Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellowship Program, where he worked at the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project, helping low-income clients with utility matters.

Now, Kadeem serves as Co-Managing Attorney of the Housing Unit at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia, where he has worked for the last four years. He credits his start as a fellow with laying the foundation for him to be a competent and compassionate attorney. He also says a key factor is adapting to opportunities as they present themselves and keeping clients at the forefront of your work.

# Marissa Lawall, Esq.

**Supervising Attorney**  
Pennsylvania Health Law Project



"The Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellowship Program is a launching pad for aspiring attorneys just starting their careers. In my case, I was lucky enough to have an opportunity to participate in both the internship and fellowship programs,

These experiences helped form the critical foundation of my career and influenced my perspective on social justice and equity issues by being able to work with the individuals affected the most. Even though I now work with clients on Medicaid related issues, the social determinants of health are a factor, and often times, clients have more issues than what they present."

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# Kadeem Morris, Esq.

**Co-Managing Attorney, Housing Unit**  
Community Legal Services of Philadelphia

"The Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellowship Program prepared me to be an attorney who could competently represent clients in court and train other attorneys in new areas of law.

To advance in legal aid, consistency is very important. You have to show up daily and do good work for your clients. You also have to think about how to do a better job and communicate your interest and availability to do more.

I joined Community Legal Services as a lawyer in the eviction prevention program. My role in that program has expanded over time with me transitioning from direct client representation to program management and supervision. My current leadership position is the result of being available at the right time, adapting to opportunities as they present themselves, and a willingness to go above and beyond to maintain a successful program."

# Thank You

## TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

We are extremely grateful to the following for their contributions to our Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellowship Program, and for supporting our mission of promoting justice, equality, and access to legal services for all.

ALLENTOWN BRANCH OF THE NAACP  
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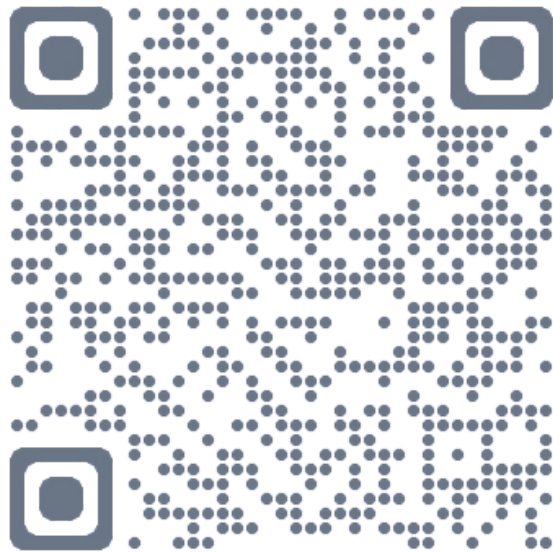
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The Martin Luther King, Jr. Program is made possible through generous funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania IOLTA Board, and the invaluable support of private sponsors.

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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