

Akin Gump Pro Bono Scholars Program

First-Summer Public Interest Placements

The most important part of the Akin Gump Pro Bono Scholars Program is working with a public interest organization. Since the Program's founding in 2008, our 71 Pro Bono Scholars have worked at 32 different organizations, providing them with a strong foundation in public interest law and creating relationships that they carry through their careers. This document provides information about several potential placements for Pro Bono Scholars, which can be a guide to your own selection. The following organizations have hosted multiple Pro Bono Scholars over the past decade:

Bet Tzedek Legal Services (Los Angeles, California)

Four Pro Bono Scholars have worked with Bet Tzedek, including Los Angeles associates Josh Rubin (2013), Annie Banks (2014), A.Y. Mernick (2015) and Ursula Rothrock (2015).

Bet Tzedek provides free, comprehensive legal services for low-income individuals and families, assisting more than 20,000 people annually. Bet Tzedek provides services to the elderly (e.g., elder abuse, caregivers and conservators, benefits protection and advance planning); children (e.g., kinship care and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status); and Holocaust survivors (e.g., reparations); and in connection with economic justice (e.g., workers' rights, low-income tax clinic and small business development).

The Bronx Defenders (Bronx, New York)

Five Pro Bono Scholars have worked with The Bronx Defenders, including New York associate Elise Bernlohr (2014).

The Bronx Defenders provide innovative, holistic and client-centered criminal defense, family defense, civil legal services, social work support and advocacy to indigent people of the Bronx. They operate as a provider of Holistic Defense, working one-on-one with clients and families, as a community resource and as a force for systemic change. They challenge the entrenched problems that drive individuals into the justice system by harnessing the power of community organizing, leadership development, impact litigation and legislative reform.

Children's Law Center (Washington, D.C.)

Four Pro Bono Scholars have worked with CLC including Washington associate Sarah Williamson Kirwin (2015).

Children's Law Center has three main teams that promote its mission to help DC's children gain a solid foundation of family, health and education. The Families First team is devoted to

securing stable homes and families for children who are in the foster care system or at risk of entering foster care. The Healthy Together team is a medical-legal partnership, working with DC's healthcare providers to identify legal remedies to health problems. The Guardian ad Litem team represents DC children in custody battles, abuse and neglect cases, and other family cases.

Her Justice (New York, New York)

Five Pro Bono Scholars have worked with Her Justice, including Pro Bono Counsel Lauren Connell (2012) and New York associate Libbie Walker (2013).

Her Justice provides free legal services in the fields of family, divorce and immigration law to low-income women living in all five boroughs of New York City. Most of its clients are survivors of domestic violence, though this is not a requirement. Her Justice engages the talent and resources of New York City's law firms, bringing together committed lawyers and determined women to secure life-changing results.

Human Rights First (Houston, Texas; Los Angeles, California; New York, New York; and Washington, D.C.)

Four Pro Bono Scholars have worked with Human Rights First, including Washington associates Brad Powell (2013) and Amanda B. Lowe (2015).

Human Rights First is a legal advocacy, policy and action organization that promotes human rights and the rule of law in both the U.S. government and private companies. Opportunities for Pro Bono Scholars include advocacy and policy campaigns relating to asylum and refugees; national security, counterterrorism and anti-torture policy and outreach; and international religious freedom and due process.

Human Rights Initiative (Dallas, Texas)

Five Pro Bono Scholars have worked for Human Rights Initiative, including Dallas associate Lech Wilkiewicz (2011).

Human Rights Initiative (HRI) provides free legal services to immigrant survivors of human rights abuses, either internationally or domestically. HRI helps clients achieve valid immigration status in order to provide a way out of their traumatic and violent pasts. HRI primarily assists with asylum cases and representation of men, women and children seeking relief under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), with an 87% success rate for its asylum cases and a 99% success rate for all its other legal cases.

KIPP Foundation (San Francisco, California)

Seven Pro Bono Scholars have worked with KIPP, including Dallas associates John Clayton (2011) and Lauren York (2013), and Houston associate Jack Polisini (2015).

KIPP is a network of public charter schools educating early childhood, elementary, middle and high school students, serving nearly 90,000 students in 209 KIPP schools spread across the entire United States. All KIPP schools are united by the same goal: to provide students in educationally underserved communities with the tools, resources, skills, character and habits necessary to succeed in college and the competitive world beyond. The KIPP team has enjoyed immense success, as KIPP students complete college at a rate above the national average and four times higher than that of students from similar economic backgrounds.

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (Washington, D.C.)

Two Pro Bono Scholars have worked with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, including Washington associate Amanda McGinn (2014).

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is an organization aimed at securing equal justice for all through the rule of law, with a particular focus on the inequities facing racial and ethnic minorities. Its areas of focus include projects related to voting rights, educational opportunities, fair housing and community development, criminal justice, legal mobilization and economic justice.

Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.)

Two Pro Bono Scholars have worked with the Legal Aid Society, including Washington associate Chris Chamberlain (2014).

The DC Legal Aid Society provides direct representation to clients in a wide variety of areas, including family law, domestic violence, housing, public benefits and consumer law. In addition, Legal Aid conducts outreach and education, and advocates for changes in law, court practice and regulatory schemes that benefit the client community.

National Veterans Legal Services Program (Washington, D.C.)

Two Pro Bono Scholars have worked with the National Veterans Legal Services Program, including Dallas associate Eric Haitz (2014).

The National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLS) offers legal help to veterans from all eras who suffer from disability issues. Based in Washington, D.C., NVLS serves as a national support center on veterans law issues. Among other pro bono work, NVLS attorneys have continually represented veterans in court for disability benefits claims, won class action suits regarding benefits filed by Vietnam veterans associated with exposure to Agent Orange, and advocated for disability benefits for veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Public Counsel (Los Angeles, California)

Two Pro Bono Scholars have worked at Public Counsel, including 2016 PBS Matt Smith (UCLA Law Class of 2018).

Public Counsel is the largest pro bono law firm in the nation. Founded in 1970, Public Counsel strives to achieve three main goals: protecting the legal rights of disadvantaged children; representing immigrants who have been the victims of torture, persecution, domestic violence, trafficking and other crimes; and fostering economic justice by providing individuals and institutions in underserved communities with access to quality legal representation. Its practice areas include appellate law, veterans' advancement, children's rights, community development, consumer law, education rights, homelessness prevention and immigrants' rights.

Tahirih Justice Center (Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, D.C.; Houston, Texas; and San Francisco, California)

Six Pro Bono Scholars have worked with Tahirih Justice Center, including Washington counsel Josh Sekoski (2010) and New York associate Jung Hwa Song (2012).

Tahirih Justice Center is a national non-profit that has served more than 22,000 courageous individuals fleeing violence since 1997. Its mission is to end violence against women and girls. Tahirih Justice Center provides direct legal services, policy advocacy, training and education to protect immigrant women and girls fleeing gender-based violence.

Teach For America, (TFA) (New York, New York)

Four Pro Bono scholars have worked with TFA, including Washington associate Julia Furlong (2013) and New York associate Andrew Fox Lillywhite (2015).

TFA is a diverse network of leaders who confront educational inequity through teaching and work with an unwavering commitment from every sector of society to create a nation free from this injustice. They aim to eliminate educational inequality by enlisting high-achieving recent college graduates and professionals to teach for two or more years in low-income communities around the United States. They are working

toward the day when every child has an equal opportunity to learn, grow, influence and lead.

The following organizations have also hosted Pro Bono Scholars or have expressed an interest in hosting a Pro Bono Scholar in 2018:

ACLU of Massachusetts (Boston)

ACLU of North Carolina (Raleigh)

Advocates for Children of New York

Appleseed Network (Washington, D.C.)

Center for Court Innovation (New York, NY)

DNA – People’s Legal Services of Navajo Nation
(Window Rock, Arizona)

Equality Now (New York, NY & London)

Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality
(Seattle University, WA)

Inner City Law Center (Los Angeles)

International Senior Lawyers Project
(New York, NY & London)

Lawyers Without Borders
(Washington, D.C., New Haven, CT; London)

Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights (New Orleans)

MALDEF – Chicago

Mississippi Center for Justice (Jackson, Biloxi & Indianola)

National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership
(Washington, D.C.)

New Orleans Public Defenders

New Schools for New Orleans

ProBAR (Harlingen, Texas)

Pro Bono Institute (Washington, D.C.)

RAICES (San Antonio and other locations throughout Texas)

Reprive UK (London)

Sanctuary for Families (New York, NY)

Southern Africa Litigation Centre
(Johannesburg, South Africa)

Texas Appleseed (Austin)

Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid
(Austin and other locations across Southwest Texas)

Whitman-Walker Legal Clinic (Washington, D.C.)

Insight from Our Former Pro Bono Scholars



“As a pro bono scholar, I partnered with ProBAR in the Rio Grande Valley. ProBAR provides representation and other legal services to detained asylum seekers who could not otherwise afford representation. I handled all aspects of my client’s case, and the judge granted his asylum petition. My summer taught me foundational advocacy skills that I utilize in my practice today.”

– *Kallie Gallagher, Houston, Litigation Associate*



“As a Pro Bono Scholar, I got to work on a cutting-edge project to set up the first-ever corporate-sponsored Medical-Legal Partnership in the U.S., enabling Walmart to provide free legal services to underprivileged, sick kids in Arkansas. Akin Gump has continued to invest in that relationship, recently working with Walmart to develop an iPhone app quick reference guide for pro bono attorneys. This has proven to be an ongoing opportunity where I have been able to put my skillset to work supporting a broad array of people providing direct services to kids and families who need our help the most.”

– *Daniel Graver, Washington, D.C., Health Care Associate*



“At NVLSP, I split time among three general assignments. First, I coordinated individual-level advocacy efforts on behalf of specific veterans. Second, I attended committee and joint committee meetings related to the VA Reform Bill and drafted blasts for constituent and director review. And third, I spent a considerable portion of the summer reviewing Combat Related Special Compensation provisions of the DoD Authorization Bill between 2009 and 2013, during which time the legislation contained a scrivener’s error prompting retroactive overcompensation—a glitch that often resulted in a necessary corresponding debt waiver request.”

– *Eric Haitz, Dallas, Financial Restructuring Associate*



"It has been an honor and a pleasure to partner with the Tahirih Justice Center, first as a Pro Bono Scholar in 2010, again as a Summer Associate the following year and throughout my career at Akin Gump. As a Pro Bono Scholar, I received excellent mentorship and guidance during my internship at Tahirih, which involved work on asylum, U-Visa and VAWA cases. Each year, our DC summer associates work in teams, guided by Akin Gump and Tahirih attorneys, to help an immigrant woman self-petition for status under VAWA or apply for a U-Visa."

– *Josh Sekoski, Washington, D.C., Labor Counsel*



"I worked on asylum, VAWA and SIJS cases when I was at HRI. I also interviewed clients, wrote memos regarding certain Immigration and Nationality Act regulations, drafted client declarations in support of their cases, researched and prepared country conditions reports and worked with country conditions experts. Since joining Akin Gump, I have continued to work with HRI on several VAWA cases as part of Akin Gump's summer associate VAWA program."

– *Lech Wilkiewicz, Dallas, Corporate Associate*



"At Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, I interned in the family law section, which primarily supported women who had been victims of domestic violence. We aided these women in a variety of family-related issues, including protective orders, divorce proceedings and a variety of custody-related matters. I also assisted the immigration section at times, helping applicants apply for U-Visas."

– *Nafisa Bringe, Dallas, Litigation Associate*

Please visit <http://bit.ly/AGPBS> for more information on the program and how to apply.

Contacts

Steven H. Schulman

Pro Bono Partner, Washington, D.C.

+1 202 887.4071

sschulman@akingump.com

Lauren Connell

Pro Bono Counsel, New York

+1 212 872.7410

lconnell@akingump.com

Brooke Padgett

Pro Bono Coordinator, Washington, D.C.

+1 202 887.5072

bpadgett@akingump.com

Akin Gump

STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP

ABU DHABI
BEIJING
DALLAS
DUBAI

FORT WORTH
FRANKFURT
GENEVA
HONG KONG

HOUSTON
IRVINE
LONDON
LONGVIEW

LOS ANGELES
MOSCOW
NEW YORK
PHILADELPHIA

SAN ANTONIO
SAN FRANCISCO
SINGAPORE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP is a leading global law firm providing innovative legal services and business solutions to individuals and institutions. Founded in 1945 by Richard Gump and Robert Strauss with the guiding vision that commitment, excellence and integrity would drive its success, the firm focuses on building lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with its clients. Our firm's clients range from individuals to corporations and nations. We offer clients a broad-spectrum approach, with over 85 practices that range from traditional strengths such as appellate, corporate and public policy to 21st century concentrations such as climate change, intellectual property litigation and national security.