

MISSISSIPPI
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FOR JUSTICE

Celebrates

PRO BONO WEEK

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Protecting Homes by Preventing Foreclosure

When families lose their homes, neighborhoods falter and communities crumble. These days, it is hard to turn on the television or read the newspaper without seeing heartbreaking stats and stories about the housing crisis. With overwhelming *pro bono* support from the legal community, the Mississippi Center for Justice is helping families keep their homes.

Creating Assets for Homeowners

It is not often that Mississippi families receive more than \$1.5 million. But thanks to the incredible leadership of DLA Piper and the support of coastal attorneys such as Katharine Sampson and Woody Pringle, hundreds of families have received recovery grants and are turning their homes into meaningful assets.

Making a Cottage a Home

Affordable housing remains the greatest gap in hurricane recovery. The Mississippi Center for Justice has battled FEMA to stop it from taking money back from deserving families and pushed the governor to ensure that low-income renters are included in the recovery effort. During the past year, *pro bono* support from Kirkland & Ellis LLP and Latham & Watkins LLP has made the difference in our efforts to help residents of Mississippi Cottages keep their homes.

Pursing Equity in Disaster Recovery

Sometimes justice requires a national team to take a fearless stance on behalf of persons without power. The Boston-based law firm of Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C., is currently pursuing litigation against HUD, aiming to ensure that federal disaster aid meets its primary objective of fulfilling the housing needs of Mississippi's most vulnerable residents.

Dear Sharon

During *National Celebrate Pro Bono Week*, the Mississippi Center for Justice is pleased to join the American Bar Association and our colleagues across the country to recognize the efforts of *pro bono* attorneys, and to call on our colleagues to increase their existing *pro bono* contributions. In this newsletter, we highlight a few of the amazing *pro bono* projects that are improving communities and changing lives across our great state. These are merely snapshots -- a small window into a vast portfolio that involves more than 200 *pro bono* attorneys who, in 2008, gave more than 18,000 hours of volunteer time to make our work possible.

With your help, the Mississippi Center for Justice is addressing the overwhelming legal need in Mississippi. However, the call to action is not just one for the legal profession but for everyone who believes that all members of society are entitled to full and fair enjoyment of legal rights. Therefore, we share this week with all of our friends and partners.

The Center's *pro bono* now extends beyond Katrina-related issues to touch nearly every region of the state. Upon realizing what an impediment unclear property title can be for families, we have expanded our efforts to obtain insurable, marketable title throughout Mississippi thanks to Adams and Reese, Brunini Grantham Growers & Hughes and Young Williams. Furthermore, *pro bono* attorneys from around the country and within the Magnolia State have helped families avoid foreclosure and continue to ensure that children have access to healthcare, including mental health services and access to fair disciplinary systems. They have also initiated community development and micro-enterprise efforts.

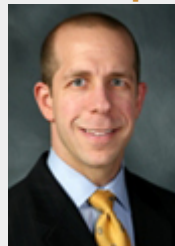
Each moment of *pro bono* time is deeply appreciated by our staff and our clients. Without you, we simply could not continue on our path to fill the extraordinary justice gap in Mississippi and to make it the model social justice state. One of our most dedicated volunteers recently told me that he did not volunteer in order to receive recognition, but to fulfill his earnest duty as an attorney and as a citizen to give back. I hope that we can all learn from his humility and dedication. Please take a moment with us this week to recognize your own contribution, to think of what we can accomplish together going forward, and to encourage others to become engaged.

With utmost gratitude,
Crystal Utley
Pro Bono Counsel

To learn more, visit our [Pro Bono Wish List](#), or contact me directly at cutley@mscenterforjustice.org.

From our volunteers...

DLA Piper

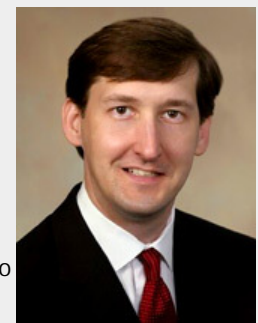


My experiences performing *pro bono* legal work on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the wake of Hurricane Katrina have had an enormous impact on my practice and my outlook on *pro bono* service. It is rare for a transactional attorney to be able to bring to bear her or his practice-specific skills on a hard core *pro bono* effort like the one DLA Piper has engaged in -- helping Hurricane Katrina victims through heirs' property issues and help them obtain the available federal grant dollars. It is even more rare to have the chance to help a group of individuals who are as in need of it and as deserving as our clients have been. The chance to work with world class public service organizations like the Center, The

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and others, showed me how *pro bono* work can be elevated to a level of professionalism and passion that I had never witnessed before. It has been an honor and a pleasure to be a part of the rebuilding effort and to work arm-in-arm with these amazing organizations. -- Adam Kruger, DLA Piper

Brunini, Grantham, Grower & Hewes

Until recently, I had not considered the benefits that attorneys could provide *pro bono* in the areas of real estate and wills and estates. A Hurricane Katrina recovery project really drew my attention to this need for many Mississippians. During this project, I repeatedly saw Gulf Coast residents who lacked good title to their damaged homes, generally because the record title holder was a deceased family member. Assisting residents with their title issues and their recovery was gratifying. Most importantly, the remedy created meaningful social and economic value to those affected by the Hurricane and the state. The Brunini law firm appreciates the opportunity to partner with the Mississippi Center for Justice in its effort to improve the availability of the legal system to more Mississippians. -- John Flynt, Brunini, Grantham, Grower & Hewes



Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.

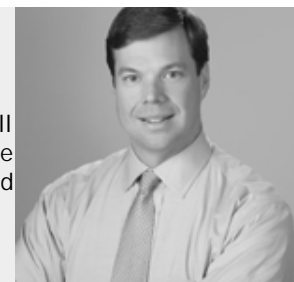


The return of the diverted \$600 million into a program to aid those desperately in need of housing destroyed by Hurricane Katrina would make it possible for people such as Dorothy McClendon and others to have a place to call home. That is why this lawsuit is important to us. -- Larry Schoen, Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.

Pictured (L-R): Larry Schoen, Amanda Carozza, Noah Shaw, Sue Finegan, Yalonda Howze. Not present: Andy Nathanson and Martha Koster

Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings

I have been fortunate to work with the Mississippi Center for Justice in representing Hurricane Katrina victims in contractor fraud cases. In an effort to rebuild their homes, the clients I have represented fell victim to an unscrupulous contractor who either did not complete the work, did inferior work, or in some cases literally took the money and ran. My clients have all shared a common thread that I believe is very telling about their character—none have wanted to pursue a legal action to recover a large sum of money; they merely want the contractor to be held accountable. -- Jeffrey Blackwood, Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings



Please visit our website at www.mscenterforjustice.org.
Donate to support *pro bono* work at www.mscenterforjustice.org.