


PUBLIC
DEFENDER
CORPS

Because Quality Representation is Everyone's Right

FELLOW PROFILES
Class of 2011



Public Defender Corps Fellow

Ashley T. Adams

Host Organization: Tuscaloosa County Public Defender

Chief Defender: Joseph Van Heest

Type of Defense Work: Adult, Juvenile, Immigration, Felonies, Misdemeanors

City, State: Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Law School: University of Tennessee College of Law



Q&A with Ashley

What inspires the work you do?

My mother is my inspiration because no matter who you are (poor, rich, homeless, gay, black, white, etc.), she is genuinely nice to everyone and treats everyone with respect. I try every day to live by her example.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I chose to work in this community because it is familiar to me and I hope to be able to use this familiarity in my career. Although I am not from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, I am from the South. As a Southern public defender, who comes from a low income background, I hope to show my clients that someone who has experienced a lot of the same things they are going through, who understands them and their situation, is now in a position to help them.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

I chose a career in indigent defense because I was appalled (and still appalled) at the lack of concern there seems to be for protecting the constitutional rights of the poor.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am most excited about getting the chance to help people and being a part of a community of defenders.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

Working with social issues (poverty, race, gender, etc.) has always been a passion of mine. Public interest work provides the opportunity to combine my legal skills and passion for working with social issues.

What is your hometown?

Summerville, Georgia

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Felipe Alexandre

Host Organization: Monroe County Public Defender's Office

Chief Defender: Timothy Donaher

Type of Defense Work: Adult, Juvenile, Immigration, Felonies, Misdemeanors

City, State: Rochester, New York

Law School: Indiana University Maurer School of Law



Q&A with Felipe

What inspires the work you do?

Thurgood Marshall

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I chose Rochester because of its vibrant culture, peaceful lifestyle, and growing immigrant community. With my interest in immigration law and the immigration consequences of criminal dispositions, I hope to educate the community, prosecutors, and judges on how we can satisfy the ends of justice without creating unconscionably unfair results, like deportation and family separation.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

I believe that genuinely good people occasionally make bad choices. I also believe that crime is often a consequence of one's circumstance and not one's personality. I think it's easy to point the finger and demonize someone accused of wrongdoing, but it takes real courage to do what is often seen as unpopular and defend the interests of the alleged wrongdoer by making the government prove its case against that person. Indigent defense is critical to the proper functioning of our justice system because the prosecution should be held to the same burden in every case, regardless of the defendant's financial means. The contrary would make a mockery of our justice system and our criminal procedure jurisprudence.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I'm excited about being at the forefront of issues related to indigent defense and learning what I can do to improve it. I look forward to the trainings, mentoring, and networking with people who share my passion for improving the system for indigent defendants, one case at a time. I hope to use my training and experiences to remind people, both lawyers and laypersons, that our clients are individuals with real needs - not just another file we are eager to close.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

My plan as a 1L was to be a corporate attorney in a big American firm in China. With Chinese language skills and a deep fascination for its culture, I dreamed of bringing international businesses to China and helping them weave through the cultural, linguistic, and legal challenges of doing business there. Sure enough, I landed a summer internship with a big law firm in Beijing; however, after a week of doing the work, I realized that it wasn't for me. It wasn't satisfying because some key ingredients were missing from my life. Before law school, I had pictured my career as an attorney involving meeting with different people on a daily basis and helping them resolve issues that were crucial to them. I found that in a big firm, my daily interactions were limited to my computer and an occasional

meeting with partners. The most disturbing discovery, was that the issues I worked on were not “crucial” to me. They might have been crucial to some eager shareholders, but they lacked that sense of urgency and plight to motivate me and trigger my inner passions. That’s when I decided that perhaps public interest was the path for me. Sure, I have taken a tremendous pay cut from leaving the corporate world, but I now enjoy the privilege of enriching my soul with every person I help. From helping people recover unemployment benefits and fight for lost wages, to helping non-citizens resolve immigration issues, to assisting criminal defendants in their cases, my public interest experiences have confirmed over and over again that for me, there is no other path but this one. My parents fought long and hard as immigrants to give me the opportunities I’ve had in life; using my law degree to give back this way just makes sense.

What is your hometown?

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Beverly Beaver

Host Organization: Defender Association of Philadelphia

Chief Defender: Ellen Greenlee

Type of Defense Work: Juvenile

City, State: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Law School: Rutgers University School of Law



Q&A with Beverly

What inspires the work you do?

There is a great amount of inequality in this world. All too often the voices of societies most vulnerable are silenced by the uncaring world around them. Children, in particular, are uniquely vulnerable because society often ignores their plight. I have always wanted to be the person who has the honor and privilege to speak on their behalf, to ensure their stories and voices were not just heard, but understood. Most importantly, I want to ensure their rights are upheld and enforced.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I chose to work in Philadelphia because I was born and raised in the area. Living in South Jersey my entire life, Philadelphia was naturally a part of my world, and became the city I cared about. I am very mindful of Philadelphia's proud legal tradition, and the great public interest attorneys who practice here. My goals in Philadelphia are simple: to provide my clients with the highest quality of representation possible by showing others their humanity; provide an outlet for their voices to be heard; and leave no stone unturned.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

As lawyers we are given a gift – understanding the law. I believe we should use this gift to help societies most vulnerable. The indigent defendant is unsympathetic to most, but his rights must be upheld and his voice must be heard. I want to be the person who ensures justice exists in the world for each defendant I encounter.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am excited to be a part of a national network of defenders, which will allow us to share successes and failures in order to better represent our clients. I'm very fortunate to be working at the Defender Association of Philadelphia and have been given an amazing opportunity to learn from some of the very best public defenders.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

I believe as lawyers we have a responsibility to use our knowledge of the law and our legal training to help protect society's most disadvantaged. To that end, I have been involved in public interest work since I began law school. Having the opportunity to one day practice public interest law is the reason I went to law school, the reason I chose Rutgers and it is why I am honored to be an Equal Justice Works Public Defender Corps Fellow.

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Kate Benward

Host Organization: Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy

Chief Defender: Damon Preston and Elizabeth Curtin

Type of Defense Work: Immigration, Felonies, Misdemeanors

City, State: LaGrange, Kentucky

Law School: University of Washington School of Law



Q&A with Kate

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I am excited about my placement in La Grange, Kentucky, which serves a large population of immigrants who face especially devastating life consequences from contact with the criminal justice system. I look forward to gaining expertise in the intersections of criminal and immigration law, and plan to work with local immigrant rights groups to combat racial profiling and the increasing role of law enforcement in enforcing immigration policies.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

To me, the racial and class inequities of the criminal justice system are among the most pressing civil rights issues of our time, and indigent defense is at the front line of this struggle.

What is your hometown?

Seattle, Washington

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Adam Braunbeck

Host Organization: Louisville–Jefferson County Public Defender Corporation

Chief Defender: Daniel T. Goyette

Type of Defense Work: Adult, Juvenile, Felony, Misdemeanor

City, State: Louisville, Kentucky

Law School: Duke University School of Law



Q&A with Adam

What inspires the work you do?

The attorneys and clients I met while interning with public defender organizations. The attorneys because they are the kind of lawyers I want to be, and the clients because they remind me why public defenders are so important.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I grew up in New Albany, Indiana, a suburb of Louisville. This community helped raise me and make me the person I am today, but I haven't lived there in more than ten years. Now I have the opportunity to use what I've learned since I left to give something back in return for everything I've received.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

Society's single-minded focus on crime prevention and punishment puts criminal defendants at great risk of wrongful conviction or excessive imprisonment. Indigent defendants face an even greater risk because they lack the resources to defend themselves. I chose a career in indigent defense because I want to help protect some of the most vulnerable members of society and ensure that wealth is not a prerequisite for justice.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I'm very excited about the opportunity to have the support and training of great criminal defense attorneys, both at my host organization and through the Southern Public Defender Training Center. I know that the training and learning from the experiences of other attorneys are vital resources for new public defenders, and I feel fortunate to be part of a great program that will help me become a capable, vigorous advocate for my clients.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

The connection was there from the beginning. I went to law school to become a public interest lawyer because I know that the law can be a great equalizer and a force for positive social change.

What is your hometown?

New Albany, Indiana

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Christen Chapman

Host Organization: Orleans Public Defender

Chief Defender: Derwyn Bunton

Type of Defense Work: Adult

City, State: New Orleans, Louisiana

Law School: Loyola Law School, Los Angeles



Q&A with Christen

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I chose to work in New Orleans because of the vibrant cultures of its different communities. Advocating on behalf of the residents of New Orleans is a vital component in preserving the culture and encouraging the communities' success. I also wanted to be a part of the Orleans Public Defenders office because of its talented attorneys who are dedicated to reforming the New Orleans' criminal justice system.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

I chose a career in indigent criminal defense because I firmly believe that a person's access to justice should not depend on his or her wealth. I can think of no better way to use my law degree than to protect the constitutional rights of those who cannot afford to hire an attorney, and hopefully to give them a voice in an overwhelming, complicated and often unjust criminal justice system.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am excited to be a part of a nationwide community of incredibly talented and passionate public defenders that are dedicated to raising the quality of indigent criminal defense.

What is your hometown?

Lakewood, California

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Julia Dekovich

Host Organization: Defender Association of Philadelphia

Chief Defender: Ellen Greenlee

Type of Defense Work: Juvenile

City, State: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Law School: Northeastern University School of Law



Q&A with Julia

What inspires the work you do?

I continue to be inspired by all the youth and families I have had the privilege to work with throughout my life. I am also inspired by my parents and grandparents who, through their hard work and sacrifice, instilled in me a deep regard for the power of education.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I wanted to work in Philadelphia, and specifically within the Juvenile Defender Association of Philadelphia (DAP), because it has been a pioneer for change in the juvenile justice movement. I am excited to learn what DAP has to offer, and equally excited to grow with the organization as it embarks on a new frontier.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

I decided that I wanted a career where I could combine my love of advocacy and community service work with my passion for writing. After college, I worked as a Head Start preschool teacher for two years. While I loved my students and found the job incredibly rewarding, I wanted to find a career where I could focus more on writing and oral advocacy. In law school, I realized how much I loved and believed in public defense work. Courses like evidence and criminal trial advocacy fostered my love of criminal trial work, while participating in the Poverty Law Clinic and interning at the Youth Advocacy Department (the juvenile public defense division of the Committee for Public Counsel Services in Boston) made me realize how much I loved client-centered advocacy. From my work as a teacher, I have also developed a particular interest in work that is aimed at ending the school-to-prison pipeline. I believe that all children should have equal opportunities to achieve the future they so desire. I think that a career in indigent defense puts you at the “front lines” of the criminal justice system. It is important to know and understand the experiences of public defenders in order to make policy-based changes.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am really excited that this is the first year of the Public Defender Corps, and that we will be setting forth new ground with Equal Justice Works and the Southern Public Defender Training Center. I’m excited to see what trainings are like and how the Public Defender Corps will evolve.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

I firmly believe that in order to change a system, you have to be a part of it. There are many players in the criminal justice system: teachers, social workers, judges, lawyers, politicians, and so forth. In order to fight injustices in this system, I believe it is important to take on a role within it and fight from the inside out. I don’t believe that being a lawyer is any more vital than any other role within the system, but I do believe that lawyers are in a position to make change through public interest work.

What is your hometown?

Livonia, Michigan

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Ashley Graham

Host Organization: Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy

Chief Defender: Ed Monahan

Type of Defense Work: Adult Felonies, Misdemeanors, Appointment of Counsel

City, State: Covington, Kentucky

Law School: Emory University School of Law



Q&A with Ashley

What inspires the work you do?

Challenging the status quo. Being a public defender means having an opportunity every day to stand up for someone and to ensure that the Government and courts are adhering to proper procedures.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I feel like the Covington office is a great fit for me. I have the training, support, and encouragement from within the office to fight for the needed changes outside of it.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

There's something meaningful about putting your hand on your client's shoulder and giving them the attention and consideration that they've never been given.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

At first, I was very excited about the focused training geared toward serving indigent populations in high volume offices. After going through some of the training, I have to say that I'm excited about working with some truly awesome people from all over the U.S.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

During my second year of law school, I interned with the Federal Defenders in Atlanta. It was there that the power discrepancies in the criminal justice system were brought home to me. I realized that most people caught up in the system were just unlucky - unlucky to be of certain race, gender, and socioeconomic status.

What is your hometown?

Columbia, South Carolina

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Kathryn Hansel

Host Organization: Public Defender of Metropolitan Nashville & Davidson County

Chief Defender: Dawn Deaner

Type of Defense Work: Adult Misdemeanors and Felonies

City, State: Nashville, Tennessee

Law School: Northwestern University School of Law



Q&A with Katie

What inspires the work you do?

During law school I had the opportunity to work with many clients who could not otherwise afford legal services, both at the Cook County Public Defenders office and in clinical settings. Through this work, I met people who were genuine and perceptive; funny and kind. People with loving families as well as people usually alone in court. People angered by injustice in the criminal justice system and people afraid of that system's potentially terrible consequences. The people I will work for as a public defender inspire me above anything else to work in a system that so often refuses to recognize their humanity. I am also inspired by the attorneys I have worked with over the past three years. I have been lucky to work with brilliant advocates who are passionate about public defense. Their advocacy skills, dedication to their work, and love these attorneys have for their clients inspire me to become the best advocate that I can be.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

Visiting Nashville, I was impressed by the dedicated lawyers I met and I am looking forward so much to joining Nashville's public defender community. There is a need for public defenders in almost every office in the country. I am glad to be working with other attorneys who recognize the deficits in the criminal justice system and have spent their careers trying to correct them. Over the next three years I hope to become exactly that kind of public defender. I hope to achieve the best results possible for my clients, represent both my clients and the public defender office with integrity, and become a strong member of the public defender community in Nashville.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

I worked in public interest before coming to law school and knew that as a lawyer I wanted to work against some of the systemic injustices I had seen. In law school, I came to realize that the people most marginalized by society, most in danger of becoming victims of injustice, and most in need of legal aid are defendants in the criminal justice system. As a result, I chose to become a public defender to work to mitigate those injustices, to make the experiences of indigent defendants a little less terrible, and to provide an ally and advocate in the criminal justice system for those who most need one.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am so excited to become part of such a wonderful network of attorneys dedicated to and passionate about public defense work. In the immediate future I am most excited to participate in training with other Public Defender Corps Fellows.

What is your hometown?

Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Katherine Higgins

Host Organization: Monroe County Public Defender

Chief Defender: Timothy Donaher

Type of Defense Work: Adult, Immigration, Misdemeanors

City, State: Rochester, New York

Law School: Cornell University Law School



Q&A with Katherine

What inspires the work you do?

I am inspired and motivated every day by the people around me who challenge the status quo with grace and compassion, and fight to make the world a better place.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

As a native Upstate New Yorker, I am honored to be able to serve in Rochester, and I look forward to becoming part of a new community there.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

I have been saddened and angered by the criminal justice system since I was young. My own experiences and those of my close friends and relatives taught me at an early age that the justice system can oppress and dehumanize real people with family and friends who love them regardless of their flaws and failures; that incarceration can truly crush a person's spirit; and that the effects of a conviction can reach far beyond the sentence. As a public defender, I hope to be the best advocate I can be, to be a source of unwavering support for my clients, and to help preserve the honesty of our adversarial justice system by providing a check against the power of the government.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am excited by the amazing potential the Public Defender Corps has to transform the face of indigent defense in our country, by providing offices with well-trained and passionate Fellows who can in turn provide quality representation to those who need it most.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

I actually went to law school with the intention of doing social justice work for the rest of my life – I knew that I wanted a career where I could work directly with people who lack the resources and support that most of us take for granted.

What is your hometown?

Ithaca, New York

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Ray Ibarra

Host Organization: Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy

Chief Defender: John Delaney

Type of Defense Work: Adult, Juvenile, Felonies, Misdemeanors

City, State: Covington, Kentucky

Law School: Georgetown University Law Center



Q&A with Ray

What inspires the work you do?

Aside from my parents and the many role models that have shown me the importance of being a productive member of society, I have two inspirations: my clients and my partner. My clients because they are surprisingly resilient despite being regularly denied the common courtesy and fundamental rights that we should all enjoy. My partner because she has similarly committed herself to the cause of indigent defense and is always able to articulate why more work is needed on behalf of the indigent accused.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

Kentucky is home to many wonderful traditions including the making of fine bourbon and the racing of fine horses. But like so many other areas of the country the everyday standards of justice are different for the indigent accused. My goals for the tenure of my fellowship include increasing the rate of appointment of the public defender's office, fighting to educate the bench and bar about the realities of poverty in Northern Kentucky, and improving the quality of representation given to even the simplest of cases in Kentucky's District Court.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

Lawyers argue for a living. They take the position that best serves the interest of their clients and they repeat that position to others in power. In choosing a career path I wanted to select a message that I could understand and support without difficulty. One such message that I believe in is that in the service of our misguided goal of over-incarceration we have trampled on the rights of the poor and the underrepresented. Explaining the details of how and why this is a mistake is a position that I can comfortably repeat for a living.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am always happy to meet a new group of colleagues. What excites me most about the Public Defender Corps is the prospect of a continuing group of defenders with a growing amount of institutional knowledge and connections in offices across the country. By sharing our experiences with others involved in indigent defense, we can appreciate the scope of the problem facing the underrepresented poor, and see the benefit of increased training and standards for the indigent defense bar.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

I started my career in public interest work because my interest in becoming a lawyer was driven by a desire to assist in restructuring our society to better work for all people in the United States. Having found indigent defense and our treatment of the poor as weak points in our society's fabric, the transition to work as a public defender was a simple one.

What is your hometown?

Cypress, California

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Andrea Kendall

Host Organization: Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy

Chief Defender: Jason Gilbert

Type of Defense Work: Juvenile, Felonies, Forensic Consultations

City, State: Florence, Kentucky

Law School: Georgetown University Law Center



Q&A with Andrea

What inspires the work you do?

All of the civil rights lawyers of past and present, Abbe Smith, and Ray Ibarra.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I chose to work in Northern Kentucky because, as an Ohioan, I have much in common with the community. My workplace is suburban on the verge of rural. As a grandchild of farmers with roots “across the (Ohio) river,” I can relate to the area and the problems clients are facing.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

To me, Public Defenders are the only real lawyers – they are the only lawyers in court almost every day working with real clients. Public defenders are also the most noble lawyers because we take the power we have from our background, education and skills to work for the powerless. I chose criminal defense because criminals are the most overlooked members of our society. We lock them up where they can’t be seen, withhold important social services and ignore any subsequent grievances or cries for help. Most of my clients, were raised in conditions so different from me that I cannot imagine what it is to live that life - they were set up to fail. At the time when prosecutors seek to take away a person’s liberty and freedom, it is crucial to have powerful people stand between the client and the government.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am excited about raising the standards of indigent defense on a nationwide level. I am thrilled to be working with an excited group of young lawyers to work towards this goal.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

I became a lawyer specifically to do public interest work. Everyone wants to “make a difference” or “change the world,” and I decided to take that charge seriously and go to law school. Public interest lawyering most fits my strengths and interests in working with clients, oral advocacy and legal research. Public defender work specifically strikes the right balance of using my intellect, empathy, and persuasiveness to work for systemic change, one client at a time.

What is your hometown?

Toledo, Ohio

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Mary Murphy

Host Organization: Orleans Public Defender

Chief Defender: Derwyn Bunton

Type of Defense Work: Adult, Misdemeanors, Felonies

City, State: New Orleans, Louisiana

Law School: University of Texas School of Law



Q&A with Mary

What inspires the work you do?

Clients, their families and my family.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

New Orleans is a wonderful city with an incredibly unique and rich culture. It also unfortunately has a long history of government neglect of the indigent community. I hope to participate in New Orleans' rebirth after Hurricane Katrina by working at Orleans Public Defender as it continues to grow into a full service client-oriented public defender office.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

I saw going to college and law school as a privilege and an opportunity to prepare myself for righting injustice in the world. Indigent Defense will allow me to focus that motivation on an ailing element of our legal system.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

The opportunity to start my career working with and learning from other lawyers who share my ideals for justice.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

I grew up outside of Washington, D.C. and saw how the law could help low-income residents protect themselves from gentrification and corporate development.

What is your hometown?

Takoma Park, Maryland

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Cecilia A. Ndounda

Host Organization: Orleans Public Defenders

Chief Defender: Derwyn Bunton

Type of Defense Work: Adult, Juvenile, Felonies, Misdemeanors

City, State: New Orleans, Louisiana

Law School: Mississippi College School of Law



Q&A with Cecilia

What inspires the work you do?

My family inspires my strong sense of community. Growing up in a tight knit Congolese-American family, I was always taught that you help those less fortunate than yourself. My family came to America with the hopes and aspirations of those they'd left behind, and it was our job to make an impact on the lives of the people around us.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I chose New Orleans, because it's a city filled with hope and resiliency, just like me. My goals in the next three years are to make a strong impact within the New Orleans community and help as many people as I can.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

Throughout law school I worked in public defense and I was exposed to the realities and injustices of our legal justice system on socio-economic minorities and their communities. I realized that there is a growing need for more public defender advocates in our country and I wanted to be one of those people helping and advocating for change.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I'm most excited about doing my part in making a difference in the lives of the people and the city of New Orleans.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

I always knew I wanted to do public interest work in some way. Prior to entering law school, I volunteered at a legal aid center and once in law school, I continued to be very active in public interest through my internships and community service.

What is your hometown?

Hayward, California

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Sarah Heath Olesiuk

Host Organization: Knox County Public Defender Community Law Office

Chief Defender: Mark Stephens

Type of Defense Work: Adult

City, State: Knoxville, Tennessee

Law School: Boston College Law School



Q&A with Sarah

What inspires the work you do?

My parents, for their work with underserved communities, and Professor Sharon Beckman, for her passion and commitment to the defense of others.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I grew up in the Southeast and am excited to be back in the area. During the next three years, I hope to play an integral role in protecting the rights of my fellow community members by providing them with quality legal representation.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

My father's representation of others and the difference he is able to make in his clients' lives inspired me to choose a career in indigent defense.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am excited to be part of a network of attorneys who are seeking to raise the quality of public defense nationwide.

What is your hometown?

Asheville, North Carolina

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Kevin Roberts

Host Organization: Orleans Public Defenders

Chief Defender: Derwyn Bunton

Type of Defense Work: Adult, Juvenile, Immigration, Felonies, Misdemeanors

City, State: New Orleans, Louisiana

Law School: Washington University in St. Louis School of Law



Q&A with Kevin

What inspires the work you do?

The people of New Orleans.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

New Orleans is my home, although I have only spent a small portion of my life there. The culture is so vibrant and the people are so genuine, that to be lucky enough to dedicate my professional life to working in the city is a gift. I look forward to helping those that I can through this fellowship and beyond.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

Because everyone deserves to have their voice heard; because people are more than their actions alone. Because defendants are victims, too; because police bullying and brutality are unacceptable and should be challenged. For social justice; for fair administration of the laws. For my clients.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

Being trained by the brightest and most passionate indigent defense attorneys and having the opportunity to collaborate and learn with the brightest and most passionate future indigent defense attorneys.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

They are one and the same.

What is your hometown?

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Emily Wallwork

Host Organization: Mecklenburg County Office of the Public Defender

Chief Defender: Kevin Tully

Type of Defense Work: Adult, Juvenile, Immigration, Felonies, Misdemeanors

City, State: Charlotte, North Carolina

Law School: University of North Carolina School of Law



Q&A with Emily

What inspires the work you do?

Sylvia Novinsky, my mentor and friend, whose tireless work and enthusiasm has encouraged and enabled me, as well as countless other students, to follow our dreams.

Why did you choose to work in this community?

I am incredibly privileged to be serving in my hometown, where I hope to provide the best possible services to my clients and to work as an agent of change to address the inequities of the criminal justice system in the South.

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

Justice Black said it best, "There can be no equal justice where the kind of trial a man gets depends on the amount of money he has."

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I am most excited about bringing the energy and resources of this program to North Carolina and becoming a lawyer that my clients want to have as their representative.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

I am a public interest lawyer because every person deserves an advocate, and it is a privilege to stand next to a client who wouldn't otherwise have a voice in the justice system.

What is your hometown?

Charlotte, North Carolina

Public Defender Corps Fellow

Jackie Willingham

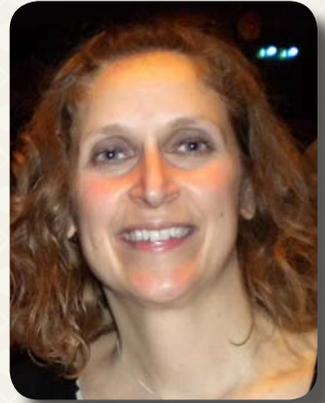
Host Organization: Wake County Public Defender Office

Chief Defender: Bryan Collines

Type of Defense Work: Adult

City, State: Raleigh, North Carolina

Law School: Wake University School of Law



Q&A with Jackie

Why did you choose a career in indigent defense?

While working as an intern in a public defender office last summer, I saw first hand the differences between those with means and those without as they dealt with the criminal justice system. Although there is no one thing that can fix the system, every person deserves to have an advocate. I knew that I would look forward to going to work if I was providing that service to people.

What excites you most about Public Defender Corps?

I'm excited about serving my community, but also excited about being in court daily and working with a group of dedicated professionals at the Wake County Public Defenders Office.

When did you make the connection between becoming a lawyer and public interest work?

I realized the important role a lawyer could play in social change while studying the civil rights movement in school.

What is your hometown?

Newport, Indiana