

# Catching Up with the 2016 and 2017 ATJ Developing Leadership Interns

By Rachael M. Mills



Members of the 2016 and 2017 classes of the ATJ (Access to Justice) Developing Leadership Intern Program with representatives of the sponsoring law firms and other program participants. From left, Monte T. Mollere, Louisiana State Bar Association ATJ; Annie Lemoine, 2016, Loyola University College of Law; Anais Moore-Jaccard, 2017, Tulane University Law School; Christopher K. Ralston, Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P.; Judge Bernadette G. D'Souza, Orleans Parish Civil District Court; Leila Abu-Orf, 2017, Loyola University College of Law; Monette Davis, 2017, Southern University Law Center; Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson; MJ Hernandez, 2017, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center; Rachael M. Mills, Louisiana State Bar Association ATJ; Kara Brown, 2016, Southern University Law Center; Micah J. Fincher, Jones Walker LLP; Professor Robert E. Lancaster, LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center; Christopher M. Vitenas, Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C.; and Mark C. Suprenant, Adams and Reese, L.L.P.

**W**hen the concept of the ATJ (Access to Justice) Developing Leadership Intern Program was first developed three years ago, it quickly became apparent it would be unlike any other internship program. Only four interns are selected for each class — one from each of Louisiana’s four law schools and each sponsored by a law firm with a demonstrated commitment to access to justice — with the goal of cultivating the next generation of access to justice leaders in Louisiana.

To develop the skills necessary to become access to justice leaders, the interns divide their time between working with civil legal aid programs, observing district judges and shadowing access to justice leaders. Weekly programming focuses on the civil legal needs of low-income people; the ways in which organizations within the justice community address those needs; and how these services are increasing the quality of life for those served. The skills and lessons learned in the six-week program have already heavily influenced the participants’ law school careers and future legal plans.

When representatives of the Louisiana State Bar Association, the Louisiana Bar Foundation, Louisiana civil legal aid providers, the Louisiana District Judges Association, Louisiana law schools, the Louisiana Supreme Court and private bar law firms joined forces to create the intern program, the goal was not only to develop the necessary understanding of Louisiana’s indigent population but also to develop leadership skills within the interns. One of the advantages of the program is that interns are able to see the varied ways lawyers can work to support Louisiana’s civil legal aid network, whether it is working for a legal aid organization, volunteering pro bono hours while working with a law firm, becoming involved with a local or state bar association, or educating colleagues and peers about the dire need for civil legal aid and the huge impact it has on the individual receiving legal assistance and the community as a whole.

With the first class of interns now graduating from law school, the program organizers wanted to “catch up” with the



The 2016 class of the ATJ (Access to Justice) Developing Leadership Intern Program with representatives of the sponsoring law firms. From left, Christopher K. Ralston, Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P.; Sarah Smith-Clevenger, Tulane University Law School; Annie Lemoine, Loyola University College of Law; Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson; Kara Brown, Southern University Law Center; Hilary Renshaw, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center; Christopher M. Vitenas, Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C.; and Mark C. Suprenant, Adams and Reese, L.L.P.

#### Dedicated Sponsoring Law Firms

- ▶ Adams and Reese, L.L.P.
- ▶ Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C.
- ▶ Jones Walker LLP
- ▶ Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P.

#### 2016 Participating Judges

- ▶ Judge Bernadette G. D’Souza, Orleans Parish Civil District Court
- ▶ Judge John J. Molaison, 24th JDC
- ▶ Judge Suzan S. Ponder, Baton Rouge City Court
- ▶ Judge Lisa M. Woodruff-White, East Baton Rouge Family Court

#### 2017 Participating Judges

- ▶ Judge Jeffrey C. Cashe, 21st JDC
- ▶ Judge Bernadette G. D’Souza, Orleans Parish Civil District Court
- ▶ Judge Timothy S. Marcel, 29th JDC
- ▶ Judge John J. Molaison, 24th JDC
- ▶ Judge Lisa M. Woodruff-White, East Baton Rouge Family Court

#### Baton Rouge Participating Legal Aid Providers

- ▶ Baton Rouge Bar Foundation’s Pro Bono Program
- ▶ Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge
- ▶ Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (BR Office)
- ▶ The Parole Project

#### New Orleans Participating Legal Aid Providers

- ▶ Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans
- ▶ Louisiana Appleseed
- ▶ Louisiana Civil Justice Center
- ▶ Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (NOLA office)
- ▶ The Pro Bono Project of New Orleans

eight previous interns —what they are doing, what they are planning, and how the internship has shaped their law school experience and future career.

## 2016 ATJ Developing Leadership Interns

**Kara Brown**, intern for Jones Walker LLP, has served in several leadership positions in Southern University Law Center (SULC) organizations, including 3L class representative for SULC’s Student Bar Association, secretary for SULC’s Women in Law and clerk for rules for Delta Theta Phi Law Fraternity. She is the co-chair for the Fall Fest Committee, Beautification Committee, Elections Committee, Law Week Committee, the Barrister’s Ball Committee and the Big L/Lil L Committee. She is employed as a law clerk for the Louisiana State Employment Retirement System.

**Annie Lemoine**, intern for Adams and Reese, L.L.P., was appointed editor-in-chief of the *Loyola Journal of Public Interest Law*. She was responsible for organizing the *Journal’s* 2017 symposium, “Champions for Justice: Celebrating the Lives of Lolis Elie, J.D. ’59 and Sam Dalton, J.D. ’54,” publishing two volumes of the journal, and organizing service events with Hagar’s House and The ARC

of Greater New Orleans.

**Hilary Renshaw**, intern for Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C., has clerked for Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P., and Breazeale, Sachse, & Wilson, L.L.P. She is a senior associate of the *LSU Journal of Energy Law & Resources*.

**Sarah Smith-Clevenger**, intern for Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P., has clerked for Phelps Dunbar and King, Krebs & Jurgens, P.L.L.C., and was an extern for Judge James L. Dennis, U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. Following her May law school graduation, she is clerking for Judge Sul Ozerden of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi before joining Phelps Dunbar’s New Orleans office.

## 2017 ATJ Developing Leadership Interns

**Leila Abu-Orf**, intern for Adams and Reese, L.L.P., is a member of the *Loyola Law Review* and her casenote, “State ex rel Alden Morgan: A Small Step in the Right Direction for Louisiana’s Incarcerated Youth,” was published in the spring issue. This summer, she is working at the Southern Poverty Law Center in the criminal justice reform sector of the New Orleans office.

**Monette Davis**, intern for Jones Walker LLP, has become a member of the *Southern University Law Review* and won the best case note in the write-on competition. She will serve as editor-in-chief of the *Law Review*.

**MJ Hernandez**, intern for Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C., serves as the Louisiana State University Public Interest Law Society’s Community Service chair. He helped coordinate a donation drive for Lonestar Legal Aid in Texas after Hurricane Harvey. He will serve as editor-in-chief of the *Louisiana Law Review*.

**Anais Moore-Jaccard**, intern for Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P., is spending the summer at Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton, L.L.P., in New York City. Next year, she will serve as the editor-in-chief of Volume 93 of the *Tulane Law Review*.

*Rachael M. Mills is the Louisiana State Bar Association’s Access to Justice projects counsel. She earned her JD degree in 2015 from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center and was admitted to practice in Louisiana the same year. (rachael.mills@lsba.org; 601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA 70130)*



# SOLACE: Support of Lawyers/Legal Personnel — All Concern Encouraged

The Louisiana State Bar Association/Louisiana Bar Foundation’s Community Action Committee supports the SOLACE program. Through the program, the state’s legal community is able to reach out in small, but meaningful and compassionate ways to judges, lawyers, court personnel, paralegals, legal secretaries and their families who experience a death or catastrophic illness, sickness or injury, or other catastrophic event. For assistance, contact a coordinator.

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