



*Mississippi Center for Legal
Services Corporation*

2015 REPORT

*Restoring Lives,
Building Brighter Futures*

SERVING 43 COUNTIES

ADAMS, AMITE, CLAIBORNE, CLARKE,
COPIAH, COVINGTON, FORREST,
FRANKLIN, GEORGE, GREENE,
HANCOCK, HARRISON, HINDS,
HOLMES, JACKSON, JASPER,
JONES, JEFFERSON, JEFFERSON DAVIS,
KEMPER, LAMAR, LAUDERDALE,
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Administrative and Hattiesburg Office

111 East Front Street (39401)
Post Office Drawer 1728
Hattiesburg, MS 39403-1728
601-545-2950
800-773-1737
Fax: (601) 545-2935

Gulfport Office

520 East Pass Road
Suite J (39507)
Post Office Box 8691
Gulfport, MS 39506
228-896-9148
877-664-0238
Fax: 228-896-0242

Jackson and State Initiatives Office

414 South State Street
Suite 300 (39201)
Post Office Box 951
Jackson, MS 39205-0951
601-948-6752
800-959-6752
Fax: 601-948-6759

McComb Office

221 Main Street (39648)
Post Office Box 575
McComb, MS 39649-0575
601-684-0578
800-898-0985
Fax: 601-684-0575

Meridian Office

2350 Fifth Street,
2nd Floor (39302)
Post Office Box 1931
Meridian, MS 39302-1931
601-693-5470
888-631-9161
Fax: 601-693-5473



In Memoriam

In 2015, the program lost a faithful warrior. His dedication and commitment will be greatly missed.



MR. LANG LEFLORE
BOARD MEMBER 2005 - 2015

For assistance, please call
1-800-498-1804

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Extends a heartfelt “Thank You” to our Sponsors for supporting

Katrina 10 Years Later: Revitalizing the Commitment of the Forgotten Poor held on August 27, 2015.

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Special thanks to Allen Karel, Marketing and public Relations Manager at Butler Snow

Special Thanks

We could not begin to do our work without the funding from federal, state, public, private and other contributors. To each funder, we are grateful.

Legal Services Corporation (LSC), Washington, D.C.

Mississippi Bar Foundation-Interest on Lawyers Trust Account (IOLTA)

*Legislative Civil Legal Assistance Fund
(\$5 Filing fee add-on)*

*The Mississippi Supreme Court-Pro Hac Vice
(Fees from out of state attorneys to practice in Mississippi)*

*Area Agency of Aging
Central Mississippi Planning and Development District
East Central Mississippi Planning and Development District
South Mississippi Planning and Development District*

The State of Mississippi Foreclosure Grant

Casey Family Programs/AOC

Greetings from Executive Director, Office of Administration



Let me begin by first expressing my deep appreciation to those individuals, firms, agencies, groups, commissions and others who continue to support MCLSC. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that we could not continue to address the daunting legal needs of low income persons, without the encouragement, broad-based support, partnerships, and collaborations of those who also believe that the legal and social transformation for low income persons cannot be achieved by standing on the sidelines.

If I had to recap the last year, I would simply say “challenging as usual,” but such is the life of a private non profit civil legal aid organization. Even with our internal fund-raising efforts, limited resources continue to be a thorn in our ability to expand, rather than limit our services. However, while dealing with recurring resource challenges, there were opportunities to touch the lives of our client community in many positive respects. There were special grants that allowed us to enhance our services in such areas as foreclosure defense work; assistance to the elderly; parent representation in Youth Court; and education and outreach that provided persons information they needed to make them more knowledgeable and less vulnerable legally. Hopefully, such knowledge leads to fewer legal problems and less need to call on an attorney for help.

Our Board of twenty-one, and staff of less than fifty, of whom roughly sixteen were practicing attorneys, remained focused on our mission to protect the legal rights of eligible low income persons within our forty-three county service area, comprising more than 26,000 square miles. We provided assistance in all areas of our priorities: elder law, assistance to the disabled, domestic violence, education, predatory lending, housing counseling, and foreclosure defense, just to name a few. Unfortunately, the depth of our commitment was often exceeded by the depth of legal needs. Sadly, as resources become static or decline, the needs of low income persons and the number of low income persons needing assistance, continue to grow. Although we are committed to providing each person contacting us, with some level of service, too many persons are turned away for extended help, because of lack of staff and resources.

In spite of the challenges faced by us and other civil legal aid organizations representing low income persons, we will continue to fight the good fight, until the fight is won. That fight, as always, is for Equal Justice for All. It will require and encompass a concerted effort from those who believe that the tired, poor and huddled masses, should also enjoy all the benefits this great country has to offer. This is not only basic, but right. If you have not joined the fight at this point, we invite and welcome your participation.

Sincerely,

Sam H. Buchanan, Jr.



“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: Thou shalt not ration justice.”
Learned Hand

Chairman's Message



In August, 2014 and August, 2015, the Mississippi Center for Legal Services Corporation (MCLSC) hosted two (2) fundraisers celebrating the program's legacy and work. Both events were held at the Jackson Convention Center, both were well attended and sparkled with high energy and enthusiasm. The 2014 event celebrated the 40th Anniversary of Legal Services and recognized those "Soldiers of Change" from the past who have contributed so much to the ongoing development of legal services in Mississippi.

The theme of the 2015 event was "Katrina, Ten Years Later: Revitalizing Our Commitment to the Forgotten Poor." In addition to recalling our legal work in response to the destructive powers of Hurricane Katrina, the event honored the commitment of Congressman Bennie Thompson, Senator Thad Cochran and Lieutenant General Russell Honoré for their commitment in combating Katrina's destruction. The event also honored five (5) staff members who have worked with the Mississippi Center for Legal Services for thirty years - - thirty years of exemplary service!

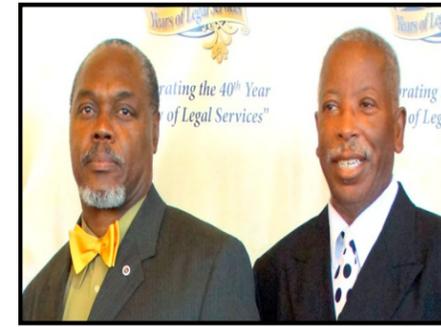
While it is important to honor and recognize the past successes of MCLSC, the delivery of equal access to justice to the poor - - the very purpose of any Legal Services program -- is an ongoing struggle, particularly in the State of Mississippi. The legal injustices of today must be remedied today. The legal injustices of tomorrow can only be addressed tomorrow. Thus, we find MCLSC, like all Legal Services programs in the United States, at a crossroads. The political climate in the United States has never been more inhospitable to Legal Services. Congress continues to chip away at funding, either directly or by the application of formulas that make little or no sense.

MCLSC provides legal representation in forty-three (43) counties with only sixteen (16) lawyers who fight in the trenches and two (2) lawyers who hold administrative positions. Our mission may seem impossible, but MCLSC endures.

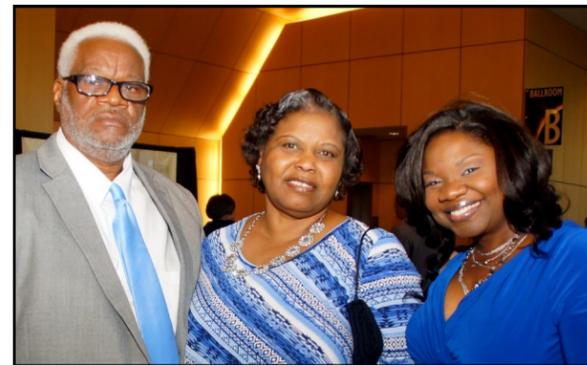
There is a misconception in the public that Legal Services programs receive all necessary funding from the federal government. This is simply not true. Funding from the government continues to decline. More than ever, the MCLSC is dependent on support from the legal community, the judiciary, the State legislature, the business community and the religious community. Without that support, the consequences for MCLSC will be dire.

MCLSC must be more than a skeletal legal program, paying lip service to our purpose, but failing to deliver what is needed. We need the funding and community support that will allow MCLSC to continue as an aggressive, active and forceful advocate for equal access to justice for all citizens.

Michael Adelman, Esq., Chair



Past Reflections ~ 40th Anniversary



2015 GALA
Katrina, 10 Years Later:
Revitalizing Our Commitment to the Forgotten Poor



Message from Fundraising Committee Chair



Mississippi Center for Legal Services Corporation (MCLSC) provides legal services for hardworking and needy low income Mississippians. MCLSC provides legal services for low income hardworking Mississippians in 43 southern Mississippi counties. A fundraising committee has been established and has been functioning for the past several years in an attempt to raise desperately needed funds to support MCLSC. The fundraising committee has been instrumental in planning banquets that raise awareness and raise much needed funds to support MCLSC. Over the past several years, funding for legal services has seen drastic cuts. These cuts have resulted in layoff of staff and closure of legal services offices in Mississippi. MCLSC for many years has been at the forefront in ensuring that low income Mississippians can have their basic legal rights safeguarded. Equal justice for all is a concept that MCLSC believes in and strives to accomplish in its daily representation of low income Mississippians throughout the state.

To the extent that legal services funding continues to see yearly cuts in its budget this means that veterans seeking benefits will be turned away, elderly victims of foreclosure will have to be turned away, and women suffering from domestic violence will have to be turned away by MCLSC. The job of the fundraising committee of MCLSC is to work hard to secure funding by encouraging giving and participation in events which will go a long way towards ensuring that all Mississippians have access to justice regardless of social status or financial means. The goals of the fundraising committee is to raise funds so that the MCLSC can continue to help low income Mississippians solve legal problems ranging from escaping abusive environments to adoptions, consumer affairs, landlord/tenant issues, and family law. Without the work of the fundraising committee, the ability of MCLSC to provide much needed legal services will be decreased. The activity of the fundraising committee is needed and desired because there is a limit on the amount of pro bono services that the private bar can provide to low income Mississippians in need of legal assistance.

The fundraising committee seeks donations from law firms and businesses in the community. The need for the activity and effort of the fundraising committee is now greater than ever. A society that promotes equal justice for all is a society that furthers the greater good of the community. Access to justice in this country should not be based on wealth alone. Agencies such as MCLSC make the concept of equal justice for all a reality for many Mississippians regardless of income or ability to pay. This equal justice to all concept furthers the greater good of Mississippi and the country as a whole and therefore it is critical that the fundraising committee do all that it can to raise funds and awareness so that MCLSC can continue doing the good works for many Mississippians. A democracy is best served when all citizens, regardless of income, have equal access to justice.

Jimmy B. Wilkins, Esq., Chair

Strengthening Partnerships: Reaching Out

In 2015, Mississippi Center for Legal Services Corporation and Choctaw Legal Defense partnered to sponsor two (2) **CHOCTAW COMMUNITY LAW DAY** workshops covering such topics as Expungements, Estates/Conservatorship, Power of Attorney, Employment Training, Guardianship, Blood Quantum/Birth Certificate Corrections, Financial Pitfalls of Budgeting and Buying Used Cars/Warranties. MCLSC also partnered with staff at Choctaw Central High School to provide Career Development Outreach. We were successful in reaching over 500 families through our joint venture.

Mississippi Center for Legal Services Corporation and the Choctaw Legal Defense are working together towards a common mission to protect the legal rights of low income persons by providing competent legal assistance in civil matters and by providing viable community education and training opportunities. We recognize that this mission cannot be achieved without partnering with other justice partners and community leaders who agree with the mission.



THE FORECLOSURE PREVENTION PROGRAM of the Mississippi Center for Legal Services Corporation is financially assisted in part by a grant from the 2015 Bank of America Foreclosure Prevention Program and is administered by the Mississippi Bar Foundation, Inc. MCLSC is dedicating legal staffing to assist homeowners faced with foreclosure and/or predatory lending practices who need legal counsel, advice and representation. Specifically, the program is providing one full-time attorney, full-time or equivalent full-time support staff, and other part-time attorney and paralegal staff who provide legal counsel, advice and representation to homeowners. More specifically, MCLSC is providing legal assistance and/or counsel including, but not necessarily limited to: pre and post foreclosure actions, predatory lending actions, mortgage delinquency and default counseling/loan modifications assistance, reverse mortgage assistance (HECM) for persons age 62 and older, foreclosure community education and awareness activities, and outreach activities, and where appropriate, rights and remedies under the Federal Fair Housing Act to persons who experience discriminatory home ownership practices due to membership in one or more protected classes under the Act.



Strengthening Partnerships Reaching Out to Communities

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION(MCLSC) RECEIVES \$60,000 LOW INCOME HOUSING ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP) GRANT



Fiscal Year 2008, formed the beginning of a long standing partnership between Mississippi Center for Legal Services Corporation (MCLSC) and the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS)/Division of Community Services.

In recognition of MCLSC's successful track record of collaborations and partnerships across the 43-county service area with key community, civic, legislative and corporate leaders, MDHS again awarded a 2015 LIHEAP grant to the Program.

MCLSC along with 18 Community Action Agencies, assisted low-income families on issues such as, Social Security Insurance, birth certificates and wills. Workshops were conducted, legal information and program brochures and other educational outreach materials were disseminated. In 2015, workshops were held in Copiah, Franklin, Hancock, Harrison, Kemper, Lincoln, Noxubee and Smith counties, benefitting more than 209 persons.



PARENT REPRESENTATION PROGRAM

The Parent Representation Pilot Project is a joint venture between MS Center for Legal Services Corporation, Youth Courts in Adams, Forrest, Hancock, Harrison, and Rankin counties, The Administrative Office of the Mississippi Supreme Court, Casey Family Programs, and others, to provide free legal representation for low-income parents in Youth Court hearings. Allegations of abuse or neglect can result in court-ordered removal of children from parents' custody. Mississippi is one of only two states in the nation that does not provide court-appointed lawyers for indigent parents in abuse and neglect proceedings. The Pilot Project is designed to begin addressing this deficiency in the Youth Court legal system.

The goal of the program is to expedite permanency for children. This may involve assisting parents to correct the problems which initiated Youth Court involvement resulting in quicker reunification of parents and children. It may mean finding a suitable relative placement for children. It can mean termination of parental rights if parental reunification is not possible. It may prevent unnecessary removal of children from their parents.

This Pilot Program began in 2013 and was partially funded from a one-year \$100,000 grant from Seattle-based Casey Family Programs. From January 1, 2015-December 31, 2015, the grant was increased to \$193,000 to reach a greater number of parents needing representation.

In 2015, MCLSC, represented over 84 parents whose children were brought into the system.

WHY HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED

WHO WE ARE

Chartered on May 1, 2004, MCLSC covers five (5) historic programs: Central Mississippi Legal Services (CMLS), Southwest Mississippi Legal Services (SWMLS), East Mississippi Legal Services (EMLS), South Mississippi Legal Services (SMLS) and Southeast Mississippi Legal Services (SEMLS) and serves 43 of the State's 82 counties.

More Mississippians than ever before, over 624,360 live in poverty. At least 274,000 persons, 20 percent of the state's population, are eligible for free civil legal aid. The provision of legal assistance and representation to these indigent citizens unable to afford private counsel is the goal of the Mississippi Center for Legal Services Corporation (MCLSC). *In fact, MCLSC is the only provider of a wide range of free civil legal aid in many, if not most, of our state's central and southern rural communities. Persons seeking assistance should call 1-800-498-1804.*

Presently, to serve its 43 counties, there are five (5) service offices. Historically, MCLSC (its predecessor programs) had 16 office locations. With the closures of 11 office locations, it is not uncommon that clients travel 90 miles to a service office. Many travel at least 60 miles one way.

ACCESS TO OUR COURTS THREATENED

When "minimum access" funding was reached in past years, MCLSC employed approximately 56 attorneys. Presently, MCLSC employs 18 attorneys. Three (3) of its 18 attorneys provide counsel and advice through the Call Center and five (5) attorneys provide limited scope representation through special grants. There is 1 legal services attorney for every 21,000 eligible persons. Nearly one-half of those eligible for extended services must be turned away. In contrast, the general public enjoys 537 attorneys,

for every person.

MCLSC receives the majority of its funding from the Legal Services Corporation, Washington, D.C. Its basic field funding has sharply declined from **\$3,205,135 in FY 2010 to \$2,607,228 in 2015**. For many years, MCLSC's second source of funding was IOLTA (Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts). This funding has also decreased drastically from **\$1,030,130 in 2008-2009 to \$54,350 in 2015-2016**.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Financial eligibility is based on income (total receipts before taxes) of all persons who are resident members of the household. The threshold for eligibility is 125% of poverty. At 125% of poverty, income for a household of 4 is approximately **\$30,375**. Our clients are as diverse as the State of Mississippi, inclusive of all races, ethnic groups and ages. They include the working poor, the new poor (persons, who, as the result of the loss of a job and not able to secure comparable income), elderly and disabled. Many work minimum wage jobs of \$7.25 per hour, and have incomes that do not exceed **\$15,000**.

WHO BENEFITS FROM OUR SERVICES?

Our attorneys assist clients in such varied matters as obtaining protections from domestic and elder abuse, obtaining and maintaining financial resources, preventing foreclosures, exercising employment rights, helping parents ensure that special education needs of their children are met, protecting the rights of persons adversely affected by man-made and natural disasters and other similar types of cases which impact the daily lives of Mississippians. MCLSC responds on average to 2,000 inquiries per month.

In 2015, the MCLSC staff served more than **11,904** persons facing civil legal issues, and **the demand keeps growing**. MCLSC assisted more than 305 families in obtaining or maintaining financial resources. The Program helped more than 515 families remain in their homes.

TYPES OF CASES Not HANDLED

There are a number of restrictions on funds raised by MCLSC. LSC programs are prohibited from participating and using its funds in certain fee-generating cases, political activities, including voter assistance or voter registration, lobbying government offices, agencies or legislative bodies, except for limited situations, abortion litigation of any kind, legal assistance with respect to criminal proceedings, class actions, redistricting and litigation on behalf of prisoners.

Profiles of Outstanding Service: Soldiers for Change

MCLSC is pleased to honor a distinguished class of staff with more than 30 years of services.

We call these tireless and dedicated staff “Soldiers for Change”



Virginia Hales Brown is a native of Laurel, Mississippi. She has three children and ten grandchildren. She earned a B.S. Degree from the University of Southern Mississippi, and Master of Science Degree from Mississippi State University. Her employment began at Southeast Mississippi Legal Services in January, 1985. She currently serves in the capacity of a public benefits paralegal and housing counselor in the Hattiesburg office. Over the years, her work ethics, critical thinking and dedication have enhanced her ability to meet and satisfy the needs of her clients. She states that her heart still beats strong for the type of work our mission calls for in serving our client communities. She recalls ten years ago, when many were challenged on a personal level and professional level in dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She recalls that many hats had to be worn in such short periods of time. Like others, she was called upon to pull off the

self-help hat to aid those whose circumstances were more challenging than her own. During this time, she was given an opportunity to work in a local Red Cross Center to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina, dealing with devastating issues relative to death, displacement, and health, among others. Virginia continues to see many clients with lasting affects from Hurricane Katrina. Thirty years and counting of work at Legal Services, Virginia sincerely believes she has been given the opportunity to be an instrumental piece of the efforts of Mississippi Center for Legal Services to provide competent legal representation to eligible persons in our service area who cannot afford legal services. For her, it has been a pleasure!



Iola Gleese started working with Legal Services in 1983 in the Vicksburg Office as a part-time receptionist. After a few years, she became a full time Legal Secretary in the office until a drastic budget cut in 2004 forced the closure of the Vicksburg office. She was transferred to the Jackson Service office where she serves as an invaluable member to the team.

Iola lives in Vicksburg, Mississippi. She is a wife, mother of two and grandmother of two. She is an active member of Triumph Church in Vicksburg, where she serves as a Greeter. She feels very fortunate to have worked with such devoted people both past and present. Iola hopes that Legal Services will continue to exist because the need is plentiful.

Volunteer Extraordinary



Shirley Payne is a former Legal Services’ attorney and has voluntarily represented SSI clients on behalf of the program. She is currently in private practice in Madison, Mississippi, and has worked tirelessly to represent disadvantaged persons whose livelihoods are threatened by possible cessation of SSI benefits. She is partnering with MCLSC and others to sound the alarm, to help notify the public, and educate legal and lay advocates on ways to assist.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY RECIPIENTS

The pattern we are seeing is that persons on Social Security disability (or SSI) are being cut off. Social Security has the authority to schedule arbitrary reviews. Usually these reviews come about at three-year intervals, give or take.

A seemingly benign requirement for certification of continued disability becomes deadly when people without means (either transportation or otherwise) cannot appear for recertification and, as a result, have their disability benefits terminated.

Apparently there is now an ongoing program for Social Security to conduct more continuing disability reviews. To cease a disabled person, generally there must be medical improvement that restores a claimant’s ability to function at work. Failure to appear at consultative evaluations, interviews, failure to file appropriate forms when requested, or failure to appear at a hearing, will be deemed a “failure to cooperate” which is an exception to this medical improvement requirement under the regulations.

Failure to cooperate allows Social Security to draw an unfavorable inference which will lead to cessation.

A letter goes out from Social Security that says, “you will be cut off unless you contact us within 10 days.” We are hearing that many people are not, in fact, getting these letters, but are cut off without notice. At any rate, if they don’t ask to continue benefits, they are cut off immediately.

We are talking to people who have already been found disabled at some point in the past. Many of these people face such difficulties from their disabilities that they cannot adequately respond. For example, someone with dementia cannot read the letters or answer the forms. And these helpless people may be terminated from benefits.

A hearing is scheduled. If the disabled person fail to show up at their hearings, they are disqualified based on “non-cooperation” as allowed under Social Security regulations.

Volunteers could help:

1. **Help read the letters.**
2. **Ask, in writing, to continue benefits.**
3. **Make sure the disabled person can get to the hearing or answer Social Security’s requests.**
4. **Provide recent medical records if you can.**
5. **Go with the person to hearings for testimony and support.**

Staff Making a Difference In Their Communities

Afa'Keela Hudson, an attorney in the Meridian

Office is a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi with a Bachelor of Science in Entertainment Industry with an emphasis in music production. She also holds a Juris Doctorate from the Mississippi College School of Law. Active in the community, she serves on the Board of Directors for the Meridian Rotary Club, Meridian Symphony Orchestra, Meridian Museum of Art, Highway 80 Songwriters Festival Board, and the Jimmie Rogers Foundation. She is a member of the Junior Auxiliary of Meridian, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Alpha Kappa Psi Business Fraternity, Inc., President-Elect of the Meridian First Ladies Civitan Club, and Vice President of the Lauderdale County Bar Association. A Leadership Lauderdale graduate, she has also participated in the recent Dreamgirls production at the Meridian Little Theatre and the Hollywood Nights dancing charity event for the Care Lodge.



Glenda F. Funchess, regional managing attorney of

the Hattiesburg Office coordinated a Press Conference in September 2015, and a Program Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Desegregation of the Hattiesburg Public School District. She wrote a full page article that appeared in the Hattiesburg American Newspaper on Saturday, September 19, 2015, giving the Historical Perspective of the Desegregation of the Hattiesburg Public School District after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the “separate but equal doctrine has no place in public school education.” She also, coordinated the 50th Anniversary Programs for the Commemoration of Freedom Summer in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, which

had the largest number of students attending Freedom Schools than any other city in Mississippi in 1964. She recently raised over \$3,000.00 for the Nationally Ranked Forensics Team at Hattiesburg High School so that the Forensics Students can continue their winning tradition as being the No. 1 Forensics Program in the United States of America.

Glenda received the 2014 Community Services Award from the Hattiesburg Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and the “Community Engagement Award” from the Forrest County Branch of the NAACP.

Glenda is currently working with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History on obtaining a 3rd Civil Rights Historical Marker in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, designating the old “Smith Drug Store” located on Mobile Street as “The Birthplace of the Voting Rights Movement in Mississippi” based on a Federal lawsuit filed in April 1950 by 15 African American Men in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi regarding their “Right to Vote” guaranteed by the 15th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Profiles of Outstanding Service: Soldiers for Change



Ledell Howard Robinson is the oldest son of the late Mrs. Lillie V. Robinson and Rev. Warren Robinson and the twin brother of Paralegal Specialist Lenard Har old Robinson. Ledell currently serves the Jackson office, where he has been employed since September 12, 1988. Prior to coming to the Mississippi Center for Legal Services, Ledell was employed by North Mississippi Rural Legal Services and worked in the Cleveland Office for ten years. Ledell taught business entities and administrative law at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi for three years.

Ledell is a member of the Greater Friendship M.B. Church, past president of the “Voices of Friendship;” Past Director of the St. Peter’s Rock Church Choir in Cleveland, MS; a current member of the Mississippi Coalition on Black Higher Education; the General Missionary Baptist State Convention Choir; a trumpeter in the Church Band of Jackson, MS; member of the Cade Chapel Baptist Church Jazz Band and member of the Cade Chapel Orchestra; former member of MASTERPLAN, an instrumental gospel group; the Mississippi Valley State University National Alumni Association and the Bolivar County MVSU Alumni Association. Ledell is a graduate of Mississippi Valley State University and studied law in the Mississippi Bar’s Preceptorship Program. Ledell has additional hours at the University of Mississippi.



Michael T Shareef has served as the Regional Managing Attorney in the M’Comb office since 1989. He is a graduate of Tougaloo College. After graduating from Howard University School of Law in 1979, Michael was employed as a staff attorney with North MS Rural Legal Services in the Cleveland office. He later joined Harlem Legal Services and Queens Legal Services programs. As a teenager growing up in Chicago, Michael had encounters with Veterans, The Chicago Police, street gangs, The Black Panther Party, educators and social/community activist who influenced his decision to dedicate his life to service. The faith, courage, strength and wisdom of his late parents, siblings and relatives were the driving force to complete his formal education. Having done so, Michael has represented thousands

of families. He is a strong supporter of the military and veteran affairs. He serves as Board Advisor to the New Medina Islamic School System and volunteers at the Skyes Community Center in Jackson, MS.



Tara Bryant Walker is the regional managing attorney of the Jackson office. She is also an Executive Board Member of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Mississippi; Member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Beta Delta Omega Chapter, and active member of College Hill Baptist Church. She has two daughters, Chelsea and Shelby. Tara received her undergraduate degree from Fisk University and graduated from Howard Law School. It has been a rewarding experience for Tara to assist clients with their various legal issues by providing advice and representation. She maintains that “Legal Services’ focus should always be on our clients, however the fact that we our struggling for our survival can at times be disheartening. Nonetheless, we continue to meet the challenges of budget cuts and limited resources to strive for equal rights and justice for our clients.”

LIMITED RESOURCES PROTECTED

Client, a double-amputee, purchased a 2002 automobile in 2014. Vocational rehabilitation had approved for him to have the vehicle altered due to his disability. Client paid a \$700 deposit, \$163 for insurance, \$314 for a tag, totaling \$1,177.00. Only two days after possession, the client began experiencing mechanical problems which, among other things, included all the lights on the dashboard would come on and remain on. When the dealership failed to repair the car within a reasonable period of time, client notified dealership that its failure to repair the car was a breach, and that he no longer wanted the car.

The dealer repossessed the car, placed the car with an unlicensed driver who was involved in an accident and totaled the car. The insurance company of the person at fault paid \$5,100 in settlement. Client was informed that after applying the settlement amount, he still owed \$1,200. Client contacted MCLSC to prevent him from paying \$1,200 and to seek reimbursement for all out-of-pocket expenses he incurred. Prior to MCLSC's representation, client was refused a refund of monies paid. MCLSC's attorney was successful in reaching a negotiated settlement to pay client his out-of-pocket expenses. Client was also released from any further debt obligation for the car.

IMPROPER ADOPTION COMPLAINT DISMISSED

Client contacted MCLSC after she was served with a complaint to terminate her parental rights. MCLSC moved to dismiss, based on among other things, a number of deficiencies in the complaint. Judge, agreed with MCLSC's attorney. The Order of Dismissal was entered allowing client an opportunity to seek to regain custody.

DOMESTIC ABUSE SURVIVOR SUCCESSFUL

After a long history of abuse, client moved out of marital home leaving her four children with her abusive husband. She was forced to live in her car for a while before moving in with a friend. The children had been living exclusively with the father for over a year. Client contacted MCLSC and with the program's assistance, client was awarded full custody of the children and the husband forced to move out of the marital home to allow client and minor children to have a safe and decent place to live.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTED

Client came to MCLSC approximately 36 months behind on his mortgage. The monthly payment was \$699.53. The client fell behind because client's wife had been laid off, and the client was diagnosed with cancer. The client's wife obtained another job, but the client was unable to work. MCLSC assisted client with obtaining documents needed to complete the application for a home modification. The Client was approved to enter into a trial period plan under the FHA's Home Affordable Modification Program, and later approved for a permanent modification, saving the home and relieving worry for our ill client.

RIGHT TO DECENT HOUSING UPHELD

Client entered in an agreement for the rental of a house. Prior to moving in, client advised landlord of needed repairs. At the time client moved in, repairs had not been made, and by certified mail, client notified the landlord in writing of the needed repairs. Client also contacted the City Inspector who examined the premises and noted several repairs required to meet city ordinances. On the day following the City Inspector's report, the landlord posted a Notice to Vacate and filed an action in Justice Court for eviction, and also sought back rent.

MCLSC's attorney argued that there was no delinquent rent due, because the premises were uninhabitable and landlord had refused to make necessary repairs. The Judge agreed. Client was not required to pay any back rent and it was ordered the client was entitled to a refund of her deposit.

FIGHT FOR JUSTICE HONORED



Glenda R. Haynes, MCLSC Board Member and former Legal Services' attorney was among other advocates who received the United States Department of Justice Superior Performance Award by a Litigation Team. They were recognized for the investigation and prosecution of *United States v. Dedmon, et al.*, a case in which 10 young white men and women were convicted for their respective roles in a hate crime conspiracy in which they made repeated nighttime trips to Jackson, Mississippi to hunt down and assault vulnerable African Americans. The crime spree culminated in the death of James Craig Anderson, who was viciously beaten before he was deliberately run over with a truck, while the group encouraged the deadly assault. At first, it appeared the killing of Mr. Anderson was an isolated incident, but evidence uncovered by the team revealed a large group of young people, who in various combinations, made several trips to Jackson for the purpose of assaulting African Americans. All 10 defendants pled guilty and were sentenced to prison terms ranging for 4 to 50 years.

NEEDED MEDICAL HELP MADE POSSIBLE

Grandmother and grandfather, 66 years old, and Social Security recipients, sought custody of their granddaughter who had lived with them for 10 years. The granddaughter has been having trouble with coordination and was diagnosed with a cyst on her brain. She needed physical therapy and other medical help. Grandparents had not had any help from either parent. MCLSC filed a custody petition in court seeking custody for the grandparents. The grandparents received an Order of custody and can now seek financial & medical assistance through the Social Security Administration for the granddaughter.