

Q. Student Comments

Student Comments

(Items noted with * were previously sent to the BOG)

***Leah Aden**

**NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund
Center for Civil Rights Fellow 2009-2011
Howard University Law School 2006**

As a result of my Fellowship with the Center for Civil Rights, I currently am a Senior Attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), this nation's premier civil rights and racial justice law firm. But for the litigation and community empowerment training that I received as an Education Fellow with the Center, I would not be immersed in the democracy building work of protecting the right to vote at LDF today.

LDF's third President and Director Counsel, the late Julius Chambers, founded the Center for Civil Rights – I suspect to transform for the better the lives of all of the residents of his home state and other states in the region, just as LDF, for 75 years, has pushed our country to live up to its constitutional promises. Given Chambers' leadership of the Center and its mission to use community-based advocacy, legal education, and scholarship to elevate communities of color in the South, I applied to serve as an Education Fellow with the Center. Like Chambers and another legendary lawyer, UNC Dean Jack Boger, who too was instrumental in founding and developing the Center, I desired to have my life's work be connected to improving the lives of people of color in our country.

I also set out after law school, initially by clerking for a federal district court judge, and then by serving as the Center's Education Fellow, to receive the legal training to become a part of the next generation of civil rights attorneys. I sought then as I do now to receive the advocacy training that is necessary to have a career like Julius Chambers and all of the lawyers that are associated with this Center – careers focused on the democracy-perfecting work that he and other lawyers vigilantly pursued. As a Fellow, I have been profoundly influenced by the mentors that I gained in Chambers and all of the Center's other leadership like Dean Boger, former Center Deputy Director and UNC Professor Charles Daye, the late civil rights lawyer Ashley Osment, current Center Managing Attorney and Adjunct Professor Mark Dorosin, and other Center staff. As a Center Fellow, I gained first-hand experience in the nuts and bolts of litigation practice. For example, I helped to reopen one of Chambers' school desegregation cases in Pitt County on behalf of families of color to further integrate and bring high equality resources to that County's schools. In addition to learning how to engage clients, develop a factual record, and participate in motion practice and settlement proceedings, I also learned the importance of developing, nurturing, and maintaining respect from your clients. That latter lesson was gleaned from having met an original client of Chambers, who, many decades later, expressed great respect and appreciation for the representation that Chambers had provided his family.

Moreover, with respect to practical advocacy training, as a Fellow, I had the opportunity to

advocate for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's public school students' constitutional right to a sound education, *i.e.*, an integrated, world-class education that Chambers paved the way for with his landmark litigation against the school district in the 1970s. Working on the *Leandro* litigation provided me with significant opportunities to interact with clients, attend court-ordered status conferences, and strategize with Center staff, UNC scholars, and communities throughout the State about how best to use state constitutional law to ensure equal education opportunity for all North Carolina students.

As a Fellow, I learned many lessons in professionalism. For example, I could not recall someone asking Chambers or any of the other Center staff for assistance and being turned away without, at minimum, being connected to other resources in the state. Today, at LDF, I often think of that training when conducting intake and providing referral assistance to communities of color when their needs fall outside of LDF's impact litigation work in the areas of education, economic justice, criminal justice, and voting.

As a Center Fellow, I also received many lessons in oral advocacy and persuasion. For example, in one noteworthy exchange with Chambers while working on his Pitt case, I met him to get his approval on a motion and brief that the team had drafted. Chambers employed the Socratic method, grilling me hard on the law and facts underscoring our request, asking me why we were seeking to reopen the case, and then testing my understanding of our goal with the litigation. This lesson too has served me well at LDF in advocating for filing impact litigation to challenge racial discrimination in voting, and in preparing me for oral arguments, including a recent one that I had before the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

Since the Center is uniquely situated within the UNC School of Law and larger university setting, as a Fellow, I assisted with organizing a national conference and policy briefing on Capitol Hill, which produced a law review and book on school integration strategies following a U.S. Supreme Court decision that limited, but did not end, opportunities for the consideration of race in school assignments. I learned through the Center's nurturing and production of scholarship of its role in supporting the larger advocacy for racial inclusion.

Similarly, as a Fellow, I learned about the critical role of public education in advancing fair educational opportunity. The Center afforded me many opportunities to travel throughout the state to speak with local communities about the value of diversity in K-12 education, and the legally permissible ways that communities and school districts can work to achieve diverse, high achieving schools for all students. Finally, as a Fellow, I had many opportunities to supervise UNC Law students who provided *pro bono* assistance to the Center. Not only was this *pro bono* assistance instrumental in my having resources as a Fellow to pursue legal and non-legal advocacy on behalf of North Carolina communities, but also it served as an opportunity for me to learn how to work alongside colleagues and manage work, as well as to allow me to serve as a mentor to another potential generation of civil rights advocates.

As a result of these varied and important experiences as a Fellow with the Center, I subsequently was awarded another prestigious four-year fellowship, whereby I spent two years as a litigation associate with Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver, and Jacobson, LLP, an international law firm based

in New York City, where I worked on complex commercial litigation and civil rights *pro bono* matters. Subsequent to those two years, I completed another two year stint as a staff attorney, primarily working on voting rights litigation, with LDF; I have since continued to serve as a Senior Attorney at LDF. I earned this four-year fellowship, subsequent to working at the Center, in large part because of the tools that I acquired at the Center for Civil Rights as an Education Fellow, which both Fried Frank and LDF recognized were assets that would serve their respective organizations.

Individually and collectively, my experiences as an Education Fellow at the Center for Civil Rights were foundational to my training in civil rights advocacy in terms of my exposure to the substance of the work, the key advocates (legal, community-based, in scholarship) engaged in it in the South and across the nation, and the public education component of civil rights work. Without these experiences as a Center Fellow, I am confident that my other subsequent professional accomplishments would not have been possible; indeed, my Fellowship with the Center has been a stepping stone for the civil rights and racial justice work that I do today with LDF.

S. Maryam Al-Zoubi
Assistant District Attorney
Office of the Bronx District Attorney
UNC Law 2016

When I came to UNC, I had just graduated with a Masters degree from the University of Chicago. I was heavily recruited by the admission staff and was awarded a full tuition scholarship, the Chancellor's Scholarship, that is awarded to only ten students a year. But I was courted by other schools and also given very generous scholarships there. In the end, I decided to attend UNC for three reasons: (1) during my impromptu tour I saw professors in their offices with their doors open for students; (2) that I would be educated by the institution that was ranked the highest in the nation for public interest; and (3) the sheer number of Centers attached to the school that could I work in to gain the litigation experience for my career.

So, what good has interning at the Center of Civil Rights brought? A wealth of experience greater than I know you imagine. Because if you knew how important the Center's litigation is to students you would not be considering stopping their litigation abilities.

The Center for Civil Rights internship gave me the experience to obtain and excel in my current job. I externed at the Center for one semester. I also externed at the Orange County District Attorney's office for nine months. I was hired before graduation to be a prosecutor in New York City, Bronx County. My experience at the Center has given me more than my experience at the DA's office. To anybody that has not attended law school or even attended recently, this may seem strange. But when you look at the facts you'll learn that it is not. A law student cannot graduate and become a litigator without litigation experience. And experience in litigation does not discriminate on the type of law.

These are highlights of the ways the Center has helped me become an experienced litigator as a prosecutor:

1. **Thorough Research.** This cannot be emphasized enough. Three years of law school research cannot give you the experience of researching hard legal topics in the moment. Law students don't turn in homework or small papers. We write one big final paper for a course. We have months to research and prepare. That is excellent in helping us build the foundations for research. But real life isn't like that. In my work I have to be able to research issues quickly yet thoroughly. Sometimes a judge will question my argument and I have 20 minutes during a recess to find the court precedents I need. The Center gave me the opportunity to help with research for their litigation and it often had to be conducted yet thoroughly. Criminal court in North Carolina does not require such quick research.
2. **Appellate/Court:** Writing for the Center has helped me respond to motions in court today. If you are not aware of this already I'll let you know- academic writing and court briefs and motions are extremely different. Law school teaches you academic writing. But for courtrooms lawyers we need practice for courtroom writing. The Center asked me to conduct some research into an appeal they were drafting. I researched and found what they needed. But because the Center had encouraged me from the beginning to join in on the process, I went a little further and began drafting the outline for sections that would use this research. I presented it to my supervisors and hoped it would help. Remarkably, they used some of my actual writing and asked me to help them edit the final draft. I am credited on the appeal as a co-author. You learn more on how to write legal motions from editing one motion than from reading thousands of court cases over three years. First hand experience cannot be emphasized enough. You can learn the theories but until you are given the chance to apply, you won't be able to use your knowledge. I did not have luxury to learn this when I started my job. Courtroom lawyers have to be able to hit the ground running. So much depends on our work. Victims' lives, our cities safety; it is crucial that I exit law school more ready than others to walk into a courtroom.
3. **Interviewing people-** I interview complaining witnesses everyday and I use the skills I learned interviewing potential clients for the Center. We could not represent most everyone who called but we directed them to people who could. I learned how to interview, take notes, and be empathetic all at the same time. If you have never had to interview a victim's of a crime then you do not know the difficulty of listening to someone's pain while maintaining your role as a lawyer.

I truly hope that you thoroughly consider what I have written here to you today. I am a skilled litigator but that would not be possible without the Center for Civil Rights and the skilled supervision of its talented legal staff.

I am a proud double Tar Heel and I am able to help recruit talented students to UNC by telling them about my experiences. If you stop the Center from being able to litigate you will create such a fall for the Law School's reputation, its ability to recruit talented students like me, and most importantly- you will stop the school from graduating competent litigators in the field.

***Mark Bowers**
ICS (Immigration Counseling Service)
UNC Law 2013

I am writing to express my dismay upon learning of UNC Board member Steve Long's proposed rule preventing university centers from participating in litigation. I can only assume that this is a not so veiled attack on the UNC School of Law's Center for Civil Rights. As a graduate of Carolina Law ('13) and a former intern of the Center, I protest the passage of this rule. My summer at the Center for Civil Rights was a marked highlight of my time at Carolina. I feel I learned more about the practice of law in those few months than I did at any other point in my education. Under the tutelage of Mark Dorosin and Elizabeth Haddix, I was exposed to numerous types of suits and legal advocacy that I did not experience at other internships or in the classroom. I received hands on training with complex discovery, investigation, client relations, and crafting pleadings. I had the opportunity to witness argument in boardroom, courtroom, and even the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. I was introduced to the long legacy of civil rights struggles in the South, and inspired by these intrepid and honorable professionals. Professionals that are a monument to what we should all strive to become in ourselves: selfless, dedicated, and impassioned.

The trajectory of my career has been one of public service. I have chosen not to walk a path to wealth and power, and have instead stood shoulder to shoulder with those who have been left behind, forgotten, abused, and over-looked. It was my time at the Center for Civil Rights that both inspired me to take this path and to give me the tools to be successful on it.

The Center for Civil Rights does a great service to the students of Carolina Law as a place to learn and grow as attorneys. The Center adds to and deepens the reputation of Carolina Law through its mission and its excellence. The Center provides invaluable support and service to the people of North Carolina who, without it, would have so much less voice. Ultimately, a state and its people are not judged by those who have the most. They are judged on how they treat those with the least. North Carolina and its universities need the Center for Civil Rights; please do not allow ideology and bipartisan rancor close the doors on one of the shining lights of the Old North State.

Eldrin Deas
Doctoral student, UNC School of Education

As a doctoral student from the UNC School of Education working at the Center for Civil Rights, I sat at the nexus of academia and public service—both pillars of the UNC system's mission—and I was able to connect my educational research experience with legal research to help shift and raise public consciousness concerning issues such as school diversity and economic resource allocation, among many others. I learned how to analyze state and local school district policy and gained practical experience in writing memos for multiple stakeholder groups. While traveling with Center attorneys to visit clients and sitting in on court hearings, I learned how to organize

and engage communities in productive ways and how to communicate their voices to policymakers and the judiciary. Overall, through the Center's advocacy and litigation work, I learned how to move from theory and passion to action.

These experiences have directly influenced how I think about my work as an education consultant, researcher, and program evaluator. The year after I concluded my work at the Center, I served as Analyst for District Supervision and Support with the Connecticut State Department of Education. My policy analysis and community organizing work with the Center allowed me to confidently engage with teachers, principals, mayors, superintendents, town councils, local boards of education, and community partners and informed my understanding of the unique and complex ways in which each of these stakeholders are connected. In my current role, I am part of a multi-partner research team that is investigating how school turnaround efforts are being implemented in North Carolina. Much like I did during my time at the Center, I travel around the state to learn from diverse communities with rich histories who want their voices heard. Without the guidance and training I received from the Center, I would not likely have gained the requisite knowledge and dispositions to be able to effectively work to create substantive and sustainable change on behalf of the people who need it most.

Jon Duberstein
Assistant Federal Public Defender
U.S. District Court, Middle District, NC
UNC Law 2007

I owe the Center a LOT in terms of putting me in a good position to be a successful, happy, fulfilled attorney.

The Center for Civil Rights was my first real practical experience as a litigator. I learned everything. How to draft a brief, how to interview clients, how to decide what to include and what to leave out of a complaint, how petitions for certiorari work, how to build cooperation among stakeholders to avoid litigation (we were working a lot with Charlotte-Meck Schools and trying to convince actors to change policy for the benefit of students without lawsuits). I also learned an enormous amount about professionalism. My sense is there are sometimes problems with the perception that non-profit or public interest law outfits are not as professional as their private practice counterparts. But this was not my experience at the CRR. From Julius Chambers--who embodied the term professional as well as any lawyer I ever go to work with--to Jack Roger, who even decades after his white shoe firm experience as a young lawyer brought a rigor and sense of professionalism that would make many big law partners blush, to Ashley Osment, who looked and talked a lot like a country lawyer, but more than held her own in any courtroom or conference room she entered, engaging with other attorneys and with clients in an amazing professional manner that never for all that lost its warmth or charm. Actually, working at the CCR maybe more than anything made me realize how much I had to learn. And it was a good thing I had such great role models.

I think to echo what I've already said, there were some in private practice (where I began my career) who eyed my public interest experience with skepticism when I began practicing. But my background with the CCR prepared me directly for practice. I already knew about keeping

rigorous, organized notes, how to speak to other lawyers, I'd had the chance to draft motions and briefs, and to work on a Supreme Court amicus brief. And beyond that I knew how to talk to other lawyers, at least much more so than I would have without my CCR experience. I can't think of much I did at the Center that DIDN'T translate directly into what I did afterwards, and it still informs the way I practice law today as an Asst. Federal Public Defender.

Corey Frost
North Carolina Legal Aid
UNC Law 2015

Most rising 3L students choose to participate in either a clinic or an externship. I specifically sought an externship with the UNC Center for Civil Rights because of the skills I would gain as an extern and to learn what it means to practice civil rights law. I can say without reservation that I made the right decision in opting for an externship at the Center for Civil Rights.

As an extern I was exposed to every aspect of civil litigation. I interviewed potential clients and attended meetings with current clients. This was particularly valuable because the law school's class on client interviewing and counseling is only offered once a year and fills up quickly. I researched case law to support motions and appellate briefs as well as drafted portions of motions and briefs. I participated in meetings with pro bono attorneys who served as co-counsel to the Center's litigation. I reviewed materials gathered during discovery and helped to draft discovery requests. I assisted the Center's attorneys as they prepared for oral arguments by attending mootings and offering feedback. Aside from being exposed to the nuts and bolts of complex civil litigation, working with the attorneys at the Center for Civil Rights taught me a great deal about professionalism while working with co-counsel, opposing counsel, and with clients.

The experience I gained as an extern at the Center enabled me to hit the ground running when I started working at Legal Aid of North Carolina. Although the type of law I practice is different from that done by the Center for Civil Rights, I use many of the same skills. Every week I interview potential clients. I research case law to cite when I have a hearing in a domestic violence or unemployment insurance benefits case. I draft complaints and motions in my child custody cases. I sometimes co-counsel with private attorneys or work closely with the Assistant District Attorney on my domestic violence cases. With regard to discovery, I am preparing for my first deposition and getting ready to respond to my first set of interrogatories in one of my cases.

When I started working at Legal Aid, I was much more confident because of my time at the Center. I remember being very nervous the first time I had to interview a client by myself as a law student. But because I had interviewed several clients while externing at the Center, I was much more comfortable interviewing clients when I started at Legal Aid. I am grateful for the skills I gained at the Center for Civil Rights and would recommend that students interested in civil litigation get involved in the Center's work through an internship, externship, or a pro bono project.

***Sarah Krishnaraj**

UNC Law 2008

UNC Center for Civil Rights Fellow 2008-2010

I served as the Center's Community Inclusion and Economic Development Fellow from 2008-2010 and respectfully request that the Board take no action towards closing the Center, altering its current structure, or severing its ties with the University of North Carolina School of Law. As is the case with many other CCR Fellows, the Center provided me with my first job upon graduation from law school. As I'm sure know by now, part of the Center's mission is to "train the next generation of civil rights lawyers" and the Center and its staff attorneys excel beyond compare. For newly minted lawyers the Center provides a nurturing, yet rigorous, environment in which to hone their legal and advocacy skills. During my tenure, I engaged in a wide variety of legal strategies that would not have been possible elsewhere. I spearheaded the Center's legislative advocacy efforts to allow for certain low-income communities to be annexed by neighboring municipalities to gain access to vital public health services. I also worked with minority and low-income neighborhoods to build relationships with local governments to secure federal funding to build necessary infrastructure within these communities, mainly water and sewer service. In the rare instance that we pursued a litigation strategy, I assisted with all aspects of the casework – drafting legal documents, legal research, depositions and court hearings, mediation, and working closely with the clients to ensure we provided accurate representation of their needs and desired resolutions. All law students graduate having read thousands of pages of case law and poured over Blue Book citations. But few, if any of us, are truly prepared for the actual practice of law. The Center provides an invaluable and unique opportunity for recent graduates to practice under the guidance and tutelage of seasoned attorneys in a supportive, yet challenging, environment.

Following my work with the Center and a brief stint as a full-time caregiver to my first child, I returned to the practice of law with Greater Boston Legal Services in their Consumer Rights division. In this role, I represented minority and low-income individuals with consumer protection issues, mainly related to the foreclosure crisis and discriminatory lending practices. Having stepped away from practice for 15 months, I nonetheless felt prepared to return, drawing on the confidence and skills I gained while at the Center. My family recently relocated to Charlottesville, Virginia where I was appointed by City Council to serve as a member of its newly formed Human Rights Commission. I am honored to be able to serve my new community in this manner and know the City Council members selected me in large part due to my work at the Center. I recently began my second year on the Commission and am leading an effort to study the racial disproportionality and disparities associated with contact between minority citizens and law enforcement officers.

I wish I could report to you that sixty years following the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case to end school segregation and fifty years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that my work at the Center was merely putting the finishing touches on the long arc toward justice Martin Luther King so eloquently spoke about. But, unfortunately, I, as well as others fighting for fair and equal treatment of minority and low-income communities, remain in the trenches. The Center is uniquely situated to have a profound effect on the progress

of our state and nation with regard to constitutional protections, particularly for the vast segments of our population that have been denied these protections for so long. Indeed, it already has.

As a three-time graduate of the University of North Carolina, a native North Carolinian, and former Fellow at the UNC Center for Civil Rights, I urge you to thoughtfully consider the magnitude of your decisions regarding the UNC Center for Civil Rights and the many North Carolinians who depend upon it.

Diane DePietropaolo Price

UNC Law 2008

UNC Center for Civil rights intern, summer 2007

To say that "advocacy is inherently partisan" and has no place in a public system is ridiculous. Apparently that means that law schools have no place in a public system, since so many of the clinical practice and pro bono efforts of law students are "advocacy." Equality for all should not be considered a partisan issue.

Courtney Ross

IBM

UNC Law 2014

While I was a student at UNC School of Law, I worked as an extern for the UNC Center for Civil Rights. I had a phenomenal experience there, and gained community outreach skills through voter outreach presentations, and analysis skills by researching school districting in North Carolina counties. A significant part of what made my educational experience so unique was the opportunity to be directly exposed to litigation practice. I watched attorneys prepare their arguments for trial, and saw firsthand the work that went into preparing a suit. My experiences at the UNC Center for Civil Rights gave me a unique lens and skill set that I bring to my current full-time position at IBM. Not only was this an exceptional educational experience for me, but I was able to see first hand the impact that UNC Center for Civil Rights' representation of North Carolina communities made. Because of my personal experience witnessing this influence, I feel strongly that the UNC Center for Civil Rights has a unique and incomparable positive impact on North Carolina communities. I am proud to have graduated from UNC School of Law. One of the reasons that I feel lucky to have graduated from the law school is the school's direct involvement with communities, and pro bono opportunities, many of which are provided by the UNC Center for Civil Rights. The work of the UNC Center for Civil Rights is in line with the UNC systems' mission of service to the state, and the pursuit of public service at UNC School of Law.

***Lauren E. Shor**

Covington & Burling, LLP

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011;

UNC School of Law, 2015

This is the second letter I have had the privilege of writing you. The first, written in February 2015, was written in favor of the UNC School of Law's Center for Civil Rights (the "Center"). I was relieved at the time when the Board resolved to allow the Center continue with its important work. Today, I am discouraged to learn that the Board is once again considering handicapping a remarkable institution of legal learning and I write to urge you not to do so. The charge against the Center today is that its actions stray too far from the academic purpose of the law school. As a former intern at the Center, a UNC law graduate, and a proud North Carolinian, I strongly disagree with this characterization. My time as an intern at the Center is a foundational piece of my legal career.

I cannot overemphasize the educational benefits of my time at the Center. I was an intern at the Center when I first wrote sections of legal briefs. These were not the graded writing exercises designed to teach me how to craft a legal argument, but advocacy that would end up before a court. I was an intern at the Center when I conducted my first hours of document review. This was not a Civil Procedure class explaining the discovery process to me, but time spent mining documents. I was an intern at the Center when I had my first interactions with clients. This is a skill that no professor can teach in a classroom and is far more complex in reality than any course could cover. As important as in-classroom legal learning is, it can never offer the same benefits as hands-on training. As described in Steven B. Long's February 14, 2017 memorandum, the work of a law school, and particularly that of a truly public institution such as UNC, is to produce practice-ready attorneys. Clinic work, internships, and externships all serve the important purpose of bolstering classroom learning. The Center does this exceptionally well.

Before I conclude, I must also challenge the idea that the Center should not exist because it lacks a "diversity of opinion." As an initial matter, just as it would be inaccurate to say that each member of the Board of Governors believes the same things, it is equally inaccurate to say that each individual working at the Center does. But more importantly, the Center offers a diversity of thought within our state and nation, and even within the liberal Chapel Hill. Perhaps this is the true charge against the Center—it represents a perspective different from your own. I would be ashamed to know that the governing body of the greatest public institution in the United States was so blinded by partisan politics that it used its power to silence an educational center it perceived as opposition.

Public education in North Carolina has historically been great because it has created millions of thoughtful and well-educated citizens who have gone on to serve at all levels of our government, courts, businesses, and schools. This is our legacy. UNC School of Law, with its alumni sitting on the North Carolina Supreme Court and in boardrooms and courtrooms around the state and the country, is great because it offers hands-on learning experiences and prepares its graduates to confront the realities of law practice. This too is our legacy. North Carolina is great when our schools, at every level, are great. Our nation is great when we meaningfully debate complex issues, when we bring these debates to our courts and trust them to reach fair decisions, and when power—Democratic or Republican, private or public—is challenged. The Center has a

strong, positive, national reputation that benefits the law school and its graduates because it does all of these things in our name.

At the time of my last letter, I was a third year law student. I had not yet begun my legal career and I knew then how important the Center's work was to my legal training. Now that I am a proud graduate of the UNC School of Law, I must reiterate how important my time at the Center was to my development as a lawyer and how important the Center is to North Carolina.

***M. Casey Weissman-Vermeulen
Office of General Counsel, HUD
UNC School of Law, Class of 2012**

I write to express my dismay that the BOG is considering shutting down the Center for Civil Rights or otherwise restricting the critical work of its staff. As a Carolina Law alum, former Center for Civil Rights intern, and practicing civil rights attorney, I can attest that taking such action would undermine both the mission of the law school and the education of its students.

I had the privilege of interning at the Center for Civil Rights following my second year of law school. Under the supervision of the Center's attorneys, I gained invaluable practical legal experience, which included interviewing clients, drafting public records requests, and researching potential legal claims on behalf of Center clients seeking to protect their communities from environmentally hazardous land uses. Beyond the tangible legal skills I developed as a Center intern, my experience at the Center fostered my interest in fair housing law, which influenced my selection of subsequent coursework and internships as a law student and led me to my first job upon graduating from Carolina Law. As a fair housing attorney at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, I continue to hold this job today (however, the opinions expressed in this letter are solely my own).

Given the direct connection I draw between my internship at the Center and my current work assisting victims of housing discrimination, I cannot overstate the value that my experience at the Center added to my legal education at UNC. For that reason, I have trouble comprehending why the BOG would question the worth of the Center's work to Carolina Law and the broader UNC community.

However, even setting aside the professional experience and inspiration I personally gained as a Center intern, I believe that the sentiment expressed by some members of the BOG that the Center should not be engaged in advocacy work is fundamentally misguided. The quintessential responsibility of a lawyer is to zealously advocate on behalf of his or her clients. The mission of UNC Law is first and foremost to prepare lawyers that are capable of doing just that. Effective advocacy on behalf of a client is not limited to the confines of a courtroom and often entails a range of advocacy strategies, including negotiation, community outreach and education activities, and public policy efforts. What makes the Center for Civil Rights so valuable to the

educational mission of Carolina Law is that it provides law students with opportunities to develop skills useful to the varied advocacy roles they may hold as future members of the legal profession. Thus, whether students later practice civil rights law, like myself, or instead pursue an alternative field, the training gained from interning or volunteering with the Center helps them to become well-rounded advocates, and, therefore, more effective lawyers.

I urge the BOG to recommend against shutting down the Center for Civil Rights. The work of the Center is vital not only to the individuals and communities it represents, but also to the Carolina Law students it trains and mentors.

Barry L. Williams
Senior Attorney, Social Security Administration

The experience and knowledge I gained from working at the UNC Center for Civil Rights (Center) has been invaluable. When I came to the UNC School of Law, I knew that I wanted a career in public service. I was awarded a Chancellors' Scholarship, the law school's highest merit-based award. During my matriculation, I was a summer intern with a primary focus in education. We were deeply involved in groundbreaking legal research and advocacy regarding the *Leandro* case. One of my major projects was an extensive memorandum in which I assessed and contrasted the human and financial inputs at all the high schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) and formulated methodologies for increased student academic performance at the high-poverty schools. The Center intervened in a case against the State of North Carolina and State Board of Education, and the intervention was granted based on the failure of CMS to provide sufficient human, fiscal, and educational resources to its high-poverty schools. Working closely with the Center's directors and attorneys provided me with the dual benefits of (1) first-hand interaction with accomplished mentors such as the late Julius Chambers and former Dean Jack Boger, who have led the cause for the advancement of civil rights and social justice and (2) involvement in research, advocacy, and litigation that combat present-day discriminatory practices and policies.

Because of my passion to advance the Center's mission and my desire to continue receiving training in the areas of research, advocacy, and litigation I applied to be a Postdoctoral Fellow. During my nearly two-year fellowship, I gained a wealth of significant practical experience. In addition to facilitating and presenting at numerous meetings and conferences on community inclusion and economic development, I also drafted a variety of legal documents and memoranda for legal proceedings and assisted Center leadership with litigation in NC Superior Courts and the NC Court of Appeals. Across our State, I met with low-income, minority families and communities to determine their needs and the best advocacy strategies to meet those needs. On behalf of the Center's client community organizations, I lobbied in the NC General Assembly and analyzed the implications of state and federal laws and regulations on their communities. In addition, I managed, supervised, and evaluated summer interns, who accompanied me in extensive, grassroots public education and outreach efforts in marginalized communities. We secured grants to help fund our work at the Center, and we secured more than \$3 million in grants for basic public utilities for three communities who had been systemically excluded from town boundaries for more than a century.

After completing my fellowship, I served as the first Diversity Program Coordinator at Conservation Trust for North Carolina, a nonprofit organization. In this position, I used practical skills I gained at the Center to provide legal and technical assistance to minority and marginalized families across our State, enabling them to retain land assets and make them profitable. Moreover, I engaged in legislative advocacy and policy research in these areas. Based on the model used by the Center, I spearheaded a statewide diversity internship program, with a goal of creating an employment pathway for future leaders. Using the grant-writing skills I gained at the Center, I successfully wrote grants to help fund these internships and managed grant programs to fund diversity initiatives at more than two dozen organizations across North Carolina. In short, but for the practical skills I gained at the Center, I would not have been able to plan, coordinate, and implement a multifaceted, statewide, and innovative diversity program – a program that is continuing to dismantle systemic inequality in the conservation sector. I have continued my work in public service in North Carolina, as I currently serve as a Senior Attorney for the Social Security Administration's Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) in Fayetteville. We process appealed disability decisions, hold hearings, and issue decisions. My position encompasses many responsibilities, which have included adjudicatory authority for fully favorable, on-the-record disability decisions, researching and developing cases for and rendering legal advice to Administrative Law Judges, and writing decisions after hearings. Because I was mentored by extraordinary mentors at the Center, I serve as a successful mentor to junior attorneys and paralegal specialists. Due to my experiences interacting with clients during my time at the Center, I successfully conduct prehearing conferences with disability claimants. Without the extensive written and oral advocacy training I received at the Center, I would not be successful in performing the multiple and intensive tasks required to ensure that individuals – many of whom are minority and/or low-income – receive fair opportunities to receive disability benefits.

A primary objective of the fellowship program is to ensure that future generations of attorneys are equipped to continue the ongoing campaign to secure fair and equal opportunities for minority and low income people. Without a doubt, the Center has fulfilled that objective with me, and I am certain that the mission and passion will continue throughout my career. Moreover, I can confidently say the same is true for the other fellows and interns with whom I worked directly, those whose work I built upon before my time at the Center, and those whose work continues to this day. The work of the Center is vital to our State and our nation, and it must continue.