

University of Miami School of Law 2009 HOPE Fellows



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Introduction to the HOPE Fellows Program

HOPE Fellows work with domestic and international public interest agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide much-needed legal advocacy to children, immigrants, the homeless, victims of hate crimes, discrimination, and abuse, in addition to other who are in need. Over the years, the program has grown from two local agencies to include international placements in countries such as Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Lebanon, England and China. HOPE sponsors the program and helps students to identify agencies that match their passions for service. Students receive a stipend for their work and are required to identify ways in which they can uniquely contribute to the agencies and constituencies they serve. When they return to campus, the Fellows then design a project to involve other UM Law students in advocacy related to their area of concentration.

In the summer and fall of 2009, HOPE was proud to support the public interest work of an increased number of Fellows. Ranging from Miami to Sierra Leone, seventeen HOPE Fellows advocated on behalf of children with disabilities, Medicaid recipients, domestic violence survivors, environmental policy reform, and people with immigration issues, to name a few.



Daniela Gordon, 3L

Placement: Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc.

Daniela Gordon will continue her passion for public interest through work with the Disability Law Project in the Employment and Economic Stability unit at Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc. (LSGMI). Her community education efforts, client intake and advocacy will help to ensure that deserving citizens and legal residents receive the support that they need in education and through governmental benefits. This work will specifically provide critical assistance to disabled children in administrative law proceedings. With the assistance of attorneys, almost 90% of benefit denials are reversed, obtaining much-needed support and Medicaid for disabled children. Daniela will bring her zeal and passion for justice to this position with LSGMI.

"My passion is to raise awareness and advocate on behalf of children. The HOPE Fellowship has provided me a powerful opportunity to work with multiple agencies to identify gaps in our educational and justice systems. I look forward to helping juveniles navigate their way to a bright and productive future."





Marissa Gray, 3L

Placement: Miami-Dade Juvenile Services Department & Miami-Dade Public Defender's Office

During the summer of 2008 Marissa Gray served as a HOPE Fellow with Public Defender Carlos Martinez on research related to the Blueprint Commission. In addition, she worked with the Direct File and Juvenile Sentencing Advocacy Program Divisions. Through her experiences, Marissa identified a gap in the juvenile justice and educational systems. As a result, she will strive to bridge that gap by starting an Educational Advocacy Project. Splitting her summer between two placements, Marissa will collaborate with both the Juvenile Services Department and Office of the Miami-Dade Public Defender to implement this critical project. Specifically, Marissa's project is aimed at youths who have been nolle prossed, dismissed, or no actioned and still face life-altering consequences in the Miami-Dade County Public School System. She will also explore the issue of juveniles who are experiencing difficulties transitioning back into the school system.

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Betsy Havens, 2L

Placement: Florida Legal Services, Miami

Betsy will intern in Miami during the summer of 2009 at Florida Legal Services, an organization that provides civil legal assistance to underserved Floridians. With a Master's degree in Public Health from the University of North Carolina and having worked with the local Medicaid program before beginning law school, she is excited to help tackle some of the more problematic policies and practices with preparing class actions and drafting legislation to address some of the recent and anticipated changes to Florida Medicaid. Over the course of the summer, Betsy looks forward to organizing Medicaid recipients and leaders from health clinics receiving Medicaid funding or enrolled in the Medicaid managed care programs in order to identify potential areas of litigation and community need.



This fall, Betsy will continue working with Florida Legal Services as a HOPE Fellow in the fall, where she will assist with research efforts aimed at health care reform. She will also contribute her knowledge and skills to UM Law's Health and Elder Law Clinic next year.

"By interning with Miriam Harmatz at Florida Legal Services, I am gaining hands-on, systemic legal advocacy experience guided by a passionate attorney focusing on impact litigation supporting Medicaid recipients. This work is exactly what I was hoping to do when I decided to go to law school! The significant institutional support from UM Law has been truly instrumental in my being able to take on this otherwise unpaid position."





Courtney Jordan, 2L

Placement: Timap for Justice, Sierra Leone

With a unique background in public service and a future goal of becoming an advocate for human rights internationally, Courtney Jordan's efforts exemplify a passionate commitment to public interest work. As a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala for more than two years, she became intimately familiar with the challenges facing poor, struggling communities who lack access to basic justice services for present and past violations. By working side-by-side with these community members, Courtney honed her skills in community development and learned the importance of patience and complete stakeholder involvement in sustaining public interest projects. During the summer of 2009, Courtney will work in Sierra Leone with Timap for Justice, a pioneering effort to provide basic legal services and improve access to justice for the poor.

Irma Khoja, 2L

Placement: Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Miami
LUCHA Domestic Violence Project

Irma Khoja's passion is empowering victims of domestic violence. As a volunteer for Sahara, a South Asian domestic violence group in South Florida, Irma has provided support, guidance, and resources to victims. She volunteers at her local religious center where she educates women on their rights in relation to spousal abuse. During the summer of 2009, Irma will work in the Domestic Violence Division of FIAC where she will continue to serve victimized women by advocating for their legal needs and protection.

"My goal is to give a voice to immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence. My hope is to empower these women so that they can live the life they always desired."



Colin Milne, 2L

Placement: Miami-Dade Public Defender's Office,
Juvenile Division

During the summer of 2009, Colin Milne will work in the Juvenile Justice Division of the Public Defender's Office. His focus will be on educational outreach and legislative reform, particularly in regards to the current "zero tolerance" policy in Florida schools. Colin looks forward to building on his past experiences working with youth and anticipates the contributions he will make at the PD's office as a HOPE Fellow in the fall.

**David Moreno, 2L**

Placement: Jersey City Public Defender's Office

David Moreno has always been devoted to helping children. His dedication to youth advocacy, however, began in the summers he spent volunteering at Long Island Youth Foundation, a summer camp for underprivileged children. As a HOPE Fellow with the Jersey City Public Defender's Office, David will provide legal advocacy on behalf of children who are currently under state care.

"I understand that life is a struggle for many people and I believe it is important to be selfless, especially when you are in a position where you can really impact the lives of others. It is my prerogative to recognize the sacrifices that were made for me to get where I am today and it is imperative for me



Randi Nagahori, 2L

Placement: Los Angeles County Bar Association
Immigration Legal Assistant Project

Randi Nagahori, a rising 2L, will be working in Los Angeles, California during the summer of 2009 in the Immigration Legal Assistance Project division of the Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA). Randi will work to provide legal assistance and counseling to a variety of low-income individuals, alongside experienced immigration attorneys and volunteers. As a part of the Legal Assistance Project, Randi will help low income immigrants apply for fee waivers and adjustment of status, enabling qualified individuals to remain in the United States and seek employment, education and permanent status. As a 2004 graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, Randi hopes to promote access to justice for those who traditionally cannot afford assistance.

“The Immigration Project operates as a walk-in legal clinic and has provided me with a hands-on opportunity to perform meaningful work on exceptional cases of asylees, refugees, battered spouses, mentally impaired and transient individuals. Working in a non-profit environment fosters a sense of civic duty and promotes the value of community outreach.”



Thomas A. Oglesby, 2L

Placement: The Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation,
Chicago Legal Assistant Project

Tom Oglesby's commitment to service in the South Florida community is long-standing. Prior to commencing his legal studies, Tom worked as a social worker with medically deprived foster care children at Florida's Department of Children and Families. During his first semester he helped revive the Student Organization for Human Rights, becoming its president, and worked with the Florida Coalition for Human Trafficking. During the summer of 2009, Tom will conduct research and draft proposals for The Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation.

“Through the HOPE Fellowship Program, I have the unique opportunity to work with an international group of political scientists and lawyers to draft a proposal for Truth and Reconciliation for the African Great Lakes Region and raise awareness of the cycles of violence and impunity that have fed the world's deadliest conflicts for the last century.”





Paul Petrequin, 2L

Placement: Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Miami
Workplace Justice Project

Paul Petrequin entered law school with an existing passion for public service and international law. To combine these interests, Paul pursued a summer position with the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (FIAC). As a HOPE Fellow with FIAC, he will work closely with attorney Jennifer Hill as part of the Workplace Justice Project where he will be involved with efforts to address human rights violations in the workplace. Paul looks forward to bringing his experience back to UM by engaging in efforts to promote awareness and encourage involvement in human rights issues.

“Helping others without thinking of a return is the greatest activity any of us can engage in, and there are endless opportunities to pursue that path in the Miami area. It's equally sad, however, that so many opportunities translates into so many citizens being taken advantage of, but we must always remember that each of us can make a difference.”

Scott Roberts, 3L

Placement: Audubon Society of Florida

Scott Roberts is dedicated to raising awareness about environmental concerns and continues his efforts to bridge advocacy, education and outreach as a HOPE Fellow with the Audubon Society during the summer of 2009. His position will involve legal research and writing, community outreach, and policy research and analysis. As the Executive Vice President of External Affairs of the Environmental Law Society, Scott serves as a liaison between the law school and outside environmental groups, connecting law students to environmental law initiatives in the community. He is currently working on efforts to start an Environmental Law Clinic on campus.

“I am proud to be a part of the policy team at Audubon of Florida. Their strong commitment to Everglades restoration and to cutting edge conservation helps to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy Florida's unique environment.”





Megan Sayers, 3L

Placement: Department of Homeland Security,
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Megan Sayers has always had an intrinsic passion for achieving justice in the immigration process, and after clerking for an immigration judge at the US Department of Justice-Executive Office of Immigration Review, she proves to be an ideal candidate for a position with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). As an intern at DHS's Krome Detention Center regional office, Megan is committed to evaluating policies, ensuring fairness and implementing the changes coming from Washington. Committed to human rights and fair immigration policies, Megan will surely have a meaningful experience with the DHS.

"It is important to remember that while securing our country, we must not fail to protect human rights."

Shana Schoem, 2L

Placement: ACLU of Southern California

During the summer of 2009, Shana Schoem will be traveling to Los Angeles, California to intern with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California. The ACLU is well known for being at the forefront of civil rights and first amendment protection advocacy in the United States. Shana will be exposed to a wide variety of legal issues, including immigration, racial and gender discrimination, LGBTQ rights and prison reform. Shana has always wanted to become involved with the ACLU and is thrilled at the opportunity to be engaged in challenging legal work as a HOPE Fellow.



"Without the HOPE fellowship, I wouldn't be able to work on the issues that I'm passionate about - the issues that compelled me to pursue a career in the law. My experience working with the ACLU is more exciting, challenging and eye-opening than I could have imagined."





Ariel Shultz, 3L

Placement: The Legal Aid Society of Miami-Dade County

Ariel Shultz has decided to combine her passion for public service and her strong calling to family law by spending the summer of 2009 working at The Legal Aid Society of Miami-Dade. As a HOPE Fellow, she will help provide legal assistance to low income families, and will assist attorneys in preparing to represent children who appear before the Family Court. As an undergraduate at Tulane, Ariel dedicated time to assisting the victims of Hurricane Katrina in the New Orleans community. Her eyes opened to poverty and inequality, she committed herself to making a difference through the law.

“My summer experience with the Dade County Bar Association's Legal Aid Office has provided me with an opportunity to combine my passion for public service with my interest in family law. Working with victims of domestic violence has been an incredible way to help women in the greater Miami area realize their legal rights and receive the support they need.”

Ayn Lee Sing, 3L

Placement: Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. Tampa
L. David Shear Children's Law Center

With a long-standing commitment to children and families, Ayn Lee Sing plans to practice family law upon graduation. During the summer of 2009, Ayn will work at Bay Area Legal Services where she will assist with the provision of legal services for families. Ayn looks forward to working with family law attorneys to assist with client interviews, reviewing cases and conducting research. This placement is a great match for Ayn who has a longstanding tradition of service to children and families through the Guardian ad Litem and Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs.



“Volunteer work related to children is significant because of the opportunity to positively impact and help shape their future. The Children's Law Center's representation of foster care children ages birth through 5 is at the forefront of helping and advocating on behalf of children.”





Sean Siperstein, 2L

Placement: Kristi House, Miami

Sean Siperstein, a rising 2L from Bellmore, New York, will be working on behalf of minor victims of sex trafficking at Kristi House, a non-profit organization that strives to end the epidemic of child sexual abuse in Miami-Dade County. Sean will conduct extensive legal research and help develop a legislative package aimed at moving minor victims of sex trafficking from the Florida criminal justice system into the child welfare system. He will be working under the supervision of Kristi House's Executive Director, Trudi Novicki, and Richard Shiffrin, a former Miami-Dade prosecutor and former Deputy Attorney General of the United States in the Office of Legal Counsel. As a 2005 graduate of Brown University who spent three years working for progressive non-profit advocacy and legal organizations in Washington, DC before starting law school, Sean views his HOPE Fellowship as a unique opportunity to simultaneously advance human rights and combat organized crime. He looks forward to bringing opportunities for students to further engage in this broad endeavor to campus in the fall.

"Legal work in the public interest is intrinsically connected to understanding and engaging with politics and the lawmaking process. As a student of both realms, I find myself in a unique position to put this conviction into action that will improve the lives of vulnerable children."

Evan Sloop, 2L

Placement: Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Miami
Workplace Justice Project

Evan Sloop will spend the summer of 2009 working with the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (FIAC), advocating for workplace equality and justice on behalf of immigrants and working under the supervision of Jennifer Hill, director of the FIAC Workplace Justice Project. Evan comes to FIAC with a strong background in immigration issues, drawing from undergraduate experience at the International Affairs Council and at El Centro Latino, a non-profit dedicated to assisting Hispanic immigrants. At El Centro Latino, he assisted immigrants with job searches, landlord-tenant issues, and immigration problems. Evan is eager to continue his commitment to advocacy on behalf of disenfranchised individuals in our community.



"My summer internship at FIAC has allowed me to explore aspects of both employment and immigration law and to apply my legal education to have a positive impact in South Florida. Not only has the experience strengthened my advocacy skills, but it has also further inspired me to pursue a career in public interest."

