

Civil Justice

Newsletter of the Georgia Legal Services Program® (GLSP)

Summer Issue, 2019

Journey Toward Racial Justice

By Sarah Hassan, Staff Attorney and Whitney Knox Lee, Staff Attorney

"You're pretty for a colored girl."
"Are you part of the Muslim Brotherhood?" These are the types of comments made to us - two women attorneys of color in Southwest Georgia. Unfortunately, these racist comments are more common than you would think. We are constantly having to prove that we are attorneys, and that we belong in the courtroom as advocates for our clients, meanwhile our white counterparts are given the benefit of the doubt. The color of their skin, alone, automatically gives them credibility and respect that we have to prove we are worthy of as attorneys of color. For example, we must dress the part in our professional suits while our white counterparts frequently arrive to court in wrinkled khakis and sloppy button-downs, yet they are still recognized as officers of the court.

Our common experiences have led to discussions within our office in Albany on issues of racial equity in and out of the workplace. What we discovered was that we are not alone. We are not the only employees at Georgia Legal Services Program who struggle with racially charged comments and feelings that suggest we are not as valued as white professionals in the courtroom.

We decided to join GLSP's Race Equity Action Team for solutions. The Race Equity Action Team was created as a result of a training attended by GLSP advocates that addressed racial bias in advocacy. The training covered the three most common areas where our clients face discrimination: education, health, and housing.

The mission of GLSP's Race Equity Action Team is to combat racism by identifying and challenging practices and policies that disadvantage racial or ethnic minority groups by providing legal assistance and support to promote community-wide racial equity and cultural competence for our clients. Our accomplishments include policy creation, data maps, staff wide trainings, advocacy guides, and the formation of a new policy - The Policy Regarding Insulting Words, Gestures, or Other Communication to GLSP Employees or Others.

GLSP's new policy respects the dignity of our staff above all else by empowering them and supporting them when dealing with hostile and prejudice situations at work. The policy sends a clear message that we will not accept bigotry in any form. During the drafting phase of the policy, it became clear that GLSP staff would benefit from race equity training. We decided to chair the Cultural Competency Training Workgroup to spearhead the planning and implementation of these trainings. We wanted our colleagues and superiors to not only acknowledge the problem, but also take concrete steps to support staff who experience racial microaggressions throughout the course of their work.

We recognized that having a staff that was not only better informed, but had the tools to handle issues of racial inequity would result in more competent client advocacy. This resulted in the development and implementation of two full day trainings this year on February 28 and March 1 conducted by Just Roots

Consulting, LLC. These Race Equity in the Workplace trainings offered an important opportunity for GLSP's managers to learn more about race equity from a management perspective, including how to support our staff. The training sessions covered the basic foundation of what microaggressions mean to the best way to handle these issues as allies, supervisors, and targets of hostile behavior. We worked with the trainers we hired to customize our curriculum to make sure we adequately addressed the unique challenges we face as advocates in rural Georgia. Our race equity work is a powerful and necessary component of service delivery that enables us to fully and proudly serve rural Georgians of all backgrounds in their fight for justice.

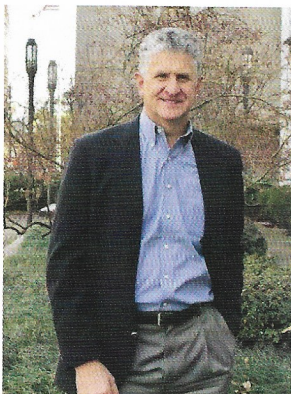
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Rick Rufolo

Briefly Speaking

By Rick Rufolo, Executive Director

On May 1 each year, the legal profession observes Law Day, a day that provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the rule of law. But, we can't celebrate the rule of law unless we ensure access to justice. When we do so, we promote a free society. At Georgia Legal Services Program, we have a simple yet powerful mission statement: creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty.

During my first six months at the helm of GLSP, I visited each of our 10 offices and met our team and GLSP board members from those communities. I heard about the struggles experienced by our clients and their families who might be denied access to justice without our help.

I've attended several meetings with law firms, nonprofit organizations and bar associations, including the State Bar of Georgia Board of Governors Spring meeting. These engagements give me an opportunity to tell the GLSP story and encourage financial and pro bono support. Recently, I had the pleasure of attending my first State Bar of Georgia annual meeting where GLSP was presented with a check in the amount of \$563,748 which represents donations by Georgia lawyers to the 2018 "And Justice for All" State Bar Campaign for GLSP. Donors are so critical to the work we do. We can't exist without you!

Currently, we are engaged in a priority setting process which includes reviewing our strategic plan, conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and developing our priorities for 2020. As we identify new issues facing our clients, we will make the necessary improvements to our delivery model and align our resources to meet our clients' needs. Thanks to our passionate and talented team, we are truly creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty.

Journey Toward Racial Justice *(continued from page 1)*



"We recognized that having a staff that was not only better informed, but had the tools to handle issues of racial inequity would result in more competent client advocacy."

Pictured are (l to r) Whitney Knox Lee and Sarah Hassan with their five-year anniversary certificates from GLSP. Sarah is a University of Georgia Law School graduate, and Whitney is a graduate of Seattle University School of Law. Since the submission of their article, Whitney has been promoted to supervising attorney in GLSP's Piedmont office, and Sarah has relocated and is no longer employed with GLSP.

Board Member Terrence Dicks Receives the Liberty Bell Award



The GLSP Augusta staff celebrated the achievements of Rev. Terrence A. Dicks (GLSP Board Member) who was recognized with the prestigious Liberty Bell Award by the Augusta Bar Association. Pictured are (l to r) Carl Schluter, Staff Attorney; Ira Foster, General Counsel/Deputy Director; Brittany Pasley, Staff Attorney; Rev. Terrence A. Dicks; Kenneth Jones, Managing Attorney; Kahlm Barclay, Staff Attorney; and Lisa Krisher, Director of Litigation.

By Lisa Krisher, Director of Litigation

Rev. Terrence A. Dicks received the prestigious Liberty Bell Award by the Augusta Bar Association on May 2 at its Law Day Dinner. This award is given annually to a non-lawyer in the Augusta Judicial Circuit for his or her outstanding public service and community involvement. Rev. Dicks has spent three decades in community service and involvement, including founding and leading many organizations with an emphasis on civil rights, needs of the inner city and children, and civil legal representation for persons with low and moderate incomes.

Rev. Dicks actively served on GLSP's board of directors starting in 2002 with breaks of a few years. For several years, he served as a member of the executive committee. Following the end of his board service in 2016, he worked as a short-term special project paralegal with Georgia Legal Services Augusta office. In late 2016, he rejoined our board. He is an active volunteer in the Augusta office.

The son of an army soldier, Rev. Dicks has lived most of his life in Augusta. For more than a decade, Rev. Dicks served on the board of the Augusta Human Relations Commission, including two terms as chair and three terms as vice-chair. Since 2004, he has been an active member of the Augusta Progressive Religious Coalition that includes members of many faiths. Through that organization, he has helped plan the Coalition's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day programs that featured local, state and national speakers. He served as a board member and second vice-president of the Augusta Branch of the NAACP as well as the chair of the fair housing committee. He founded the Georgia Center for Children and Education, Inc., and

serves as its volunteer executive director. It is the successor to the Center for Children and Education, founded by former Augusta GLSP attorney Brian Kintisch. GCCE's goal is to encourage "parent involvement in education and to support community involvement in public schools."

Rev. Dicks was the chair of the nonprofit Georgia Clients Council (GCC) for several terms. During that time, he helped develop the campaign "Claiming a Street Named King." This campaign seeks to take "back the street by building businesses and houses on the crime-ridden abandoned boulevards that bear the name of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." by improving the conditions along the streets honoring Dr. King. Rev. Dicks also would welcome claiming streets named after civil rights leaders from all backgrounds.

Rev. Dicks received the 2016 National Legal Aid and Defender Association Client Contribution Award. The National Legal Aid and Defender Association is our country's oldest and largest nonprofit association devoted to excellence in the delivery of legal services to those who cannot afford counsel. The Client Contribution Award recognizes work by individuals, groups, or programs that promote client service and engagement.

Rev. Dicks doesn't just talk the talk, he literally walks the walk. He is a tireless advocate and leader for justice for all, especially important in Augusta where more than 24% of the population lives below the federal poverty level.

GLSP's Housing Forums Address Tenants' Rights

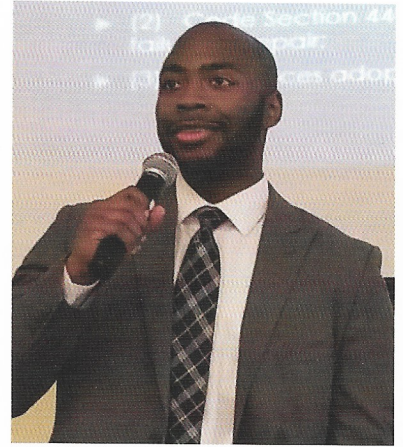
By Susan Reif, Housing Specialist Attorney, and Heidi Behnke, Housing Program Manager

GLSP's Eviction Prevention Project hosted "Repair Augusta" on February 27 to bring together housing leaders, community change-makers, and the media to address the housing problems created for tenants and the community when landlords fail to keep their rental property in good repair. Participants learned about the legal rights of tenants, and how entities, such as GLSP, the City of Augusta's Code Enforcement and Housing, and Community Development Departments are working collaboratively to address the issue of substandard rental housing and the blight it creates in communities.

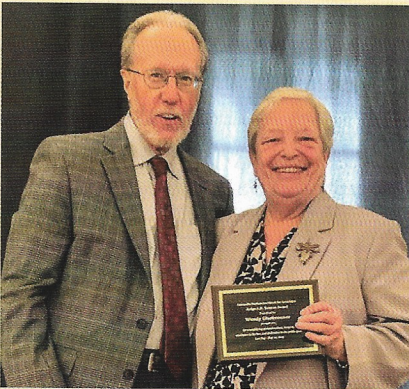
"Repair Augusta" was the first housing forum we offered this year thanks to the efforts of Kahlim Barclay, EPP Staff Attorney in Augusta, and Heidi Behnke, Housing Program Manager. The event focused on how substandard rental housing results in increased eviction rates, blight and instability within the city. Too often, tenants withhold their rent out of frustration when the landlord fails to make repairs. Some tenants do so in mistaken reliance on information obtained through the Internet. These tenants often face eviction for nonpayment because, in Georgia, a tenant must pay rent even if the landlord fails to make repairs.

We held a housing forum in Brunswick on March 26, and a housing forum in Dalton on May 15. We are planning forums in Columbus and Savannah. GLSP's housing forums provide our communities and attorneys unique opportunities to become aware of critical systemic housing problems plaguing low-income renters across the state.

EPP is funded by a grant from the Georgia Bar Foundation, which makes possible the hiring of more attorneys to increase our representation of tenants in private, nongovernment-subsidized housing.



Kahlim Barclay, EPP Staff Attorney in Augusta, was the keynote speaker at GLSP's "Repair Augusta" Housing Forum on February 27.



Wendy Glasbrenner, managing attorney of GLSP's Gainesville and Athens offices, received the prestigious Kenyon Award on May 10 at the Gainesville-Northeastern Bar Association Law Day luncheon in honor of her 40-year career of exemplary service with GLSP. The Kenyon award is the highest award a lawyer within the Northeastern Judicial Circuit can earn and is named in honor of long-time and renowned Hall County Superior Court Judge A.R. Kenyon. The award is given annually to a local lawyer whose career has exemplified professionalism, integrity, excellence in the profession and dedication to the public good.

Wendy Glasbrenner and the Hon. Cliff Jolliff, retired Juvenile Court Judge and former GLSP attorney

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Gifts to GLSP are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Welcoming New Employees (1/1/19 - 6/10/19)



Ashley Clark, University of Georgia School of Law '12
Staff Attorney, Eviction Prevention Project, Columbus Office

I began my legal career as a public defender striving to protect the constitutional rights of indigent clients within the criminal justice system. I joined GLSP to further my commitment to provide high quality legal representation to underserved communities. I believe the work I perform through GLSP's Eviction Prevention Project upholds the Program's mission to provide access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. One of my most significant accomplishments was successfully negotiating a settlement agreement for a client who was recently diagnosed with cancer and was served with a dispossessory warrant. Through our legal assistance, this client was able to avoid an eviction, move out of a rental unit riddled with conditions that posed risks to her health and safety, and continue with life-saving medical treatment in a safe environment.

Elliott Gillooly, University of Georgia School of Law '15
Staff Attorney, Brunswick Office

I chose to work for GLSP because of the importance of advocating for the powerless who in our society are defined by poverty. One of my significant accomplishments was successfully arguing a motion to set aside a writ of possession that had resulted in a homeowner's wrongful eviction by the seller of the home.



Gina Holt, Florida Coastal School of Law '07
Staff Attorney, Dalton Office

I hold a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. I was an educator teaching sixth and eighth grade students. I am blessed to be the mother of a wonderful Autistic child. I believe this allows me a unique perspective when working with education cases. During my time with GLSP, I have represented a student with disabilities who allegedly physically assaulted two teachers. The student was not charged criminally, and the school did not take any disciplinary action. I have represented a student in a due process mediation where the student was granted all requests made, including an award of monetary compensation. I chose to work for GLSP because I have a strong dedication to the humanitarian side of law, and I am committed to enforcing the legal rights of those who are most in need. Making a positive difference to those most in need was the reason I attended law school, and I knew that a position with GLSP would allow me this opportunity.



Carl Schluter, Mercer University Walter F. George School of Law '01
Staff Attorney, Augusta Office

I chose to work for GLSP because I believe everyone should understand the legal process even if they cannot afford an attorney. Educating the public, the sheriff's department, and the courts on the issues of domestic violence, the cycle of abuse, and its generational affects are among my significant accomplishments at GLSP.



Lonna Taylor, John Marshall Law School (Atlanta) '12
Staff Attorney, Eviction Prevention Project, Central Office

I chose to work for GLSP because of its mission to help Georgians gain access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. Every time we help with the prevention of a tenant's eviction, it is a significant accomplishment for our Program.

Welcoming New Employees *(continued)*

Hayden Barnes, Staff Attorney
Columbus Office

Elise Brown, Paralegal/Navigator
Victim Legal Assistance Network
Piedmont Office

Meta Brown, Secretary
Macon Office

Shauna Carmichael, Staff Attorney
Brunswick Office

Rowena Daniels, Staff Attorney
Albany Office

Jakira Davis, Staff Attorney
Piedmont Office

Lisa Dibble, Senior Paralegal
Macon Office

Elisa Dunwood, Outreach Paralegal
Macon Office

Alexandra (Alex) Eichenbaum, Staff Attorney
Statewide Domestic Violence Project
Central Office

Sarah Gehring, Law Assistant
Gainesville Office

Laura Hernandez, Receptionist
Central Office

Renea Jones, Intake Paralegal
Albany Office

Carol Lennox, Secretary
Brunswick Office

Anais Lopez, Paralegal
Keeping Latino Students in School Initiative
Central Office

Elizabeth Main, Staff Attorney
Piedmont Office

Jule McReynolds, Staff Attorney
Macon Office

Lyddy O'Brian, Law Assistant
Piedmont Office

Vanessa Parras, Law Assistant
Dalton Office

Lisa Pike, Secretary
Albany Office

Letitia Smith, Intake Receptionist
Albany Office

Jennifer Soto, Secretary
Savannah Office

Nancy Soto, Intake Paralegal
Dalton Office

Lynnae Thandiwe, Staff Attorney
Piedmont Office

Laura Thompson, Regional Operations Manager
Savannah Office

Alina Venick, Staff Attorney
Gainesville Office

Rebecca Wackym, Law Assistant
Gainesville Office

Shellana Welch, Staff Attorney
Augusta Office

Welcoming Summer Interns



Khadija Dukes, Washington and Lee University School of Law '21, Central Office

Khadija has worked as a writer for Paste Magazine, then with Hawkins, Parnell & Young law firm in Atlanta. After two years with the firm, Khadija relocated to Lexington, Virginia to attend law school. After completing her first year of law school, Khadija began to work as a legal intern at Georgia Legal Services. Khadija is a native of Conyers, Georgia.



Mya B. Hogan, Agnes Scott College '21, Central Office

Mya has recently completed her sophomore year at Agnes Scott College. She is pursuing a political science and business management double major with plans to attend law school. Previously, Mya interned with the UPS Global Public Affairs Office, UPS Legal Department, and the Fulton County Public Defender's Office. Mya desires her internship with GLSP to help her learn about the inner workings of nonprofit law firms. She desires to build relationships with her co-workers, and to be a useful resource to the office staff. Mya is from Atlanta, Georgia.



Adenike Miles-Sorinmade, Washington & Lee University School of Law '21, Piedmont Office

Adenike's career goals are to become an attorney, business owner, and real estate agent. Adenike desires her internship with GLSP to strengthen her writing and research skills, offer her networking opportunities, and help her to decide whether she wishes to pursue a career in litigation. Adenike is from Boston, Massachusetts. She enjoys brunching, traveling, and reading.



Charlie Richards, Washington and Lee University School of Law '20, Central Office

Charlie is a third-year law student at Washington and Lee University School of Law. While in law school, Charlie served as a Kirgis Fellow and as executive editor of the Washington & Lee Law News. He has served on the Powell Lecture Series Board, and as a Sports Czar. Charlie desires his internship with GLSP to help him gain a better understanding of the law and GLSP's clients. Charlie is from Orlando, Florida.



Ivelisse Saint-Clair, Emory University School of Law '21, Piedmont Office

Ivelisse is a rising second-year law student at Emory University School of Law. Ivelisse's future career goals are to use her law degree to help minorities, and she is interested in participating in global work. Ivelisse hopes her internship with GLSP will offer her opportunities to interact with clients and practice in spoken and written communication in English and Spanish. Ivelisse is from Kissimmee, Florida. She enjoys playing volleyball, hiking, and exploring new restaurants.



Michael J. Yates, Jr., Charleston School of Law '20, Central Office

Michael is a merit scholar and an active member in the Business Law Society and Entertainment and Sports Law Society. Michael desires his internship with GLSP to help him gain a better understanding of the power of pro bono legal aid. Michael is from Roswell, Georgia. He enjoys learning about the law, volunteering in his local community, and spending time with his family.



Henry Moss, Jr., Benedictine Military School '21, Savannah Office

Henry will begin his sophomore year at Benedictine Military School this August. He has always been interested in the law and has already learned a bit about the law from his mother, Chatham County Chief Magistrate Court Judge Mary Kathryn Moss. Henry is particularly interested in criminal law and hopes to become a federal prosecutor.



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