



2018 NEWSLETTER

BLF Welcomes Post-Graduate Fellow Courtney Arnold



BLF's 2018 fellow, Courtney Arnold, recently started her project "Bridging the DC Probate Gap" at AARP's Legal Counsel for the Elderly in Washington, DC. As a large segment of our population rapidly faces retirement, there is an increasing need to ensure that elders and their families feel prepared in terms of their future healthcare and assets. Unfortunately, elders of color are less likely to have conducted any estate planning – leaving room for family conflict, loss of wealth and property, and financial instability. Furthermore, probate can be a confusing, emotional, expensive, and lengthy process. The difficulty of going through probate is compounded when one cannot afford to hire an attorney who is willing to help. Courtney will represent families in a range of

probate matters, with a focus on cases involving the transfer of title and deeds of homes. She will guide elders of color and their families in estate planning. And, she will collaborate with community, legal, and faith-based groups to provide informational sessions and clinics about estate planning and probate. Courtney received her J.D. in 2018 from American University Washington College of Law, and is a Masters of Public Policy candidate. She has a passion for elder law, with a particular focus on end-of-life care, estate planning, and housing in economically disadvantaged communities of color. During law school, Courtney served as chair of the National Lawyers Guild, a student attorney in the Women and the Law Clinic, and taught at a DC high school through the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project. Prior to law school, she served with AmeriCorps VISTA in Texas.

Update from 2017 fellow Alexis Erkert:

Alexis had a very successful year at Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, working to mitigate the consequences of mass incarceration in the New Orleans area. She represented formerly incarcerated people and their families in housing court and administrative hearings, successfully preventing evictions and the loss of Section 8 housing vouchers. Alexis worked with community organizations and governmental agencies to set up referral networks, and she conducted know-your-rights trainings for community members and CLE trainings for lawyers. Alexis also expanded her project to include pre-release legal screenings. She educated reentering people about the housing authority's criminal background policy, advised them how to get added to their families' vouchers and leases, and helped them address consumer and medical debt that acted as barriers to securing housing. Alexis is excited to report that this work resulted in funding from the City of New Orleans to continue and expand her work. She will stay on at SLLS as a staff attorney to provide free civil legal aid, know-your-rights training, and more to people coming out of prison. This is work that SLLS has been unable to fund and that no other attorney or agency in New Orleans is able to provide, so it fills a crucial gap.

Alexis says: *"I am very excited and also grateful to BLF for providing me with an entry path into this work through my fellowship... This fellowship has been more rewarding than I could have imagined."*

Two New Phoenix Fellows Arrive at Berkeley Law

BLF is proud to announce our new Phoenix Fellows, who entered Berkeley Law this fall as part of the Class of 2021. BLF's Phoenix Fellowship provides tuition support to outstanding students of color who are committed to social justice work.



THE PHOENIX FELLOWSHIP



Savelle Jefferson graduated from UC Davis in 2016 with a BA in Sociology with an emphasis in Law and Society and a minor in Political Science. He was a founding member of the Black Pre-Law Association at UC Davis, a member of the collegiate mock trial team and a High School Outreach Fellow for the UC Davis Student Recruitment and Retention Center. Savelle has also been an advocate for change on the county, state, and national level. While in college, he worked as a Criminal Justice Researcher in his home county's Department of Probation, analyzing and collecting data to evaluate re-entry services and their effect on the county's recidivism rate. He also worked at the AFL-CIO on a program to ensure legal voter protection and voting rights, and helped develop a criminal justice reform training for labor interns on the

broader effects of mass incarceration. Savelle then went on to work for Fair Elections Legal Network as their North Carolina State Director, supervising fellows at college campuses in civic engagement programs during the 2016 election to promote voter registration and equal ballot access. As Savelle enters law school he aspires to obtain a legal education that will allow him to make tangible change in our society for individuals who lack the social and financial capital to make change themselves.

Jasjit Mundh is a Bay Area native raised in a single-parent, immigrant household; her parents immigrated from Punjab, India. She graduated with highest distinction from UC Berkeley in 2017, where she studied social welfare and minored in public policy. During college, Jasjit was involved with unions and workers' rights organizations. She also helped create safe spaces for the Middle Eastern and South Asian community on campus, hosting Tea Talks and community bonding events. She worked to connect low-income tenants to free legal resources, and helped register voters, focusing on the Sikh community and community in San Jose. Jasjit conducted research throughout her studies to understand how people involved in their own governance can improve policy and program implementation. After graduating, she tutored elementary school children and worked as a support staff teacher to reduce the educational achievement gap for low-income students of color. Jasjit is interested in being an advocate who ensures the voices of her community are heard on a macro-scale through the legal and policy field. She hopes to give back to those who helped and inspired her to get here.

