

Martin Luther King Jr.

Summer Internship & Fellowship Programs

2024 DRUM MAJOR ESSAY COLLECTION

&

NEWSLETTER



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Andrew Abdelqader (He/Him)



**Pennsylvania Health Law Project
Widener School of Law (2L)**

On February 11th, 1968, at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a sermon detailing what it meant to have a “drum major instinct.” As he referred to it, this instinct, innately existing in each of us from the time we are young children, is described as our desire for attention; desires to be first, to be the best, to gain a sense of importance and recognition, as well as the attention we believe inevitably follows such pursuits.

Dr. King cautioned against and resolved the limitations of this instinct by redefining how one should direct it. Instead of letting our instinct become destructive and pernicious, he stated that the goals and greatness we seek should come not from ourselves but rather from our service to others. That our desire to be first should be a desire and commitment to be first in love, generosity, and gratitude.

When I joined the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN) and started my internship with the Pennsylvania Health Law Project (PHLP), I did not know what to expect. I was (and am still) new to both this state and public interest law. Yet throughout my internship process and in my interactions with individuals at PLAN and PHLP, I was able to witness their dedication to the work they do and the people they serve. PHLP represents and ensures Pennsylvanians’ access to Medical Assistance by listening to clients’ stories and translating their experiences into legal problems with legal solutions. They advocate for policy reform and building community capacity to champion large-scale changes across the state to ensure equity and opportunity for all Pennsylvanians to meet their basic needs. “An inequity that excludes one person is the tip of an iceberg blocking access for many.”

I saw this firsthand when I encountered a client who was having issues filling their prescriptions because their physician was out of state. Suddenly and recently Pennsylvanians residing near bordering states, whose nearest emergency room or urgent care facility was often out of state, were being denied coverage at the pharmacy for medications crucial to their treatment and recovery. Researching the issue further I called pharmacies in the area, who told me this issue was affecting not just our client, but a significant number of residents in the area. The pharmacists had no solution. This type of inequity, as well as many others, affect society’s most vulnerable residents, particularly low-income people, people with complex health needs, the uninsured, and people of color. Being able to help people navigate through a non-user-friendly healthcare system while also providing empathetic and relieving next steps was one of the most rewarding experiences I have had.

As a future attorney and even broader as an individual sharing this world with others, how can I intentionally cultivate and hone this commitment to service and understanding? In delving deeper, I came across the book “Unreasonable Hospitality: The Remarkable Power of Giving People More than They Expect.” The author, a Michelin star restaurateur, described intention in the service industry by saying:

*“Intention means every decision, from the most obviously significant to the seemingly mundane, matters.
To do something with intentionality means to do it thoughtfully, with clear purpose and an eye on the desired result.”*

My time with PLAN and PHLP has been filled with countless acts of passion, generosity, grace, and gratitude. I learned that change occurs when we imagine alternatives and work to achieve them. That change entails appreciating, respecting, and embracing one’s diversity and cultural background. It entails an authentic desire to truly make someone an equal and welcome partner on the path forward. It entails a lifelong commitment to honing one’s drum major instinct.



Cam Chisholm (She/Her)



**Regional Housing Legal Services
Drexel Thomas R. Kline School of Law (1L)**

Over the past several weeks I have learned how injustice continues to permeate the lives of everyone through the use of the housing market. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" is a quote from Dr. King's Letter from a Birmingham Jail. A home, as I learned, is a privilege not every individual can enjoy. Gentrification, affordability, and preservation have been continuous themes throughout this summer thus far and I am continuing to learn the privileges I have. This summer I had the pleasure of working at Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS) as a summer intern. At RHLS where the affordability of homes is their top priority, I have learned about Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) projects, what affordability looks like in the Philadelphia area, and what penalties individuals may suffer from the absurdity of the current housing market. While at RHLS, I have learned the many privileges both myself and others take for granted daily. As I have worked and lived for the past twenty three years, I have been granted the opportunity to live, eat, laugh, and love under the roof of a home that has given me a sense of self-confidence. Although I am privileged, many others are not, and Dr. King's teachings exhibit how being mindful of your privileges is integral to understanding how injustices to one threaten justice everywhere.

To maintain awareness of the social injustices that affect the lives of others while simultaneously maintaining the needs of their firms, companies should continuously engage with the community they work in. Community engagement appears in a plethora of ways and does not always look the same for every corporation or firm. However, community engagement is integral to gaining a better understanding of what people need. As a law student, who comes from a diverse background, it has been important to immerse myself into the community to understand how the work I do impacts others. Personally, community engagement appears as food drives for the heavily concentrated homeless population within the Philadelphia area. This is a social challenge that is often overlooked, and societies prescribed remedy to this issue is to ignore it. Another way to maintain awareness of the social challenges is hiring diverse students from different backgrounds to widen the range of opinions, ideas, and backgrounds. By adding fresh faces, interns are able to contribute innovative ways and ideas on pre-existing practices and intersect their diverse backgrounds with the study of law. At RHLS, to maintain awareness of social challenges that other groups face is done by hosting DEI geared events and conversations that focus on different topics. By identifying a theme, conversing with different members of the company, and incorporating current news media, it invites room for differences amongst the firm's ability to maintain awareness of social challenges. As Dr. King said, "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish as fools." By intertwining community engagement, diversifying the intern pool, and being willing to expand our horizons, the continuous challenges faced by society can begin to diminish one law firm at a time.

Dr. King's teachings served to challenge how we understand ourselves and the world around us. One of his many beloved quotes states, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." In addition to community engagement, as a way to remain mindful of the social challenges that affect society it is also important to be self-aware and continuously reflect on our experiences by using resources to your advantage. While working at RHLS, this summer, I have become more aware of the importance of the internet and how it can be utilized as a tool to comprehend the world around us. As an intern, I have been utilizing a variety of online entities, sources to write grants, and complete other projects which has brought me face-to-face with statistics such as: in Kensington 80% of individuals are not within the annual median income range (AMI), which complicates their ability to live comfortably and ensure their children and homes are taken care of. Another fact I have learned is that individuals in Pottstown are being penalized for being homeless by being incarcerated. As an intern, this challenge is not one I have personally dealt with; however, it has allowed me to reflect on the challenges that others face, as Dr. King has asked us to do.

Being mindful of social challenges as an individual and attorney is important because as people, we were put here to serve others. Dr. King's practices were focused on his commitment to ensuring that diverse individuals had equitable opportunities. By hiring diverse interns, engaging in their surrounding community, utilizing the internet as a tool, and taking time to self-reflect law firms throughout Philadelphia will continue to aid in the growth of the community. RHLS has shown me, as a first year intern, the importance of these skills while sharpening me as an individual. I have been impressed by the opportunity to work with a firm that is truly committed to providing remedies to the challenges that society faces while remaining true to their mission as a company. RHLS embodies commitment to Dr. King's primary incentives as an activist, a preacher, and a black man.

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Nic Johson (He/Him)

**Justice at Work
Villanova Law (2L)**



In a year where there has been immeasurable volatility in terms of our policies surrounding our border, and when there's a candidate running for President who stokes fear and horror into the lives of people—humans—simply seeking a better life and aiming to keep it, organizations like Justice at Work are needed now more than ever. I am excited to have been a part of an organization that takes the lead in making sure employers respect human rights, human dignity, and the right to work to create a better life for oneself, one's family, and the country. Immigrants, along with slaves who were brought and forced to settle in and provide for America, are truly the backbone of our country. Without their contributions, America could not and never be considered the greatest country on earth.

The legal field possesses the greatest challenge which is not only to keep the walls of our justice system intact, but to also strengthen them in the wake of political fights and efforts to curtail, derail, and exterminate the inclusion of diverse perspectives, walks of life, and equitable principles in our everyday operations. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., formerly of my hometown of Montgomery, Alabama, once famously said, "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." In order to forge a stronger justice system that is respectful and informed of all cultures, identities, and livelihoods that call America home, it is imperative that we meet the progress-stopping barriers where they are. Practically speaking, we must ask ourselves: what are we doing to make sure our services are accessible? What are we doing to make sure we are meeting those who need our services where they are? Most importantly, what are we doing to empower each other and grow our teams to create potential for greater change and impact?

While at Justice at Work, I have been fortunate enough to work on several cases and initiatives with the overall objective being to reach our most vulnerable in America: our immigrant population aiming to make America home.

For example, in June I worked alongside attorney and executive director Anton Andrew to springboard a plan to create an advisory board and committee, both of which would be tasked with helping the organization's goal of becoming more culturally responsive and inclusive. Thus, welcoming to all who may desire and need its services. Any public service organization serious about eliminating barriers to access and receiving services must continuously reflect upon what is and is not working. Even more importantly, we fervently agreed that conversations surrounding those reflections must involve everyone, from experts, to those whose are boots-on-ground, as well as those with lived experience.

Additionally, I worked with another attorney at JaW to assist an immigrant with obtaining a U Visa and who at the time was under an extremely strict deadline to comply with a request for evidence by the USCIS. This client was being treated much more critically by USCIS because of a lengthy criminal history. However, this client experienced a very horrific past which led him to seek a U-Visa to begin with, and as a result suffered from serious mental health issues. My job as a part of the project was to get him a public defender for one of the cases pending at the time. My mission, however, was to be empathetic and understanding, and to make sure that I was meeting him where he was as I sought justice on his behalf.

According to National Health Corps, "meeting someone where they're at means honoring and respecting where they're currently at in their life journey, not where you want them to be." (National Health Corps, n.d.). The National Health Corps describes the act of doing this as a two-step process: 1) practicing empathy, and 2) meeting yourself where you are at. (National Health Corps, n.d.) While at JaW and working with clients and on their cases, I have been able to witness firsthand what this looks like, and I can say without hesitation that I have been nothing short of amazed.

Martin Luther King, Jr., in his daily fight for justice and equality, preached empathy, lived empathy, and approached even the worst of beings with empathy. Though many criticized it, his peaceful yet consistently efficient approach to facing our nation's racial challenges head on not only caught the attention of all, but forced them to think introspectively to ask themselves: am I doing enough or what could I do better? According to the Committee for Children, possessing empathy "effects change—the change that Dr. King sought, and the change that we need in order to make the world healthier, safer, more civil, and more functional." (Committee for Children, 2017).

In the face of current challenges, it is crucial for those within our justice system and legal services organizations to remain steadfast in their commitment to justice and inclusivity. By continuing to practice empathy and meet people where they are, they bear the responsibility of building a stronger, more equitable society that honors the contributions of all its members. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would not have it any other way.

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JP Leskovich (He/Him)



Community Justice Project University of Pittsburgh Law (2L)

The future of the legal field will be shaped by how it responds to an increasingly diverse population and its needs. The US is rapidly diversifying, with population increases in communities of color and increases in people identifying themselves as disabled or LGBTQ+ to survey takers. This means that lawyers and the legal field are facing an increasingly diverse client base who have different needs, different backgrounds, different challenges, and come from different backgrounds. For the legal field to not just adequately serve its clients but serve its clients well (and it should be the goal of lawyers to not just be adequate), it is imperative for lawyers to understand the people they are helping. However, not all people from a similar background have the same story, the same challenges, the same needs. The key here is for lawyers to understand the challenges people may face due to their identity, while still understanding their unique circumstances and treating them as individuals. This can be achieved by cultivating a legal field that is not only diverse but embraces inclusion. To create this legal field, we all must lead the way, functioning as drum majors for the future.

The work to cultivate this legal field begins internally by embracing diversity and creating a legal field that includes and understands people from marginalized communities, lawyers can develop and practice the skills they need to provide all clients the best representation possible. And there is still much work to be done to create that legal field. There has been some progress in creating a diverse field that looks like the country. This is important, because the more the legal field is representative of the communities they serve, the easier it will be to create an environment of understanding and advocacy. The National Association for Legal Placement (NALP), in their 2023 annual report, said that “women, people of color, and LGBTQ lawyers continued to see incremental improvements in representation.” NALP went on to detail that women were the majority of associates for the first time, that the share of associates who were people of color rose 1.8%, and that “the progress of LGBTQ lawyers is also a high point.” (National Association for Law Placement, Inc., 2023). These numbers reflect a diversifying legal field, which can hopefully serve the needs of its diverse clients better by tapping into personal connections and experiences.

However, creating the legal field we need to truly serve our diverse client base will take more than just increasing numbers on a spread sheet. It will require creating an environment that not only includes people but celebrates them. An environment free from discrimination and overflowing with an understanding of the systemic issues that many communities face. While the legal field has made progress on diversity, it has much work to do in terms of inclusion. Despite women being a large portion of the legal field, there still is not parity in treatment: 67% of women lawyers report a lack of access to business development opportunities, 53% have been denied or overlooked for a promotion, (Kramer & Harris, 2023). Additionally, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ people, and people of color all report elevated levels of discrimination that demographic data elides. (Blanck & Wise, 2021). In particular, people with disabilities make up a majority of the people who report experiencing overt discrimination in the legal workplace. (Blanck & Wise, 2021). This disparity between diversity and inclusion, between demographic data and discrimination data, is holding the legal field back from being able to adequately serve its clients. If the legal field made an active and continuous effort to include and understand lawyers from diverse backgrounds both as members of their communities and as individuals, it would build capacity to do the same with clients.

This will not happen overnight, and it will not happen without each of us doing our part to confront biases and advocate for ourselves and our clients. This can mean approaching cases with systemic issues and analysis in mind. For example, this summer, I have done work to promote language access in the court system. When we got a case that one court was not following the state’s language access policy, thereby creating a hierarchy in legal access based on English proficiency, we did not assume it was an isolated incident. We mobilized to assess how widespread and systemic this issue could be. This means making lawyers and clients feel seen by practicing cultural competency and asking thoughtful questions that both validate their experience and seek to problem solve. These are lessons that I will take with me as I pursue a career in the law and seek to build a better system that works for everyone.

In his Drum Major sermon, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described an instinct that we all have, what he called the “drum major instinct.” It is the drive to be recognized, to be seen, to be applauded. This instinct can be destructive. It can also be constructive if harnessed for good if we become “drum majors for justice.” (King, 1968). If we take this drive and use it to be drum majors for the future, we can build a better system that reflects the diverse communities in our country and addresses their needs. Dr. King said that “I’d like somebody to mention that day [his funeral] that Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to give his life serving others.” When the time comes to eulogize me, I would like somebody to mention that day that JP Leskovich tried to give his life to build a more equitable world. I would like to somebody to say that JP Leskovich tried to be a drum major for the future.

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Kayla Martin (She/Her)

MidPenn Legal Services
Villanova Law (2L)



In 1959, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. encouraged young citizens to “make a career of humanity and to commit [themselves] to the noble struggle for equal rights” (King, 1959). Over six decades later, this challenge continues to serve as an inspiration to many. This call to action has inspired me to explore ways to serve as an advocate for social justice through academic and professional opportunities. My internship at MidPenn Legal Services has provided me with invaluable guidance and legal work experience necessary to address societal and ethical needs. By aligning with MidPenn’s vision of using “the civil justice system to improve the lives of [their] clients and communities through the provision of high quality impactful legal services,” I have gained a deeper understanding of various legal fields while preparing to advocate compassionately for justice and equal rights.

In the demanding legal profession, attorneys often find themselves at the crossroads of pursuing social justice while meeting the needs of their firm. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s sermon, “On Being a Good Neighbor,” emphasizes the importance of altruism, compassion, and empathy, qualities that are essential when faced with this dilemma (King, 1963). Dr. King illustrates this through the parable of the Good Samaritan, who, upon seeing a wounded man, focused on their shared humanity rather than their differences in race, religion, social status, or economic status (King, 1963). This act of kindness exemplifies the moral responsibility to care for and actively improve the lives of others despite our differences. This principle guided my work at MidPenn Legal Services as we worked on numerous cases that required this type of empathy, compassion, and understanding of moral responsibility to successfully address the social challenges faced by our clients. We often encountered this in Landlord Tenant Resolutions. These cases involved tenants facing eviction largely due to nonpayment of rent because of various hardships, such as job loss from medical needs or other financial constraints. These clients were subject to landlords indifferent to their predicaments who were unable or unwilling to work through options with their tenants of lower economic status. As a result, tenants were often left anxious about their future. As advocates, our role extended beyond legal counsel; we provided resources, guidance on eviction processes, and practical assistance such as rental assistance referrals. We also advocated for tenants during negotiations and hearings to secure outcomes safeguarding their homes and overall well-being. By embodying empathy, compassion, and moral responsibility we were able to navigate social challenges while fulfilling professional duties.

Dr. King further stresses the significance of empathy, compassion, and advocacy with his message “...to speak for the weak, for the voiceless...” (King, 1967). In “The Heart of Lawyering: Clients, Empathy, and Compassion,” the story of Catherine illustrates this lesson (Gerdy, 2008). Catherine excelled in legal knowledge and work ethic but struggled to connect with clients on a personal level (Gerdy, 2008, p.190). This scenario emphasizes that success in law depends more on relationship skills than intelligence alone (Gerdy, 2008, p.190). Attorneys who recognize the shared humanity in all clients, regardless of background, and can be empathetic better understand their clients’ needs, foster trust, and facilitate open communication ultimately enhancing the reputation of the legal profession and meeting client and firm expectations (Gerdy, 2008, p.190). Additionally, developing and expressing compassion is important for client interactions as it often helps clients feel their lawyer cares about them (Gerdy, 2008, p.190). This type of trust and open communication was essential for our Protection from Abuse hearings. These cases are always extremely delicate as our clients were survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Working on these cases highlighted the importance of clients from all backgrounds having equal access to representatives who are not only strategic but compassionate and relatable. I experienced this first hand with a case that involved a teenager. While our attorneys were in the courtroom advocating for her safety and well-being, I chose to stay by her side throughout the entire process. Our close age allowed her to feel comfortable with someone who could better understand her experiences. While these acts may not typically be considered part of the job in larger law firms, MidPenn’s commitment to meeting our clients’ needs allowed our group to understand the importance of these small acts in building trust with our client and her family. These actions fostered a sense of safety and facilitated open communication as we sought to speak for the victims of ongoing abuse.

Integrating empathy and compassion while also being mindful of societal and firm needs will not only lead to individual benefits but can improve lives and lead to social change (Huang, 2019). Organizations like MidPenn exemplify this balance by prioritizing client welfare alongside other firm considerations. Attorneys can learn from this approach, recognizing that meeting firm and client needs and promoting social justice are not mutually exclusive but rather essential components of legal practice. By embodying these principles, attorneys not only uphold Dr. King’s call to serve humanity but also enhance their firm’s reputation and contribute to a more just legal system.

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**Legal Aid of Southeastern PA
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As a law student, I find it easy to be distracted by honors, titles, recognition, and outward appearances. Our education and potential career choices give us numerous opportunities to achieve these things by worldly standards. In his "Drum Major Instinct" Sermon, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr reminds us:

"Jesus gave us a new norm of greatness. If you want to be important... recognized... great... wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. (Amen) That's a new definition of greatness."

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. King reflects on our innate human desire for recognition and greatness, our drum major instinct. He explains that true greatness is achieved through service to others. In today's social climate, characterized by economic inequality and societal divide, we must channel these desires and potentially selfish ambitions toward a commitment to service and justice. I firmly believe that this is the most effective way to address the pressing societal issues we face.

Research by authors such as Aaronson and Mazumder highlight the increasing economic inequality and its impact on social mobility in the United States. Their findings emphasize the importance of legal advocacy in mitigating these disparities, especially for marginalized communities. Similarly, David Brady discusses how poverty and inequality are deeply entrenched in societal structures and how essential it is to address these issues through systemic change and legal interventions.

Thanks to the MLK Internship Program and PLAN Network, I have had a summer experience illuminating the path to greatness Dr. King preaches about. At Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania (LASP), I have been immersed in legal advocacy that exemplifies the power of being a servant. The attorneys walk alongside community members daily, facing housing instability, inadequate healthcare, employment barriers, and family crises. Through this experience, I have honed my legal research and writing skills, developed a deeper understanding of the legal system, and strengthened my belief in the importance of empathy and cultural competence in legal advocacy.

The LASP organization fosters empathy and understanding toward its clients' challenges in ways that go beyond typical legal assistance. This summer, I watched the LASP attorneys fight for our community members one by one. Negotiations allowed tenants to remain in their homes; court orders provided safety and security for parents and their children; financial and medical resources were obtained. In addition to these individual victories, the LASP organization also advocates for policy changes that can address the root causes of our clients' challenges when possible. Most importantly, the legal advocates offered our clients a beam of hope in a world that otherwise seems hopeless.

My gratitude for witnessing the impact of a life of service this summer is immeasurable. Dr. King's words resonate deeply with me, "You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant." Though I may not come from familial privilege, wealth, or higher education, I, too, can make an impact through service in my community. Dr. King's Sermon reassures me of my capacity to stimulate change.

I came to law school as a 38-year-old first-generation Latina law student. I had been out of school for over 18 years. My journey includes similar scenarios and situations that our clients are facing daily. I am intimately familiar with the hopelessness, injustice, and inequality that our clients come up against. I have experienced the struggle of finding affordable housing, the fear of not having access to adequate healthcare, and the frustration of employment barriers. Until this summer, I was not sure how to channel my desire to effectuate change. The MLK Program and PLAN Network have provided me with an opportunity for growth, knowledge, and clarity for my path toward a life of service.

To echo Dr. King, if when I am gone, I am spoken of, I would like it to be said that I tried to love and serve humanity. That in a world full of distractions, I focused my drum major instinct on spreading grace and love to everyone I encountered. This is the legacy I aspire to leave behind.

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Emily Tyler (She/Her)



**Neighborhood Legal Services
Thomas R. Kline School of Law – Duquesne**

How can you make a change as a legal advocate? Beforehand, the first thing that came to my mind was winning a case - an obvious answer. Now, however, I realize that this answer only scratches the surface. True legal service, at its core, requires us to learn about our clients and have compassion towards them. We need to consider the unique difficulties they face and consider how certain outcomes will affect them. Only then can we make our clients feel heard. Only then can we make a difference.

This level of attention and care is essential in landlord-tenant cases. Housing insecurity is a widespread problem, and yet its effect is seen differently among certain populations. Most people recognize that people in poverty face a higher risk of housing insecurity, but there are many other things to consider. For example, a study in the Annual Review of Sociology found that “factors such as race, gender, family size, employment status, and neighborhood crime are important predictors of eviction.”¹ I have also found that one’s age or disability also affects people’s housing vulnerability. Moreover, housing insecurity in and of itself leads to other difficulties, especially regarding health. A study conducted in Washington found that respondents facing housing insecurity were about twice as likely to report poor health status, poor mental health for fourteen days or more, or poor health that limits activity in the past 30 days than those without housing insecurity.² Always, multiple factors and conditions are present within one client, and as legal advocates, we must approach our services through an intersectional lens. Not only is it important to assess someone’s goals, but it is essential to create a safe and warm environment when people talk with us.

I fully realized the importance of this mindfulness during my time with Neighborhood Legal Services, an organization dedicated to providing legal services to tenants in need. My responsibilities included interviewing clients and giving them tailored advice about their legal rights and remedies. Over the summer, I worked with many amazing people, but two clients in particular taught me how to accommodate their social challenges while still meeting the needs of my organization.

In the first case, I learned how to effectively communicate with a client who suffered from a mental health crisis. Here, I had a client who was unable to pay rent for four months due to her job insecurity and worsening mental health. Specifically, she suffered from severe depressive disorder and anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and a hoarding habit. She had no family, no friends, and no car. Her landlord continuously threatened to evict her, and in combination with her severe economic difficulties, the situation made my client afraid to leave the apartment. When her landlord posted a hearing notice on her door, this client reached out to me in a complete panic.

To serve this client, I needed to tell her all the logistics of going to court, such as how to get there and what to argue, but I also needed to make sure that she felt calm and safe while working with me. Thus, when I called, I talked softly and slowly, took things step by step, and gave her time to reflect when she got overwhelmed. To further accommodate her anxiety and compulsive disorder, I sent confirmations when she sent me documents. I made extra check-ins to update her on the process of my services, and I mapped out several bus routes to the court office. These things seem little, but they truly cultivated a trusting and safe relationship with this client, while allowing me to inform her of her responsibilities to be successful in her case.

The second case taught me how to tailor solutions based on a client’s unique challenges. In this situation, I served a client who had disabilities and faced several habitability issues. Because this client is 90% blind and has several missing limbs on his feet, he has trouble walking around, especially outside. Yet, at his residence, the outside railing was completely broken and there was no working outside light. As a result, this client fell down the stairs. Although he repeatedly notified his management of these issues, nothing was done to fix them, which brought him to our office.

In assessing my client’s options, I wanted to ensure that my advice was tailored to his physical difficulties, as the property’s conditions heightened his risk of injury and created unequal access to his residence. This led me to advise this client on making a reasonable accommodation, where a tenant requests a change to a rule, practice, or service to ensure they have an equal chance to use and enjoy a residence.³ In combination with the usual habitability defenses, this solution allowed the client to address his specific issues of discrimination due to his disability. As in the first case, this small effort of considering my client’s needs made such a large impact, as it provided stronger enforcement for the landlord to ensure safer access to and from the apartment.

Overall, my work with Neighborhood Legal Services has taught me an important lesson: in a system that deprives our poorest of resources and compassion, providing targeted solutions to unique challenges is vital to implementing change. Often, little efforts to accommodate go such a long way. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his speech, “The Drum Major Instinct,” “[E]verybody can serve. [...] You only need a heart full of grace, [...] a soul generated by love.”⁴ And with that, I would have to agree. When we are fueled by compassion and kindness, we are bound to make an impact, even from the little things. After all, at its root, change is born from listening to, learning from, and supporting those around us.

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Luke Watkins (He/Him)

**Community Legal Services
University of Pittsburgh Law (2L)**



In my head—or, at least in my dreams—at the end of all our lives we are judged. Not by how much money we made, or by how many followers we have amassed on social media, but by our answers to two very simple questions: What did you sacrifice and who did you sacrifice it for? That is the question of our times. It might just be the only question of some time.

Now let us be clear, I am no saint. Nor am I even all that religious. I suppose I believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ, but this belief could easily be attributed to the teachings of Mr. Rogers. Or Dr. Martin Luther King. Or my parents. I do not pose these questions to you, dear reader, from some moral high ground. In fact, I am now and forever way down in the hole. But more on that later.

The prompt for this essay is as follows: how can attorneys be mindful of social challenges while continuing to meet the needs of their firm or company? It is an important question, but I am not sure it goes far enough. Because being mindful is great, necessary even in the context of people like us. People who do have, or will have, the awesome and terrible power to write words down on paper and cause the apparatus of the state to totally transform someone's life, for good or for ill. To save or take someone's house. To save or take someone's children. To save or take someone's life.

It seems like every day I wake up and am made aware of a new cause I must keep center of mind. And I try to. I am sure you all do, too. The legal community is full of bright and passionate people, well versed in a wide variety of subjects. I am just not sure where that is getting us. We are all aware that homelessness is not an individual's choice nor fault, and yet the legal community is the reason homelessness has just been criminalized. We are all aware that banning abortion procedures leads not to less abortions but instead to more dead women, and yet the legal community is the reason Roe v. Wade is no longer the law of the land. We are all aware that police in this country need to be held more accountable when they commit wrongs, and yet the legal community is the reason for qualified immunity's invention out of thin air. A wise, funny looking old man once said, "we are who we pretend to be." I wish that were the case, because right now it seems like we are, all of us, pretending to be somebody or something powerful enough to stop suffering by bearing witness to it.

I said earlier, and I repeat again now, that this is not a condemnation from an outsider. I realize that as hopefully a future attorney, I am surrounded by glass while tossing these stones. But as Dr. King once said, "the hour is late: the clock of destiny is ticking out. We must act now!" (King 1960-a). The scary, even paralyzing truth is that no one is out there that is coming to save us. Most certainly not me. I am not sure I have even a single answer to what must be done, let alone all of them, but I do believe I just might know the right questions to ask to get the ball rolling. I found them at the bottom of the hole.

On August 9th, 2021, I had planned to take my own life. I was diagnosed with Bipolar 1 with psychotic features—a fact I only learned a few months before after my brain exploded—and I was so tired of it all. I was tired of waking up every day only to have to step into the ring with my demons. I was tired of living and life, and all the people, places, and things that go with it. I did not choose to be born into a world on fire, and now it seemed like life had covered me in gasoline. There was no way I could make it. I was deep, deep down in the hole.

However, at the bottom of the hole I found a friend. Somebody important to me took time out of their busy schedule to visit me that August afternoon. We sat on the back porch of my parents' house and watched the sun slowly set. When it was time for them to leave, I asked why they had even come at all. They told me that they had seen me fall in the hole, and that they had been down here before, and that they knew the way out. So, I made it to August 10th. Then I made it to August 11th. Then I made it here.

And here is so wonderful. I am working at Community Legal Services in Philadelphia in the Supplemental Security Income Unit, helping some of the most vulnerable people in my community obtain or retain access to a benefit that does not rid them of their struggles, but might help put food in the fridge and a roof over their head. The rules surrounding the program are archaic and punitive, representing some of the worst impulses this country's political and legal system has to offer—hated of the poor, the downtrodden, the reminders that we too might fall down the hole.

In a 1960 sermon delivered in Philadelphia, Dr. King told the crowd before him, "I should submit to you this morning that unless an individual can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity he hasn't even started living." (King 1960-b). It is the idea behind Dr. King's statement that makes me tell people I feel like I am 26 and 3 at the same time, that I have only really started living. It is also what my friend said, down at the bottom of the hole.

When my friend told me they knew the way out of the hole, I gripped them by the shirt collar and begged them to tell me. It is easy, they replied, you simply must answer one question: what do we owe each other?

Just in case you ever find yourself deep down in a hole, and no one is around to see you fall, I will tell you the answer. So, what do we owe each other, dear reader?

Well, everything.

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Chelsea Watt (She/Her)



Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project Penn State Law (1L)

In a society on the heels of a global pandemic that transcended borders, cultures, and classes, human connection and empathy are more important than ever. One of the most powerful and profound voices on the effects of empathy on humanity was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King's powerful appeal from the 1959 Youth March for Integrated Schools, "Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a better person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in," encapsulates how attorneys can integrate empathy and the dedication to social injustice into their professional lives.

Being able to empathize and understand your clients is what is at the heart of lawyering. This practice is just as important as being able to learn the law, conduct legal research, and prepare arguments. Being a well-rounded attorney means looking at the complex legal issue, which has both factual and emotional dimensions, and being able to act with knowledge of both. Legal scholar David A. Binder explained that empathy "is the real mortar of an attorney-client (indeed any) relationship." (Binder, 2012, p.48). This idea poses the question: how can attorneys practice empathy while practicing the law?

*While practicing, attorneys must balance the duty of meeting the client's needs with the duty of meeting their firm or company's needs. Luckily, practicing empathy costs nothing. It is something we can all do while still meeting the needs of our professional organizations. In *The Heart of Lawyering: Clients, Empathy, and Compassion* by attorney Kristin B. Gerdy, she explains that empathy is the ability of attorneys to experience the legal world from the client's point of view. It is being able to "walk in the skin" of your client. (Gerdy, 2013, p.19 f). There are numerous ways that attorneys can do this with their clients and, as Dr. King said, create a career of humanity.*

First, we must practice active listening and understanding. By taking the time to hear the lived experience of your client and acknowledging their hopes, fears, and concerns we can foster a strong attorney-client relationship that can induce and improve communication. If we invest time into learning the client's unique social challenges and contexts, we can employ more nuanced legal strategies that recognize the broader implications any decision would have on our clients' daily lives.

Another large facet of empathetic lawyering is the commitment to continued education. By taking the time to educate ourselves on evolving social issues and their impacts, systemic biases, and the impact that legal decisions can have on marginalized groups, we will undoubtedly serve our clients better.

Alongside education, reflection is an important practice. Regular reflection and seeking out feedback on how to better improve empathetic interaction with clients allows for the adaptation and refinement of your approach based on evolving client needs and experiences.

While interning with the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, I have learned that being able to "walk in the skin" of your client requires stepping out of your comfort zone and familiarities. In this realm of work, as seen through my experience this summer, taking an empathetic approach not only creates cooperation amongst professionals but also creates a harmonious work environment. This environment, in turn, creates a more positive impact on clients.

Attorneys within the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project are able to manage and meet the needs of the organization without sacrificing the human connection they share with their clients. This summer I have seen empathy on display in every action taken by the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project attorneys. From the deference given to voices that have lived experiences, the intraorganizational support, guidance, and education, to the passionate advocacy on behalf of clients, I have a newfound respect for the practice of empathetic lawyering.

Once my time with the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project concludes, I know that I will leave the organization with many more tools to practice in a way that is mindful of the social challenges and struggles of my clients. This experience has solidified my commitment to make a conscious effort in my time as a practicing attorney to give each of my clients an experience that at its very core is rooted in empathy, understanding, and compassion – just as it has been modeled for me by the attorneys at the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project during my summer experience.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s belief in an empathetic and human-centered approach holds true, especially in the legal profession. Here, a lawyer's ability to blend intellectual and emotional skills is crucial in advocating for clients based on their individual social experiences and challenges.

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Drum Major Instinct Speech (abridged)

This morning I would like to use as a subject from which to preach: "The Drum Major Instinct." "The Drum Major Instinct." And our text for the morning is taken from a very familiar passage in the tenth chapter as recorded by Saint Mark. Beginning with the thirty fifth verse of that chapter, we read these words: "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him saying, 'Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire.' And he said unto them, 'What would ye that I should do for you?' And they said unto him, 'Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.' But Jesus said unto them, 'Ye know not what ye ask: Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' And they said unto him, 'We can.' And Jesus said unto them, 'Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.'" And then Jesus goes on toward the end of that passage to say, "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." The setting is clear. James and John are making a specific request of the master.

They had dreamed, as most of the Hebrews dreamed, of a coming king of Israel who would set Jerusalem free and establish his kingdom on Mount Zion, and in righteousness rule the world. And they thought of Jesus as this kind of king. And they were thinking of that day when Jesus would reign supreme as this new king of Israel. And they were saying, "Now when you establish your kingdom, let one of us sit on the right hand and the other on the left hand of your throne." Now very quickly, we would automatically condemn James and John, and we would say they were selfish. Why would they make such a selfish request? But before we condemn them too quickly, let us look calmly and honestly at ourselves, and we will discover that we too have those same basic desires for recognition, for importance. That same desire for attention, that same desire to be first. Of course, the other disciples got mad with James and John, and you could understand why, but we must understand that we have some of the same James and John qualities. And there is deep down within all of us an instinct. It's a kind of drum major instinct—a desire to be out front, a desire to lead the parade, a desire to be first.

And it is something that runs the whole gamut of life. And so before we condemn them, let us see that we all have the drum major instinct. We all want to be important, to surpass others, to achieve distinction, to lead the parade. Alfred Adler, the great psychoanalyst, contends that this is the dominant impulse. Sigmund Freud used to contend that sex was the dominant impulse, and Adler came with a new argument saying that this quest for recognition, this desire for attention, this desire for distinction is the basic impulse, the basic drive of human life, this drum major instinct. And you know, we begin early to ask life to put us first. Our first cry as a baby was a bid for attention. And all through childhood the drum major impulse or instinct is a major obsession. Children ask life to grant them first place. They are a little bundle of ego. And they have innately the drum major impulse or the drum major instinct. Now in adult life, we still have it, and we really never get by 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. Everybody likes it, as a matter of fact. And somehow this warm glow we feel when we are praised or when our name is in print is something of the vitamin A to our ego. Nobody is unhappy when they are praised, even if they know they don't deserve it and even if they don't believe it.

The only unhappy people about praise is when that praise is going too much toward somebody else. (That's right) But everybody likes to be praised because of this real drum major instinct. [...] But let me rush on to my conclusion, because I want you to see what Jesus was really saying. What was the answer that Jesus gave these men? It's very interesting. One would have thought that Jesus would have condemned them. One would have thought that Jesus would have said, "You are out of your place. You are selfish. Why would you raise such a question?" But that isn't what Jesus did; he did something altogether different. He said in substance, "Oh, I see, you want to be first. You want to be great. You want to be important. You want to be significant. Well, you ought to be. If you're going to be my disciple, you must be." But he reordered priorities. And he said, "Yes, don't give up this instinct. It's a good instinct if you use it right. (Yes) It's a good instinct if you don't distort it and pervert it. Don't give it up. Keep feeling the need for being important. Keep feeling the need for being first. But I want you to be first in love. (Amen) I want you to be first in moral excellence. I want you to be first in generosity.

That is what I want you to do." And he transformed the situation by giving a new definition of greatness. And you know how he said it? He said, "Now brethren, I can't give you greatness. And really, I can't make you first." This is what Jesus said to James and John. "You must earn it. True greatness comes not by favoritism, but by fitness. And the right hand and the left are not mine to give, they belong to those who are prepared." (Amen) And so Jesus gave us a new norm of greatness. If you want to be important—wonderful. If you want to be recognized—wonderful. If you want to be great—wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. (Amen) That's a new definition of greatness. And this morning, the thing that I like about it: by giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great, (Everybody) because everybody can serve. (Amen) 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. I know a man—and I just want to talk about him a minute, and maybe you will discover who I'm talking

Drum Major Instinct Speech (abridged)

about as I go down the way (Yeah) because he was a great one. And he just went about serving. He was born in an obscure village, (Yes, sir) the child of a poor peasant woman. And then he grew up in still another obscure village, where he worked as a carpenter until he was thirty years old. (Amen) Then for three years, he just got on his feet, and he was an itinerant preacher. And he went about doing some things. He didn't have much. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. (Yes) He never owned a house. He never went to college.

He never visited a big city. He never went two hundred miles from where he was born. He did none of the usual things that the world would associate with greatness. He had no credentials but himself. He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. They called him a rabble-rouser. They called him a troublemaker. They said he was an agitator. (Glory to God) He practiced civil disobedience; he broke injunctions. And so he was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. And the irony of it all is that his friends turned him over to them. (Amen) One of his closest friends denied him. Another of his friends turned him over to his enemies. And while he was dying, the people who killed him gambled for his clothing, the only possession that he had in the world. (Lord help him) When he was dead he was buried in a borrowed tomb, through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today he stands as the most influential figure that ever entered human history. All of the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned put together (Yes) have not affected the life of man on this earth (Amen) as much as that one solitary life.

His name may be a familiar one. (Jesus) But today I can hear them talking about him. Every now and then somebody says, "He's King of Kings." (Yes) And again I can hear somebody saying, "He's Lord of Lords." Somewhere else I can hear somebody saying, "In Christ there is no East nor West." (Yes) And then they go on and talk about, "In Him there's no North and South, but one great Fellowship of Love throughout the whole wide world." He didn't have anything. (Amen) He just went around serving and doing good. This morning, you can be on his right hand and his left hand if you serve. (Amen) It's the only way in. Every now and then I guess we all think realistically (Yes, sir) about that day when we will be victimized with what is life's final common denominator—that something that we call death. We all think about it. And every now and then I think about my own death and I think about my own funeral. And I don't think of it in a morbid sense. And every now and then I ask myself, "What is it that I would want said?" And I leave the word to you this morning. If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. (Yes) And every now and then I wonder what I want them to say.

Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize—that isn't important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards—that's not important. Tell them not to mention where I went to school. (Yes) I'd like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody. I want you to say that day that I tried to be right on the war question. (Amen) I want you to be able to say that day that I did try to feed the hungry. (Yes) And I want you to be able to say that day that I did try in my life to clothe those who were naked. (Yes) I want you to say on that day that I did try in my life to visit those who were in prison. (Lord) I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity. (Yes) 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.

If I can help somebody as I pass along,

If I can cheer somebody with a word or song,

If I can show somebody he's traveling wrong,

Then my living will not be in vain.

If I can do my duty as a Christian ought,

If I can bring salvation to a world once wrought,

If I can spread the message as the master taught,

Then my living will not be in vain.

Yes, Jesus, I want to be on your right or your left side, (Yes) 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

2024 NEWSLETTER



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR...

First and foremost, we at PLAN Inc. would like to thank everyone who was involved with the overall success of the MLK Jr summer internship program, from the funders, to donors, to the programs, and to the applicants themselves. This program would not be anything without all of your engagement and continued support. This year we integrated new components into the MLK program, while enhancing previous aspects to ensure the participants had a broader focus of diversity, equity, and inclusion, specifically through the lens of social justice and intersectionality.

As we continue to grow the MLK Jr. program here at plan, please consider donating to this program in addition to all of our year-round DEIB efforts. PLAN Inc. has taken several strides in the realm of deib specifically this past year, and with your support we can continue to accomplish even more. Your donations, which are tax deductible, will help us to preserve the legacy of both the MLK Jr. internship and the MLK Jr. Fellowship program. Thank you again for your support!

We hope you enjoy our newsletter!

Sincerely,

Dr. Tevis Bryant

Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging & HR Operations



This program is changing the lives of students from marginalized and underrepresented communities, and it is showing them what is a possible career within the field of legal aid.

THE HISTORY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

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 the 2024 cohort of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Interns, and IOLTA fellows. Over the ten-week period that followed, interns gained valuable, hands-on experience under the guidance of mentors. Throughout the summer, the interns had various hands-on experiences of the work being done year-round within the network. Additionally, interns were paired with a peer mentor who is also in the cohort. Interns were intentionally paired with a peer of a different background, so they can continue learning about the nuanced experiences that those with other identities have. This allowed them to begin viewing things in legal aid from the perspective of others. This addition to the program connects organically with the teachings of MLK Jr. and his goal of shared understanding and bringing people together.

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 2024 SUMMER COHORT



**Andrew
Abdelqader**
(He/Him)

Pennsylvania
Legal Aid Network

Pennsylvania Health Law Project
Widener School of Law (2L)

Andrew Abdelqader is a second-year law student at Widener University Commonwealth Law School with a deep-rooted passion for making a positive impact through public service. His academic background includes degrees in criminal justice and communication, complemented by years of professional work experience. Raised in a multicultural environment, Andrew learned the importance of adaptability and empathy from a young age, which fueled his desire to create positive change in society. Outside of academics, Andrew finds joy in exploring other countries and cultures, culinary delights, and sports of every kind. One of his favorite quotes is “Every great accomplishment starts with the decision to try.”



**Cam
Chisholm**
(She/Her)

Pennsylvania
Legal Aid Network

Regional Housing Legal Services
Drexel Thomas R. Kline School of Law (1L)

Cameron Chisholm grew up in Abington PA from grades 5-12. Cameron graduated from Abington Senior High School and attended Albright College for undergrad where she earned her Bachelor's in English and Co-Major in History. Throughout high school, college, and law school Cameron has maintained a vested interest in literature and writing. Cameron is an avid reader who primarily reads books written by black authors. However, Cameron also maintains an interest in the underdeveloped world of personal finance.



**Nic
Johnson
(He/Him)**

Pennsylvania
Legal AID Network

**Justice at Work
Villanova Law (2L)**

Nicolas (Nic) Johnson, originally from Montgomery, Alabama, is a 2L at Villanova University's School of Law in Greater Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Nic received his bachelor's degree in political science from Spring Hill College, located in Mobile, Alabama, in 2022. At Villanova Law, Nic has been quite involved, having served as Pro Bono chair for the Black Law Students Association, as community outreach chair for the Street Law Society, as well as a Public Interest Scholar. Nic has also served as certified student attorney within the Villanova Law Caritas Clemency Clinic for the past academic year. In his spare time, Nic writes, plays the drums, and watches sports. In the future, Nic plans to do public interest and defense work in the areas of education and juvenile law.



**JP
Leskovich
(He/Him)**

Pennsylvania
Legal AID Network

**Community Justice Project
University of Pittsburgh Law (2L)**

JP Leskovich is a second-year student at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. He grew up in a family of service, with members of his family working in teaching, nursing, and the military. JP is passionate about democracy and the rule of law, working as JURIST's US Bureau Chief, and he sees legal aid as a way to ensure the law respects everyone. He worked with Neighborhood Legal Services in Summer 2023 on their tenants' rights teams, helping protect low-income tenants from eviction. In his free time, JP enjoys film and cinema, reading about queer and Jewish history, and finding ways to be artistic. He hopes to pursue a career in public interest law so he can use his legal skills to improve people's lives.



**Kayla
Martin
(She/Her)**

Pennsylvania
Legal Aid Network

**MidPenn Legal Services
Villanova Law (2L)**

Kayla Martin is a rising 3L Dean's Merit Scholar at Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, who graduated magna cum laude from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A in Criminology and Law and Society. She is passionate about advocating for social change and making a positive impact. Kayla has pursued this passion through academic and civic engagement opportunities by serving as a legal research assistant for the law school's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion department while also having served as the president of the university's Black Law Student Association and as a board member for the Criminal Law Society. Professionally, she has worked as an advocate for social justice by serving as a law clerk for the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia and at the Law Office of Peter Levin. She has also worked as an investigative intern for the Federal Public Defender for the District of Maryland and as a legal intern at The Law Office of LaSheena M. Williams. In her spare time, Kayla enjoys SoulCycle, hiking, listening to crime podcasts, completing Sudoku puzzles, and volunteering at Penn Relays.



**Rachael
Robles
(She/Her)**

Pennsylvania
Legal Aid Network

**Legal Aid of Southeastern PA
Villanova Law (2L)**

Rachael is a First-Generation law student. Her journey to law school has been unique and demonstrates the transformative power of faith, determination, and relentless hard work. Beyond her legal pursuits, she finds joy in spending time with loved ones, road trip adventures, and visiting the manatees in Florida. Driven by gratitude and a passion for advocacy, Rachael is excited to expand her legal skills and serve the communities that have shaped her upbringing and inspired her dreams of becoming a legal advocate.



Emily Tyler
(She/Her)
Neighborhood Legal Services
Thomas R. Klaczko School of Law - Duquesne University (1L)

Emily is from Pittsburgh, PA, and she currently attends the Duquesne University Kline School of Law. Growing up in a warm, tight-knit community inspired Emily to give back to her city. In particular, she is passionate about family and property law because she loves tailoring solutions to unique situations, and more importantly, these areas of law are filled with everyday people who need support in vulnerable situations. As of now, Emily has two long-term goals: not only does she seek to provide equitable legal resources to underserved individuals, but she also wants to make the legal field, itself, more inclusive by listening to, learning from, and working with people with different experiences. Beyond her career goals, Emily grounds herself by writing music and going on runs. She is grateful for this opportunity to grow as an advocate.



Luke Watkins
(He/Him)
Community Legal Services
University of Pittsburgh Law (2L)

A writer at heart and a field organizer by trade, Luke Devlin Watkins never wanted to go to law school. All of that changed, however, on May 1, 2021, when Luke suffered a psychotic break from undiagnosed Bipolar I. At the bottom of the pile of hundreds of pounds of Pittsburgh Police officers, Luke learned what it felt like to die. Except he didn't, and he is determined to do as much good for as many people as he can in the bonus time it appears he was given. Flirting with abolitionist politics before the incident, his own experience with police brutality propelled him first into law school, and now into public interest law. When he is not busy trying to "save the world," whatever that means, he enjoys spending his time with his significant other and their lovely little cat, Molly. When they are busy, he keeps himself occupied by golfing.



Chelsea Watt
(She/Her)
Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project
Penn State Law (1L)

Chelsea was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama and attended Auburn University. She is a first-year law student at Penn State Law. She is a first-generation college and law student who enjoys reading, hanging out with her cat Cleo, and watching movies with her friends in her free time. She is still exploring the different areas of law she is interested in but knows she enjoys working with low-income and underrepresented communities.

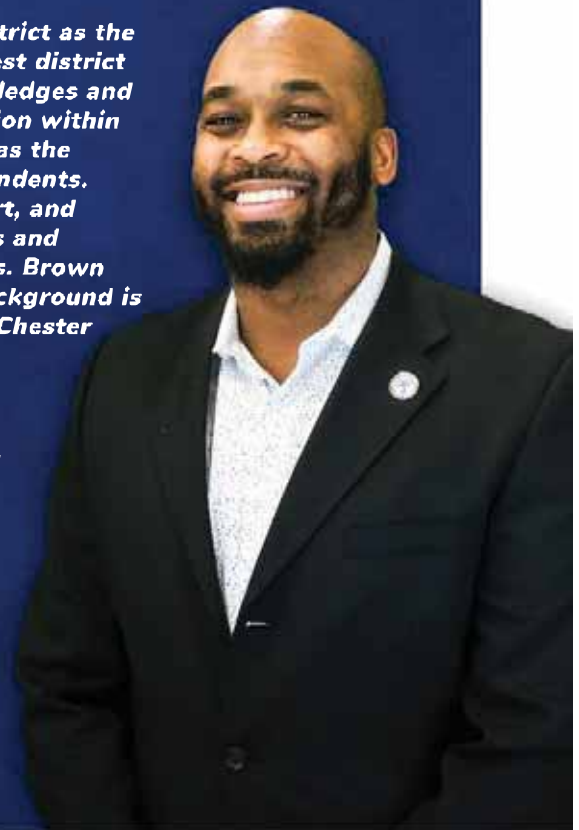
SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT

Justin Brown is a well-known author, speaker, and diversity instructor in the field of education. Brown is a qualified and professional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion leader with strong creative, analytical, communication and people skills. He has been serving in the capacity of DEI work for over 15 years. Brown possesses a core understanding of leading organizations with a wide range of perspectives, including creativity and increasing participation in programs, events, and initiatives. Brown worked in student affairs at West Chester University in West Chester, Pennsylvania for 10 years. Justin's passion for working with students developed while pursuing a bachelor's degree in public relations from Slippery Rock University. During his undergraduate tenure, Justin was actively involved on campus, working, and collaborating with various offices and departments on campus. It was during this time that Justin created the Diversity Awareness Program (D.A.P), a program dedicated to raising awareness and educating institutions about the importance of diversity, and the embracing of all cultures and backgrounds.

Justin then continued nurturing D.A.P through his graduate studies at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, while working towards earning his master's degree in student affairs in higher education. Brown is the CEO of two companies, "Diversity Awareness Program LLC" and "Onward and Upward." Diversity Awareness Program Serves as one of the country's unique diversity training institutions. In 17+ years, Brown has facilitated over 1,500+ programs at 600 different colleges and universities. "Onward and Upward" mentoring program is a comprehensive, college preparatory program that provides prospective college students with the skills and knowledge to be successful in institutions of higher learning. Our mission is to equip students and their families with the necessary resources and tools to effectively prepare for college financially. Brown truly believes that education is the great equalizer in society and that every student has the right to be educated.

Brown now works full-time at the Downingtown Area School District as the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. DASD is the 6th largest district in Pennsylvania. As the inaugural director, Brown's work acknowledges and works to address structural and procedural barriers to full inclusion within the district. There, Brown plans, directs, coordinates, and works as the internal consultant to the superintendent and assistant superintendents. Brown also provides coordination, consultation, guidance, support, and assistance to schools in working and communicating with parents and families from marginalized and historically oppressed populations. Brown envisions a district where every student regardless of color or background is encouraged to achieve their highest potential. Brown grew up in Chester County and now resides there with his wife and 2 children.

**JUSTIN
BROWN, M.A.**
CEO OF DIVERSITY AWARENESS PROGRAM (D.A.P.)



MLK Jr. 2024 Summer Internship Update

This year we wanted to focus on expanding onto the already thriving MLK program at PLAN Inc. Going into recruitment our goal was to expand the cohort that had traditionally hosted ten (10) law school students to give more students an opportunity to learn about the network and gain experiences that will aid them in their professional careers. Once recruitment concluded we had secured (12) interns each placed at a different program, but some chose to pursue other opportunities as we began orientation; however, we will continue moving forward with recruiting larger amounts on interns to ensure that we support each of the programs within the network. The program was also enhanced this year to include a new peer mentor element. This peer mentor element paired interns from different backgrounds with one another so that outside of the experiences in their host programs, they were able to lean on each other to have critical conversations regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. We have also built in programming to increase fundraising efforts that will specifically benefit the MLK internship program in the future.

MLK Jr. 2024 Fellowship Program Update

We are pleased with the work of current fellow Esteban Rodriguez at Regional Housing Legal Services. Esteban is a talented professional who has been engaging with our DEIB efforts here at PLAN Inc. as well as in the diversity programming taking place at RHLS. He is set to conclude his fellowship at the beginning of 2025. Additionally, we are happy to welcome one of our newer fellows, Mallory Turner. Mallory is placed with MidPenn Legal services, and while she is newer to the role she has been heavily involved in PLAN's diversity training, events such as the Juneteenth Gymboree, and contributing to programming ideas. We are currently working with Summit Legal Aid and Neighborhood Legal Services to hire fellows for those sites. Once those positions have been filled, we plan to keep all of our fellowship cohorts between 4 to 6 placements at a time.

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.

MEET THE FELLOWS



Mallory Turner
(She/Her)

Pennsylvania
Legal Aid Network

MidPenn Legal Services
Penn State Dickinson Law
Fellowship Term: 2024 - 2026

Mallory is a Bogue Chitto, Mississippi native that moved to Pennsylvania for law school. The best places to eat back home are usually the restaurants within gas stations and local grocery stores. Mallory enjoys going to museums, traveling, making desserts, learning about history, thrifting, reading multiple genres of books, participating in water activities, and attending live musical performances. Prior to law school, she taught and counseled GED students who inspired me to achieve my long-term career goal of becoming a lawyer. She also knew that she wanted to incorporate public interest into her post law school career due to enjoying working with students.



Esteban Rodriguez
(He/Him)

Pennsylvania
Legal Aid Network

Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS)
Temple University Beasley School of Law (2022)
Fellowship Term: 2025 - 2025

Esteban is a Staff Attorney and PLAN Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellow working on the development and preservation of affordable housing and other community development efforts. Prior to joining RHLS, Esteban was an Assistant City Solicitor in the Philadelphia Law Department's Labor and Employment Unit, representing the city and its departments in various types of litigation. While in law school, he held an internship with Community Legal Services' housing unit, worked in the chambers of U.S. Magistrate Judge David R. Strawbridge as part of Temple's Federal Judicial Clerkship Honors Program, and served as a staff editor of Temple Law Review. Esteban holds a J.D. from Temple University's Beasley School of Law and a B.A. in both Psychology and Brain & Cognitive Sciences from the University of Rochester. Prior to law school, he worked in higher education development for a national top 10 university and in zoo volunteer management. Esteban lives in East Germantown with his spouse, two very demanding cats, and one easygoing bearded dragon. Outside of work, you can find him knitting/crocheting, reading something nerdy, or looking up new restaurants to check out.

JUNETEENTH GYMBOREE EVENT

On Thursday June 13th, 2024 PLAN Inc. hosted it's first ever Juneteenth Gymboree celebration. To honor and recognize the holiday of Juneteenth. The Gymboree was a three-day series of program designed to recognize the community closely impacted by the significance of Juneteenth. The programming had an additional goal of fundraising monies to contribute to future MLK interns, fellows, and general DEIB programming at PLAN Inc. This first year included a total attendance of 52 with included individuals in the network, Black business owners, MLK interns & fellows, religious leaders, and more. Throughout the targeted fundraising campaign, the program secure \$1255.75 in donations to be used towards future diversity programs. This event highlighted PLAN Inc.'s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, and more importantly provided the MLK interns and fellows with a space to engage in the diversity component of their roles. We thank everyone who attended, participated, and donated throughout the series of programs.





To Our Mentors & Training Partners

This program could not have been successful without the longstanding dedication, support, and efforts of staff across the entire network. Specifically, we would like to thank and show appreciation for the program staff serving as supervisors and mentors to all the interns. Additionally, we would like to express our gratitude to all our colleagues who agreed to host training sessions as part of our MLK Orientation for the interns. Finally we would like to thank all of the program directors who worked with PLAN staff to select and host interns for the summer experience, the program would not thrive without your continued support.

Mentor Supervisors

*Pam Silver
Jack Stucker
Alicia Anguiano
Dan Vitek
Kathryn Wentzel
Michelle Terry
Catherine Martin
Brenda Marrero
Alexandra Morgan-Kurtz*

Training Partners

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Gio Brackbill
Ryan Cummins
James DeAngelo
Jamie Gullen
Rachel Pinsker
William McGlaughlin
Alexandra Morgan-Kurtz
Nick Matash
David K. Trevakis*

Program Directors

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