



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

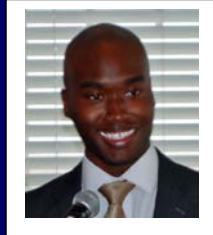
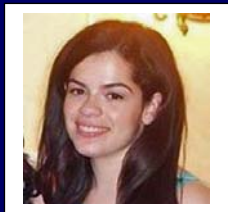
Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Summer Internship and Fellowship Program

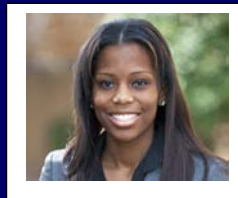
Pennsylvania
LegalAid Network, Inc.

THE DRUM MAJOR

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Martin Luther King, Jr. Summer Interns

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, Inc.
Louise Brookins Building
118 Locust Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101

August 6, 2014

To the 2014 Martin Luther King, Jr. Interns:

We are pleased to present you with the 2014 edition of **THE DRUM MAJOR**, which is a small token of appreciation for your efforts this summer.

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

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

Very Truly Yours,



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Chukwudi U. Erechukwu, *Community Legal Services*

Mingjie Gan, *Pennsylvania Utility Law Project*

Casey L. Martinez, *Community Justice Project*

Angel Murphy, *Legal Aid of Southeastern PA*

Cana R. Noel, *Pennsylvania Health Law Project*

Renu Urvashi Sagreiya, *Philadelphia Legal Assistance*

Wesley S. Speary, *Regional Housing Legal Services*

Nailah W. Williams, *Neighborhood Legal Services Association*

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The Justice League

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

Attending law school has always been my goal. Becoming a lawyer would combine my interest in law and in helping people. My parents advised me from an early age about the importance of an education and the possibilities that would arise from it. They both left the Dominican Republic as a newly-wed couple to come to America to build a better life for their children and always stressed to do something important with my life so that I would not have to struggle like they did and so that I could make a difference.

Friends of Farmworkers made an impression on me since my first interview. They all greeted me warmly, were very friendly and made me feel at ease right away. Although they are a law firm, they are a non-profit organization. They focus primarily on wage claims to farmworkers with or without status and in some limited cases provide representation for immigration relief. Outreach services to farms, schools, and communities are also among what they do in order to educate clients on their rights and their options.

So what does all that mean?

- It means taking down a company that treated workers like their own personal slaves.
- It means getting a few thousand dollars of unpaid wages to the struggling family who still sends money back to other family members stuck in worse situations, although it leaves them with very little.
- It means changing the law to get workers more rights and protections and more penalties and punishments for those who think they can use fear, intimidation and coercion to get rich.
- It means aiding in the application process of permanent residency to the United States to those who suffered abuse.
- It means educating workers so they know they when are owed overtime, what the minimum hourly wage is, receiving decent housing and working conditions.
- It means realizing the American dream after living its nightmare.

The first week of my internship I was given *Tomatoland* written by Barry Estabrook to read, and I knew that I was working at the right place. The author recounts numerous stories throughout the book about the tough and little known life of migrant farmworkers. One of the biggest stories that stayed with me was of a pregnant woman who was forced to work even while pesticides were sprayed on and

near her for hours. The bosses told her that it would not harm her although her clothes were drenched in the chemical, and they wore full body suits while spraying it. She saw the skull and crossbones sign on the canister of the chemical but trusted these people. Her child would be the third child on the farm to be born without arms and legs because of this practice. Many are fooled into staying because they are told "I will help you get a green card" or are coerced into staying through threats of deportation and harm to their families.

Injustice to even one farmworker is a threat to all. To allow any form of abuse to one is to allow it to all workers. When it becomes okay to yell, humiliate, and embarrass one worker, it becomes okay to do that to all. I know that in these weeks I have done little compared to what these attorneys have done for decades. But in speaking with the clients about their experiences, translating official documents so that they are aware of what is going on, seeing where they work, writing memos and finally putting that visa application in the mail, allows me to feel like I have played a part in preventing injustice "anywhere."

Merriam-Webster's dictionary states that an attorney is "one who is legally appointed to transact business on another's behalf" and states that a friend is "a person who helps or supports someone or something." Although *Friends* do act as the attorney on the client's behalf, they are more friends to these clients than any other attorney could be because sadly, when they come to the office, it is the first time they are being treated with respect and getting real help for no cost. The admiration the clients have for the attorneys is shown by the endless "thank yous" and constant gifts. I feel very lucky to have been given the opportunity to have known and worked with these *Friends*, but most of all to know that for a summer, I was a part of The Justice League.

Chukwudi U. Erechukwu
Rising 3L, Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law
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Limitations of Technology

The one thing that sets this summer's experience apart from last summer is that I was taking an Access to Justice class simultaneously. Although I regretted the work load that ensued, the change in perspective was tremendously beneficial. Every day, my class readings highlighted the issues I faced at Community Legal Services (CLS), and it gave me a better understanding of the realities that lower income individuals face.

In class, we discussed the access to justice gap faced by our clients, and theories about how to better address them, and every discussion conjured memories of clients I interviewed. One of our discussions involved the use of technology to address the access to justice gap. Throughout the discussion, I stood my ground on the belief that technology could provide better access to justice for lower income individuals. I even went as far as to challenge the entire class on this thought (I ended up writing my final paper on this point), but my overzealous reach was crushed by a young man in his early 20s.

This young man was the son of one of my clients who needed to retrieve some records from his employer for housing assistance. His mother was terminated because he was unable to furnish the records. For over two weeks, I tried to direct them to the right resources, and it was to no avail. Finally, with the young man's permission, I used my computer to retrieve the records in less than two minutes. In that instance, I thought of why I was able to retrieve this record in two minutes, and why a young man in his 20s was unable to do so in 20 minutes.

The answer is simple, my entire teenage to adult life had given me the necessary skill and experience to navigate an unknown data bank so that I could retrieve the records in no time. Although I was born in Nigeria, and was unfamiliar with computers until the age of 10, I had the benefit of always having a computer to work with, a job that always required me to work with computers, and interests that required computers. My experience in computers allowed me all these advantages that I never put into perspective. Unlike some of our clients, I had schools, jobs, and parents that allowed me to develop decent computer skills. This young man never got that experience, and because of this, his family was facing an eviction.

Something as simple as the ability to navigate a computer to retrieve records prevented this young man from keeping his housing. This revelation revealed the flaw in my assumption that technology could bridge the access to justice gap. My entire assumption was based on the premise that everyone who needs this innovation actually had the opportunity to access the necessary technology, and the experience to use it effectively. If this were true, then a lot of the clients that I saw this summer could have solved their own problems faster, but unfortunately, they do not have the good fortune that a kid from Nigeria had. They do not always have a good school

system that allows them to learn computers effectively at age 10. They do not have jobs that give them more opportunities to work and learn how to navigate different databases as teenagers and adults. And they did not have the opportunity to always have access to computers for 15 years.

I had all those opportunities, and they allowed me the ability to help. Had I not taken ownership of the situation, I would not have learned this lesson, and the client would have suffered. I still hold the belief that technology could address the access to justice gaps that a lot of our clients have, but there are other issues of access that exacerbate the issues that these clients face. Hopefully, better collaboration in addressing these other issues can better serve these vulnerable individuals.

Mingjie Gan
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My Ten-Week Internship with PULP

When I started my internship with PULP this summer, I had never imagined having to make a choice between putting food on the table and keeping the water running. Despite the fact that federal and state laws have dedicated funds and designed various assistance programs for low-income households, energy affordability has continued to be one of the everyday challenges confronting the poor. PULP is an organization that assists Pennsylvania's low-income households to maintain affordable utility and energy services within their homes.

On the first day of my internship, I participated in a mediation held before the Public Utility Commission (PUC) that included a utility company, energy supplier, Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA), and low-income advocates, including Community Legal Services and PULP, regarding the utility company's Customer Assistance Program (CAP) design. CAP is a legal mechanism which every utility company is required to develop for the purpose of making utility services affordable to low-income households. However; due to the various conflicts of interests, it usually takes months for parties to reach a resolution on the structure of the CAP program that will eventually be adopted and implemented. While advocates for low income households strive to lower the energy burden and make utilities affordable, the utility company wants to limit the short fall; namely, the difference between the amount due and the amount that was actually collected. The OCA, in representing utility consumers in general, tries to keep the cost of the CAP program from going higher, because every extra dollar it would cost in implementing the CAP program would spread to all the regular rate-payers, causing their bills to go higher. Advocating for the low-income households while balancing the interests of regular rate-payers, for-profit utility companies and energy suppliers, is definitely a challenge; however, this whole process is very important in assuring low-income households' voices are heard and pushing the CAP program in the right direction.

An important step in making utilities affordable to low-income households is weatherization. It is the practice of protecting a building and its interior from the elements, particularly from sunlight, precipitation, and wind that will optimize energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption. Many times the homes they live in are in poor conditions with broken windows or deteriorating roofs, which have made their utility bills unnecessarily higher. Although every utility company has a weatherization program, implementation of it is quite a different issue which, if not done properly, would not only make low-income households continue to suffer from deteriorating living conditions and high bills, but also increase the total costs of the universal service program, raising the bills of all rate-payers in general. The attorneys of PULP, Harry Geller, Patrick Cicero, and Elizabeth Marx, have dedicated their time and energy to advocating on the structure and implementation of weatherization programs, as well as policy fronts, and I was given an excellent opportunity to take part in this process. For example, I attended a collaborative meeting hosted by a utility company,

at which we discussed the possibility of inter-utility cooperation on weatherization programs including joint auditing. I also participated in discussion groups involving environmental and consumer advocates trying to reduce energy consumption and maximize energy efficiency for multi-family housing residents.

While assisting PULP during the summer, I had the opportunity to conduct legal research and write a memorandum about legal protections that are available for utility consumers who are served by municipal corporations, where the Public Utility Code is not applicable. Municipal corporations are not subject to the regulation and jurisdiction of the PUC when it provides utility services, only within its corporate limit. Issues arise when a municipal corporation charges unreasonable fees, or terminates the utility services to its residents due to the occurrence of defaults and refuses to enter into a payment plan with them. I found this particularly rewarding because it allowed me to study the entire puzzle of utility law, and at the same time, cross into the areas of tort, contract, and consumer law to find legal protections and solutions for low-income households.

I started to realize that as a lawyer, one should not just attempt to solve the current legal issues encountered by low-income groups, but should advocate for policy changes that will make it less likely for the same problems to be confronted in the future. This is something that will continue to define my perspective in my future practice of law. It was truly my honor to work alongside the very dedicated attorneys of PULP in advocating for low-income households, and I am grateful to the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network for presenting me with this great opportunity to assist in seeking justice and equality.

Casey L. Martinez
Rising 3L, University of Pittsburgh School of Law
Community Justice Project
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Better Call PLAN

It is an unfortunate truth that our society generally holds attorneys in low esteem. Congressional gridlock, partisanship, recent billing scandals, and corruption all add to the view that attorneys are motivated by profits and self-interest rather than justice. Even popular culture has turned its back on our profession. The most popular fictional attorney on television today, Saul Goodman, takes the stereotype of the morally bankrupt ambulance chaser to new extremes. This particular personification of our profession is so popular, that it has been turned into a spin-off television show.

This corrosive attitude toward attorneys has even tainted our law schools. The widespread accusations that law schools have falsified employment data and are encouraging students to take on debt loads that many will be unable to repay, have further battered the image of our profession. So why then, with job security and morale for attorneys at its lowest, have the needs for legal services never been greater? In my opinion, the answer partly lies in the fact that for too long our best and brightest graduates have been encouraged to seek financial security over the pursuit of justice. We must fundamentally change the current paradigm and instill in law students the desire to fight for social justice, and the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network is working to make this shift a reality.

The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN), through its Martin Luther King Jr. Summer Internship Program, has provided law students with the opportunity and means to spend their summer working in various legal aid programs. In doing so, they have not only placed law students with organizations that work to fight for social justice, but have also combatted the traditional model that law students should primarily aspire to work for large law firms. For me, this summer has been an invaluable experience that has further deepened my belief that I should use my legal education to better the lives of others.

This summer I worked for the Community Justice Project (CJP) in Pittsburgh. Unlike traditional legal services programs that work one-on-one with clients in need, the CJP focus on fighting injustice and vindicating the rights of its clients on a macro level. The CJP pursues mainly class action law suits with the aim of not only finding justice for the individual class members, but also changing policy on a broader level. Class action law suits are a particularly powerful tool for effecting policy change in that they put large scale actors on notice even when the individual claims of each plaintiff are too small to pursue through a traditional law suit.

Over the course of its history, the CJP has fought to protect the rights of some of the most vulnerable members of society, including undocumented immigrants¹ and

¹ See Lozano et al. v. City of Hazleton, 620 F.3d 170 (3d Cir. 2010).

recipients of public housing assistance.² Unfortunately, recent legal decisions that have further eroded the separation of money and politics have made organizations like the CJP even more vital to our community. With our law makers becoming more and more dependent on the money of large donors to keep themselves in office; individuals, particularly those with scarce economic resources, have been left without a voice to represent them. The civil courts are increasingly the only avenue through which individuals can take on large scale actors and find justice. The CJP provides its clients with valuable legal resources without regard to their ability to pay. Working for the CJP this summer has provided me with the opportunity to conduct substantive legal research on some of its cases and has also allowed me to work one-on-one with clients.

While the CJP focuses mainly on class action law suits, they also host legal fellowships which provide some of the more traditional one-on-one legal aid services. The CJP has a full time attorney who focuses on wage theft claims and immigration relief for undocumented immigrants. Many do not realize that undocumented people are particularly vulnerable members of society. Their lack of legal status often makes them easy targets for theft and extortion. During my summer, I was able to assist in client interviews and work on applications to provide undocumented clients with some form of legal status. I feel a personal connection with undocumented immigrants. I am the grandson of a migrant farm worker from Mexico, and I grew up in an impoverished part of California where many of my friends and classmates did not have legal status. I know all too well the opportunities that citizenship brings, and the disadvantages that a lack of legal status creates. My work this summer has reinforced my desire to become an immigration attorney so that I may provide legal assistance to vulnerable populations such as undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers.

Through its grass roots efforts to assist those in need, PLAN has made strides in restoring the pride in our profession by proving that justice is for all, not just those with the financial resources to hire a private attorney. With the Martin Luther King Jr. Summer Internship Program, PLAN has worked to inspire law students to seek a career in the public interest, and has provided the means for us to assist these important organizations over the summer. For too long, our profession has made profits and financial success the top priority and has relegated the search for justice and social good to an afterthought. If our profession is to live up to Dr. King's legacy, we must act in concert to challenge law students to dedicate their careers to fighting for change and social justice. Only after we return to the noble roots of our profession, the pursuit of justice and equality, will society again view us in the mold of fictional characters such as Atticus Finch and less like Saul Goodman.

² See Thompson et al. v. Altoona Housing Authority et al., 2011 WL 7039526 (W.D. Pa. Nov. 9, 2011).

Angel Murphy
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A New Perspective on a Lawyer's Role

Lawyers play a plethora of roles in order to zealously advocate on behalf of their clients. Of these roles, the most important include that of an evaluator, negotiator, and advocate. In their role as advocate, a lawyer delivers information to clients regarding their legal rights and obligations and explains the best option moving forward. As a negotiator, a lawyer sets out to achieve a just outcome for the client within the realms of upholding their professional responsibility to the prestige and dignity of the legal community. As an evaluator, a lawyer makes sound determinations of how the legal issues the client presents them with align with the enforcement and upholding of the law.

While interning with the Norristown office of Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania, I was afforded the opportunity to see and become accustomed to playing all of these roles on behalf of the indigent clients residing in the Montgomery County area. From litigation techniques and procedures to tedious policy and research memorandums, my experience has been all encompassing. As a rising 3L, I set out on this internship to get more exposure to and experience with civil litigation procedures in preparation and practice for the upcoming bar examination, and in my time here I have done just that.

I worked on legal issues relating to employment law, consumer law, family law, landlord tenant and homeownership. The most rewarding of these were the custody cases where I was able to inform parents, guardians, and even grandparents on their right to make amicable amends before they proceeded to open a case in court. Since there is no fundamental right to counsel in civil matters, many people are seeking the services and assistance of Legal Aid in search of assistance with and counseling for an array of legal matters. Many times these issues are unique to those individuals who are plagued with the realities of an unequally situated society. Therefore, it was important for me in my role as an intern and liaison to my supervising attorneys to ensure that everything I did was in accordance with making sure the client walked away feeling satisfied with the services received. Such services varied from providing clients with general information about their legal rights and obligations to actual representation in the courtroom.

Reflecting more on the role of lawyers, during my time with Legal Aid, I have learned that although the role is more active in the litigation process, lawyers also play an important role in operating the system of justice by making important moves procedurally. In every case that I worked, I was sure to keep in mind that a client's status as indigent and not in a position to afford an attorney does not mean that they should suffer in getting anything less than adequate representation. As the late great Martin Luther King Jr. has so eloquently stressed, "law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and when they fail in this purpose, they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress." If we are ever

going to attain the progress that Dr. King spoke of, we must first be able to connect, strategize, and execute, which are the exact skills that I have acquired this summer with Legal Aid. While engaging, communicating, and advocating on behalf of clients who come from a diverse array of circumstances, I have learned just how important my role is in the fight towards justice for all. I am now empowered more than ever to continue my journey as an aspiring attorney and future social engineer in the public interest sector of the law.

There is a host of hands-on skills that I have learned this summer, including but not limited to, proper courtroom etiquette, advanced research and writing skills, client communication, and exposure to a diverse group of legal issues. Within this learning I have also had the opportunity to gain some intangible learning experience in working and flourishing with those individuals who need legal representation the most. My time here with Legal Aid has been rewarding and fulfilling. I have worked with seasoned attorneys who have done nothing short of showing me the way and pointing me in the right direction of how to move forward in laying the foundation for a public interest position of my own.

Cana R. Noel
Rising 2L, Temple University Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law
Pennsylvania Health Law Project
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The Things That Matter

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“In the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one should go broke just because they get sick,” stated President Barrack Obama. Unfortunately, access to quality healthcare continues to remain a luxury in this country. As an intern at Pennsylvania Health Law Project, I was able to see firsthand how difficult it is for low-income Pennsylvania residents to navigate the healthcare system. I worked with clients who were forced to choose between paying for groceries and using the money for life-sustaining prescriptions. How do you choose between the things that matter the most in life: food, water, electricity, medicine? These stories of sacrifice were common among my clients. With every phone call I received from a new client, I felt as if such decisions were in my hands. I told the clients whether or not we could assist them, what healthcare coverage they may or may not be qualified for, and ultimately, if they would have to continue to make these unbearable sacrifices.

Prior to this internship, I was aware that many people in this country lacked quality healthcare and that the Affordable Care Act was implemented to try to remedy this problem. What I didn’t know, however, was the complexities involved with being found eligible for medical assistance and the intricacies involved with applying for such services. Imagine being told that you are poor, but not poor enough to qualify for medical assistance; or being told that one of your children qualifies for medical benefits, but the other doesn’t. Many of my clients faced such predicaments. I remember spending hours doing mathematical calculations to inform one of my clients that she was ineligible for medical coverage, because she was twenty-eight dollars over the income limit. I also had clients who were eligible for medical assistance, but because they did not fill out the correct form, they were being denied services.

My job at PHLP was to determine whether such clients were eligible for medical assistance and direct them to where to apply for such services. While this seems simple enough, the work at PHLP was often quite challenging. There are distinct requirements for the hundreds of medical assistance categories that exist, and it was my job to figure out if our client could fit into one of these categories. Most clients called not only about themselves, but also about their spouses and children who also lacked health insurance. At times it was like navigating a complex maze to find just the right category. Unfortunately, this wasn’t the hardest part. The most difficult part of my job was informing clients that despite all of our efforts and research, they were not eligible for any category.

While these were some of the bleaker moments of my internship, there were also great, uplifting moments. I worked with a client for weeks who was struggling to

obtain health coverage for herself, her husband and her daughter. The whole family had an assortment of medical issues and didn't have money for medical prescriptions. The mother, who had a heart condition and needed life sustaining medication, stopped purchasing her prescriptions, so she could afford to purchase medicine for her husband and her daughter. There was a period of time when I didn't receive a phone call from her for weeks. She told me that she stopped paying her electric and phone bill, so she could use the money for an inhaler for her daughter. Although her situation was grim, whenever I spoke to her on the phone, we had very pleasant conversations. She always laughed and made jokes and told me that laughing was the only way to prevent her from crying. I became determined that I would find some way to help this family receive health coverage. Through days of research and calling the County Assistance Office, I was finally able to get the whole family on medical assistance. Moments like these made me realize that there is no other job I would rather do.

In addition to the day-to-day work I did with clients, I participated in public policy initiatives. PHLP works with state agencies and other organizations to produce fundamental changes in the Pennsylvania healthcare system. The challenges that many of our clients face stem from the policies and procedures implemented by the state legislature. PHLP advocates through conferences, newsletters and other avenues for improved healthcare policies. I enjoyed working on several research projects that proposed systematic changes to the healthcare industry throughout Pennsylvania.

I truly cannot thank the staff of PHLP and Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network enough for selecting me as a Martin Luther King Jr. intern and giving me such an eye-opening experience. I hope to continue my work in this field and will use the skills gained from this internship to be a strong advocate for vulnerable communities in need of health coverage. I want to continue to provide the things that matter, to the people who need it the most.

Renu Urvashi Sagreiya
Rising 3L, Boston College Law School
Philadelphia Legal Assistance
Philadelphia, PA

Harnessing My Drum Major Instinct

I admit I am guilty of possessing the drum major instinct. Like many, I have "a desire to be out front, a desire to lead the parade, a desire to be first." But I, like Martin Luther King, Jr. did, aspire to someday become a drum major for justice. I decided to join law school because I recognized the many injustices in our society. I wanted to dedicate my life to righting wrongs, uplifting those living in poverty and making lasting systemic change. I believed that the law is an important tool and could and should be used to protect everyone from the injustices that plague our communities.

This past summer, I was privileged to serve as an advocate at the Custody and Support Assistance Clinic (CASAC) at Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA). In this role, I assisted low-income parents, grandparents, and caregivers with a variety of their family law needs, ranging from child custody, child support, protection from abuse and divorce. Each client had a story to tell, and many of them were heartbreaking or frustrating, and all were deeply intimate.

PLA's services are so crucial for the Philadelphia community. The clients that seek its services cannot afford legal representation and are among the most vulnerable individuals in society. These clients come to PLA at one of the most difficult times of their lives. Each client's situation is so personal to them and the stakes so high that it was often difficult not to feel personally caught up in the dramatic events I heard about every day. Many of CASAC's clients are survivors of domestic violence and other forms of abuse, and it was the help I was able to provide to these clients, and to those in similar desperate situations, that was the highlight of my summer. I will never forget the woman who fled her abuser and was living in a battered women's shelter with her four children and needed our advice to empower her to face her abuser in court over a custody battle. Or the man who was terrified that he would never see his daughters again after their mother disappeared with them with no explanation or contact information. Or the woman who was continually being harassed by the father of her children and just needed someone to listen to her story and advise her of her options. I feel privileged to have been someone to whom these clients could tell their stories and that I was able to work for an organization which provides people what they are most looking for in these trying situations: knowledge that someone cares, hope that there is something to be done, and the information necessary to strengthen them to take action. I realized that sometimes the most grateful clients were not the ones who were just given a legal solution, but rather those who were made to feel that another human being felt they were important enough to listen to their plight. Clients have shown me the strength and determination of the human spirit in the midst of adversity; a strength that I hardly fathomed. The persistence of clients to thrive in the midst of adversity has allowed me to gain a greater admiration for the innate abilities of human beings, and it has also compelled me to be more appreciative of the opportunities I have been given in my life. Finally, this experience has taught me to

never make assumptions, but rather to treat every client as an individual with a mosaic of life experiences that have culminated in him or her seeking legal help at a particular moment in time.

I am grateful for the opportunity to see how I can put my law degree to good use upon graduation and to see firsthand the difference that legal empowerment can make in someone's life. As someone who recognizes my own drum major instinct, I am proud that two years of law school has not changed the person I am. I remain devoted to public interest law and being part of the force that will change society for the better. My internship with PLA has been amazing, rewarding and incredibly beneficial in helping me become the drum major and public interest lawyer I want to be. I hope to carry the lessons I've learned from both the clients and the attorneys at PLA throughout my life.

Wesley S. Speary
Rising 3L, University of Pittsburgh School of Law
Regional Housing Legal Services
Pittsburgh, PA

Harnessing the Drum Major Instinct

In his *Drum Major* sermon, Dr. King spoke of what he called the “drum major instinct,” an internal drive that compels us to seek recognition and greatness. Dr. King spoke of the perils that await us if we allow that drum major instinct to go unchecked and try to acquire fame and fortune for their own sake without regard to other people. Along with his words of warning, Dr. King also offered words of inspiration and advice on how to harness our own drum major instinct and focus and develop it toward the end of doing good for others. Although I had not heard or read Dr. King’s *Drum Major* sermon prior to starting down my current career path, the concepts of his sermon have guided my choice to seek a public service career and to intern with Regional Housing Legal Services (“RHLS”) and Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (“PLAN”). I perceive the legal services that RHLS and the other PLAN members provide to those who would otherwise not be able to afford them, as a necessary means for combating the harm that the drum major instinct’s negative aspects cause and for developing the instinct’s positive aspects.

While rereading Dr. King’s *Drum Major* sermon in order to write this essay, I observed that I am not above the struggle to rein in my own drum major instinct. Before reading the sermon, I wanted to write something that was so good that it would convince people that I am an intelligent writer. As I read the sermon, though, I thought about the purpose of this essay in light of Dr. King’s words. I realized that while my essay is a reflection on my experience with RHLS and PLAN, the essay’s purpose is not to show how great and wonderful I am. Yes, the essay does need to be worthy of publication, but its purpose, at least for me, is to communicate to others how legal services have helped to harness and can continue to help harness the drum major instinct for the greater good of society. After I finished reading the sermon, I refocused my essay to discuss how legal services in general and my summer internship reflect the concepts of which Dr. King spoke in his sermon.

In his *Drum Major* speech, Dr. King spoke of the church as a place for all people to gather and receive equal treatment and recognition, which is an idea that applies more broadly to society as a whole. I would venture that those of us who have worked in and who continue to work in legal services recognize and embrace the fact that all people have equal value and deserve equitable treatment. We also recognize that unfortunately, there are those people who do not see others as having equal value and who do not believe that everyone deserves equitable treatment. People who regard themselves as better than and disregard the plights of others are tuned in only to the negative beat of their drum major instinct. They listen to their compulsion to amass wealth and property in a way that shows no regard to the harmful consequences to others. As a result, many people are left without the proper and adequate necessities that we all need to survive, including clean, safe, and affordable housing, jobs (thereby having a means to provide for themselves and their families), medical care, etc. Those folks must struggle to find a way to simply survive from one day to the next. Whether

those folks' struggles lie in the court room, the living room, the workplace, or out in the open streets, they need the assistance of legal services to combat the negative consequences of a drum major instinct run amok in our society.

Along with other PLAN members, RHLS helps to lead the struggle to clean up after the selfish and neglectful drum majors while trying to foster the development of the benevolent drum majors. For example, at RHLS, we have been dealing with a matter that involves an absentee manufactured housing community owner who (presumably to make greater personal profit) neglected to pay property taxes, neglected to pay for municipal services like sewage, and neglected to pay for maintenance of even the most basic of needs, such as the community water supply. Rather than fixing the problems when confronted with legal action by various agencies, the owner simply abandoned the community and its residents. Confronted with inadequate living conditions and (for some, at least) the possibility of losing their homes, residents banded together and came to RHLS for help. During the process, rather than trying to secure their self-interests in their individual homes and lots, members of the residents association have been working toward the betterment of the community and improving everyone's living conditions. The association has worked to bring their community water supply into compliance with state regulations, eliminate waste and other unsafe conditions, beautify the community, and unite residents.

Like all of us, though, the association is not infallible. Sometimes the association's officers start to think and act as though their ideas and solutions are the best and only options for the community. When that starts to happen, we as legal service attorneys become more than just dispensaries of legal advice and must rein in the officers' drum major instincts. In addition to being their legal aides, we function as their equitable guides. Recognizing that the community has gone such a long time without adequate services and that the officers want to avoid perpetuating or repeating past inadequacies, we have to rein in and redirect their thoughts, feelings, and energy to the original purpose of making the community better for all residents. As we try to guide and refocus the officers' and the association's drum major instincts, we ask them to take into account all of the residents' concerns and needs. By reinforcing an inclusive, cooperative process, we hope to help the community achieve the ideals and principles of equality that Dr. King discussed in his sermon.

Just as the officers in the residents association needed reminders that their drum major instinct may be tuned to the wrong key, I have had to check my own drum major instinct. From time to time I need to remind myself that I do not have all of the answers and that people should not listen to me exclusively. For example, when I started attending meetings on community land trusts, I thought that I had learned enough on the topic that people should listen to and follow exactly what I had to say. However, I found out very quickly that I was not an expert on the subject and that I clearly did not have all of the answers. I had overlooked things such as considering other people's perspectives and taking the time to learn what community members actually want. Although I had the desire and ability to contribute something of value to the discussion, so did everyone else. Regardless of how "good" I thought my contribution was, or if it actually was good, I could not offer it at the expense of excluding others' contributions. I had to set aside my ego, my desire to be the smartest person in the room, and actively listen to and engage in open discussion with others. I

took control of my drum major instinct and refocused my energy on contributing my knowledge and combining it with that of other group members.

Along with the challenges of how we address the drum major instinct in others and how we address the ways in which our own instinct affects our interactions with others, comes the recognition that in order to accomplish things, sometimes you simply have to follow the drum major's lead. If you are someone who wants to do great things that benefit others, you need to acquire the knowledge, skills, and ability to accomplish those tasks. In addition, you need to establish a level of credibility that shows others that you know what you are doing and convinces them to give you opportunities. Once you have the skill set, credibility, and support, you can maneuver yourself to a position of influence, from which you can better work to reach all of the goals that you have set for yourself. Ideally, as you complete each task and reach each goal, you will see the rewards of your labor in the improvement of other people's lives.

For legal aid attorneys, part of playing and marching to the drum major's lead starts in law school. You study for many hours, write and rewrite papers, meet with professors, and take exams that are several hours long. In addition, you do summer internships (preferably in a field in which you want to practice) to gain experience and start building a professional reputation and network. Maybe you do an internship or work at a law clinic during the academic year, also with the goal of learning more, doing more, and becoming more established in the legal community. This three-year part of the performance ends with a flurry as you study for and take the bar exam, without which those three years and thousands of dollars may mean nothing. You do all of that to get a special, exclusive license that allows you to practice the law. You also do it to show future employers that you are their best option and that they should hire you.

Although all of the work and achievements to become a lawyer may seem ego-driven, without them, potential employers may never hire you; they may never even bother to do more than glance at your resume. Even if you are hired, if you have not done enough to establish credibility in the eyes of other attorneys, they may never take you seriously. Because of that, in order to become a legal services attorney and someone to whom people will listen, we play to our drum major's lead. Over time, though, we can learn to control the beat as we play, becoming both the drummer and drum major. Once we reach that point, our service to society and not our personal image will hopefully be a leading example for others to follow and emulate as they learn to harness their own drum major instinct.

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The Drum Major Instinct: A Desire to Serve and Commitment to Justice

“Law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and when they fail in this purpose they become dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

Looking back on my life, I have come to believe that I was born to serve. Although there were times of doubt and feelings of inadequacy, my father would always remind me “to whom much is given, much is expected.” Those words often replay in my head, providing me with the strength and desire to dedicate my life to service. With that in mind, I began to do so in many different capacities some of which include a mission trip to Rwanda, helping those displaced by Hurricane Sandy and coordinating community outreach programs as a member Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. And although on paper, those experiences may appear to be one-sided, one thing that I have learned is that service is not really about what you can do for others; for me it is much deeper than that. Service is about using the tools God has equipped me with to build relationships, trust, and most importantly, to effectively listen to the needs of others so that one day those experiences may be transformed into change.

In Dr. King’s sermon, he speaks on “The Drum Major Instinct,” which he defines as a desire for greatness and leadership that many have possessed throughout history. A dream that is harmless at its conception, however, when one fails to harness it, often becomes obsessive, impulsive and destructive. What once began as merely a desire, quickly converts into selfishness and a belief of superiority, which in turn results in the oppression and the unjust treatment of others.

Unfortunately, history has a way of repeating itself, and although it is easier to believe that we live in a different world and that we are therefore a different people than those Dr. King spoke of in 1968, we should not use that belief to blind ourselves from reality. There are still many changes that need to be made in our society. Although change will be difficult, we should not allow difficulty to be used as a means to prevent progress.

It is with that belief that I chose to pursue a career in public interest law, as I believe that the law can be used to positively impact the lives of others, and it is my way of fighting the injustices that I have always struggled with and fought against. However, through my studies I have come to realize that while the law can be used to promote progress, it can also have the opposite effect when misinterpreted, unjustly administered, or when one is misadvised of their rights. This became even more apparent during my internship experience with Neighborhood Legal Services Association (NLSA) along with an increasing awareness that socioeconomic

background plays a major role on the disposition and effect that a law has on an individual. As James A. Baldwin declared, “anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor.” Whether an individual was born into it or it resulted from a series of unfortunate circumstances, those facing poverty have an increased likelihood of enduring the adverse impact of the law, due to a lack of available resources, the increased chance that they will be taken advantage of as a result of not knowing their rights, and the fact that for every legal services attorney there is often an infinite quantity of cases.

All these issues bring me back to 1968, when Dr. King emphasized the importance of redefining what it means to be great, by encouraging us to do so through our service to others. Like Dr. King, I strive to be a “drum major” for justice, not just through my own instinct and desire to not only protect the legal rights of others by advocating on their behalf, but also to create and direct them to resources that can improve their circumstances.

I was able to begin my journey this summer as an MLK intern with NLSA, where I served as a certified legal intern, under the supervision of Ms. Barbara Kern. Every day that I set foot in the office, I was granted the opportunity to inform clients facing eviction of their rights under Pennsylvania law and point them toward resources that could further assist them. I also went to several hearings where I was able to not only advocate on behalf of a client, but also to use the law to achieve a more favorable outcome. With that said, although I worked extremely hard and there were times where I felt discouraged, I was grateful for the opportunity to see hard work pay off in the lives of others, and I know that every hour spent was worth it.

While I know that I am just beginning my journey, and I have a lot more to learn, I know that this is a summer that I will never forget. I am grateful that I was awarded the opportunity to participate in such a great program.

PROGRAMS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA LEGAL AID NETWORK, INC.

- Community Justice Project**
- Community Legal Services**
- Friends of Farmworkers**
- Laurel Legal Services**
- Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania**
- MidPenn Legal Services**
- Neighborhood Legal Services Association**
- North Penn Legal Services**
- Northwestern Legal Services**
- Pennsylvania Health Law Project**
- Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project**
- Pennsylvania Utility Law Project**
- Philadelphia Legal Assistance**
- Regional Housing Legal Services**
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Services**

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN)



Specialized Programs
 These programs provide statewide legal expertise for addressing specialized legal problems or serving populations with special needs.

- Community Justice Project (CJP)
- Pennsylvania Health Law Project (PHLP)
- Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP)
- Friends of Farmworkers (FoF)
- Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP)
- Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS)

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