

Securing Justice: Eleven Cleveland-Marshall Law Students Receive the Law School's
Public Interest Summer Fellowships and Set to Work Serving the Poor Locally,
Nationally and Internationally
(or Why We Think We Have the Best Law Students in the World!)

This year the law school was able to offer Public Interest Fellowships to 11 students. The 2009 Fellows were chosen from many deserving applicants who wished to begin or continue work in public interest jobs during the summer season. According to Professor Pamela Daiker-Middaugh, who heads the law school's Pro Bono Program, the applicants this year were among the best in the history of the Summer Fellowships. Congratulations to all.

Maya Simek '10, a former social worker, will work on women's and children's legal rights this summer as a law clerk for Equal Rights Advocates in San Francisco. Under supervision of ERA lawyers, Maya will staff the advice and counseling hotline that provides legal counsel on issues of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, title IX enforcement, family medical leave and other employment issues. Her fellowship builds on her experience as a student in the law school's Employment Law Clinic.

Peter Zahirsky '12 is pursuing a dual degree with the law school and CSU's Levin College of Urban Affairs (JD/MPA). His fellowship is with the United States Department of Education in the Office for Civil Rights in Cleveland. Paul will research the legal background and investigate cases brought before the Office. He will also work with other summer associates on a large research project involving autism in children in cases being handled by the Office for Civil Rights.

Erika Frantz '12, a student in the law school's and the Levin College's dual JD/MPA Program, is spending ten weeks this summer as a volunteer with the Kilimanjaro Women Information Exchange and Consultancy Organization in Moshi, Tanzania. KWIECO is a 20-year-old non-profit organization that provides legal counsel to the area's residents on women's rights, children's rights, land rights and human rights. Erika's efforts to help the Tanzanians were inspired by an earlier volunteer experience in the South African Kingdom of Lesotho, where she worked with Habitat for Humanity.

Luisa Taddeo '10 plans on a career as a criminal defense attorney. Law summer she worked as a law clerk in the Juvenile Division of the Cuyahoga County Public Defender's Office, where, she writes, the public defenders "care very much about the practice of law and the administration of justice." Luisa hoped to go back once again this summer. Unfortunately, the County could not pay for her services this year; fortunately, her fellowship has allowed her to return as a legal intern to a job she loves. As a law clerk, she will be able to prepare for and try misdemeanor cases under the supervision of a veteran attorney.

Joanna Lopez '10 will be a member of the legal staff of the AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland, a non-profit organization providing "a compassionate and collaborative response to the needs of people infected, affected and at risk of HIV/AIDS." Joanna's

work with AIDs patients will focus on issues of civil rights, employment, housing and basic legal rights of men and women afflicted with AIDs. She writes that she hopes, eventually, to play a role in Cleveland's economic and social reemergence and, specifically, to be the kind of lawyer who works on problems that "have a major effect on underprivileged youth," especially youth from the Latino and the African American community.

Sarah Dixon '11 will work for Lakewood Alive, a community economic development corporation with a mission to improve the economic vitality of the city of Lakewood, Ohio. Sarah will work to improve housing conditions and reduce the involvement of courts in actions brought against low-to-moderate income residents and property-owners charged with housing code violations. A resident of Cleveland, Sarah writes that she hopes, in the future, to practice real estate law in an effort to help Cleveland and other cities recover from the foreclosure crises.

April Lea Stephenson'10 sought a fellowship in order to volunteer with the Fort Hall Law and Order Commission, which operates the justice system established by the Shoshone-Bannock Indian tribe on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation in Idaho. The Commission has jurisdiction over criminal misdemeanors, child protection cases and other civil cases, and April will assist in all phases of client representation. Fort Hall is a sovereign nation with its own bar exam. April will take the Fort Hall bar this summer in order to be of greater assistance to the Commission and to the members of the Shoshone-Bannock tribe. She writes that there is not a "single group of people in Southeastern Idaho more in need than the Shoshone-Bannock people of Fort Hall."

Four students will spend their summers working for organizations that provide free legal counsel to the poor. **Joseph Fell '11** and **Allison Lawson '11** will work for the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, and **James Griffin '10** and **Lynn Meadows '11** will work for the Akron Community Legal Aid.

Joseph Fell will work on several Legal Aid Society of Cleveland projects, including its free walk-in neighborhood advice and referral clinics. There, alongside volunteer lawyers, he will offer legal counsel to poor residents. Joseph will also volunteer in the LAS's Save the Dream Program addressing foreclosure problems; its Juvenile Law Project assisting parents in emergency situations; its Elder Law Project providing outreach to East Cleveland's aging population; its Bankruptcy By-Pass Project helping the elderly and poor with financial issues, and its Towards Employment program assisting residents find jobs.

Allison Lawson managed a battered women's shelter for three years in Summit County, Ohio, where she realized that a law degree would greatly aid her ability to advocate for victims of domestic violence. Alison is a wife and mother of one child and a stepmother of five. Her summer fellowship gives her the financial support she needs to advance her career in public service and continue her work for women and children as a member of the Legal Aid Society's Family Law Unit.

James Griffen, a U.S. Air Force veteran of the war in Iraq, will work for the Municipal Court Project, a model project of the Akron Community Legal Aid. His focus will be on providing legal counsel to unrepresented defendants in eviction and credit card suits with education about the court process and potential defenses they may have. He will also develop educational materials, help clients defend themselves against inappropriate consumer claims and assist in the Project's once-a-week free legal clinic.

Lynn Meadows will join James as a Summer Fellow in the Akron Community Legal Aid working in the Housing Practice Group, where she will aid clients afflicted with eviction, foreclosure, land contract and other housing law problems. Lynn notes that she became aware of the problem of preserving housing for the poor as a student at Georgetown University when a lawyer, pro bono, represented her and her roommates in a rental dispute.