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Elder John Hayes (left) and Pisgah Legal's Health Justice Program Director, Shannon Cornelius, pause before they begin an interview in June. Hayes, President/CEO of WRES, Asheville's only radio station that targets African Americans, shared Pisgah Legal's efforts to assist people who need Affordable Care Act (ACA) health insurance after losing their jobs – and their insurance – during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## No Stopping Until There's Justice for All

PISGAH LEGAL WILL CONTINUE TO BE PART OF CREATING RACIAL JUSTICE IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, AND HOPEFUL PARTNERSHIPS ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY

As converging events – the killing of George Floyd and the ongoing pandemic – shake the world and our mountain communities, Pisgah Legal Services (PLS) stands in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and people of color, who are demanding justice.

There is no denying the racial inequities in access to justice, economic opportunity, health care and so many other institutions in our country.

We have much work to do as an organization, a community and a nation to make racial justice a reality. PLS is committed to being part of this movement.

Pisgah Legal's Community Economic Development (CED) Program is a resource for community-led efforts to alleviate poverty by creating affordable housing and removing barriers to economic opportunity.

(Continued on page 5)



CALVIN GAYON PHOTO

Clint Smith, Ph.D.  
is the featured  
speaker for our  
**10<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Justice Forum**  
on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

We will come  
together virtually  
this year.

See p.3 for details.

# Change Begins Right Here at Home

PISGAH LEGAL STRIVES TO CREATE MORE EQUITABLE WORKPLACE, SERVICES TO COMMUNITY

We all must do better when it comes to building a system that upholds the principles of justice and dignity for all. Pisgah Legal Services is no exception.

We have spent the last year discussing how to take more meaningful action to support our employees and community in advancing equity, diversity and inclusion so that we build a more just and equitable society.

From those conversations, we created the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Program at Pisgah Legal Services, which is led by Co-Directors Dylan Simosko and Latoya Gardner. Both Dylan and Latoya bring years of professional and educational experience to these new roles.

Dylan Simosko, the Health Justice Program Coordinator, works specifically from a framework of health equity and the importance of addressing social determinants of health in our mountain communities. Latoya Gardner, the Expunction Project Coordinator and Community Economic Development Coordinator, focuses on race equity because of the disparities that persist in our criminal justice system and disinvested communities.

We stand on a solid foundation created by Pisgah Legal advocates seeking justice for the last 42 years. To address poverty in the United States, we must concentrate on the root causes of racial disparities experienced by Black, Indigenous, people of color and immigrant communities.



*Pisgah Legal staff members Latoya Gardner (far left) and Dylan Simosko (far right) are Co-Directors of Pisgah Legal's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Program. They are shown here at an all-staff training in February with Racial Equity Institute instructors Reiney Lin and Dr. Deborah Stroman (middle).*

A race-conscious approach is especially important for anti-poverty advocates because unjust laws have racialized poverty. As we move forward, we strive to use a lens that commits us to an “equity first” approach because we believe that the circumstances in which people live determine their ability to be healthy, whole human beings. Health disparities are preventable outcomes that can be addressed

through both anti-poverty and racial justice actions.

Under its 2019 strategic plan, Pisgah Legal Services added equity, diversity and inclusion as core values and set the following goals:

- Train all staff to understand equity issues
- Identify key internal and external focus areas for this work
- Use a racial equity lens to evaluate internal systems and policies

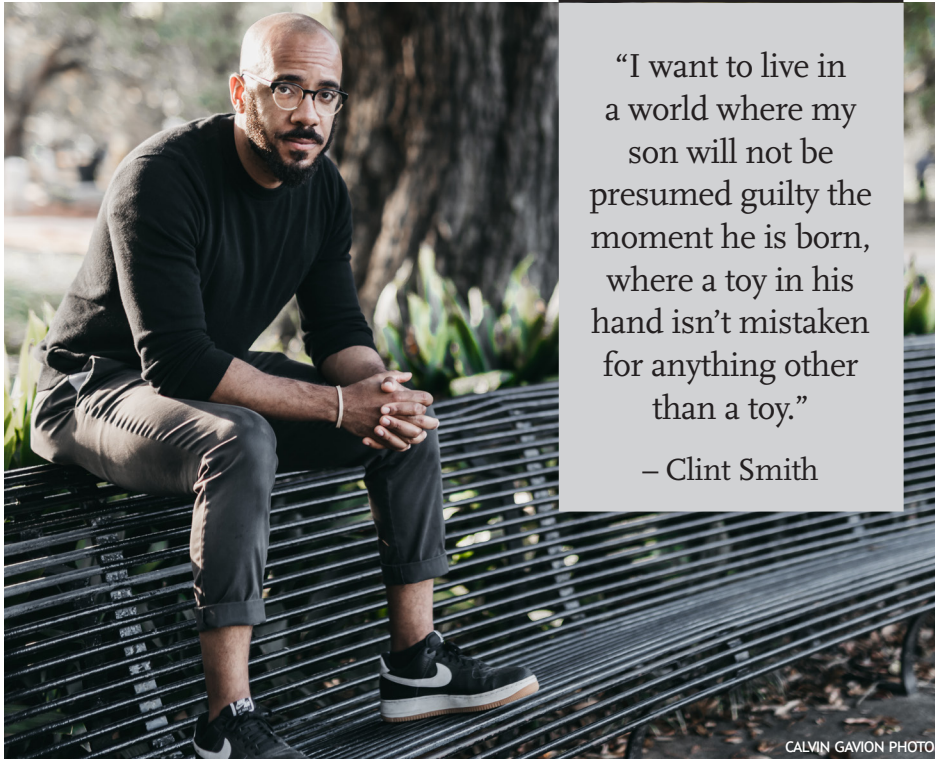
In February 2020, our staff participated in a Racial Equity Institute training where we began the intentional work of developing a shared language and cultivating racial justice leaders.

We are reviewing our hiring practices and policies so that we create an equitable workplace that reflects our core values.

As we continue this work, we hope to partner with our community to begin to strategically dismantle the systems and institutions that prevent us and our clients from thriving.

Learn more about partnerships that are already underway on page 5.





"I want to live in a world where my son will not be presumed guilty the moment he is born, where a toy in his hand isn't mistaken for anything other than a toy."

– Clint Smith

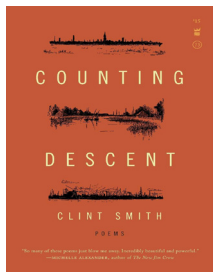
CALVIN GAVION PHOTO

## Don't Miss Clint Smith Oct. 1st

YOU CAN ATTEND THE 10TH JUSTICE FORUM ONLINE THIS YEAR

The pandemic is not stopping our Justice Forum. Join us on October 1<sup>st</sup> for a conversation about racial justice featuring **Clint Smith, Ph.D.** at this year's 10th Annual Justice Forum, to be held online via Zoom.

Smith uses his experience as an award-winning teacher and poet to share personal stories of justice, community, and education. He illuminates how we can all find the courage to create change, overcome challenges, and unite ourselves through the power of the collective voice.



His TED Talks, "The Danger of Silence" and "How to Raise a Black Son in America," have been viewed more than seven million times. He is the author of "Counting Descent," is a National Poetry Slam Champion, and his writing has been published in *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic*. Smith earned his Ph.D. in Education at Harvard University, a B.A. in English from Davidson College and is an alumnus of the New Orleans Public School System.

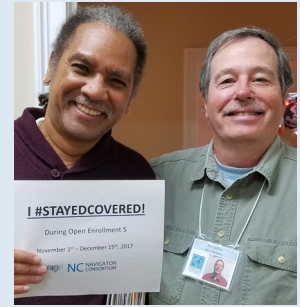
The Justice Forum begins at 7pm via Zoom, and is free. **You can show your support by making a gift on our website, or by purchasing a Reception Ticket for \$25/person, and join us for a pre-event virtual gathering.** The Online Reception begins at 6pm and features a special poetry reading by Clint Smith and a musical performance by local jazz and blues singer Kat Williams. Registration for both events is required.



KAT WILLIAMS

Visit [pisgahlegal.org/2020JusticeForum](https://pisgahlegal.org/2020JusticeForum) for details. Questions? Contact Michelle Spiegel: (828) 210-3773.

## Profiles in Giving



Jim Carillon (right) has volunteered for Pisgah Legal Services for more than seven years, from the very beginning of our work to assist folks in need of ACA health insurance. One of the many people Jim has helped navigate through the process is the pastor of his church, Michael Carter (left).

Jim and his wife, Aline, are retired and stay busy volunteering in the community. They even became foster parents for a newborn this past year.

When Jim heard about Pisgah Legal's recent giving challenge, he donated his entire stimulus check.

Jim says it was his late father who taught him that whenever you receive an unexpected gift to share it.

Jim says, "Pisgah Legal Services immediately came to mind because I have such respect for the entire organization. I can't think of better place for it to be shared, and I hope others will be inspired as well."

If you would like to donate, visit [pisgahlegal.org/give](https://pisgahlegal.org/give), or contact Ally Wilson at 828-210-3444 or [ally@pisgahlegal.org](mailto:ally@pisgahlegal.org).

# How is Pisgah Legal Helping People During COVID-19?

## Preventing Homelessness

STOPPING UNFAIR EVICTIONS  
AND FORECLOSURES



HOUSING



HEALTH

## Providing Health Care

SIGNING FOLKS UP FOR ACA  
INSURANCE AFTER A JOB LOSS

## Securing Basic Income

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE,  
SOCIAL SECURITY, DISABILITY, SNAP



BENEFITS



INFORMATION

## Offering Legal Advice

ANSWERING IMPORTANT  
QUESTIONS ONLINE/BY PHONE

## Ending Domestic Violence

PROTECTIVE ORDERS, DIVORCE,  
CHILD CUSTODY, PROPERTY



SAFETY



CONSUMERS

## Halting Scam Artists

STOPPING THOSE WHO PREY  
ON THE VULNERABLE

**YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT MAKES THESE SERVICES POSSIBLE. PLEASE GIVE TODAY! THANK YOU!**

## ACA Open Enrollment Begins November 1st

SECURING AFFORDABLE HEALTH INSURANCE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

According to a study by Families USA, a health care consumer group, only people in four other states – California, Texas, Florida, and New York – have lost more health insurance during the pandemic than those in North Carolina. **One in five adults in NC, under the age of 65, don't have health insurance.**

Pisgah Legal's Health Justice team is preparing for a very difficult Open Enrollment for ACA health insurance, also known as "Obamacare."

The director of the program, Shannon Cornelius, says, **"Open Enrollment only runs from November 1st through December 15th, so the staff and volunteers are preparing to help serve people in a variety of ways including remote and phone appointments. We know a lot of people will need help accessing health insurance this year."**

Throughout the pandemic, staff and volunteers have assisted local people with job losses and other life events that qualify for Special Enrollment Periods for ACA insurance.



In June, the number of people who completed ACA appointments with Pisgah Legal almost doubled from the same time last year, thanks to a public awareness campaign funded by the Dogwood Health Trust.

Of the people Pisgah Legal collected information on in June, \$880 per month was the average advanced premium tax credits they received to pay for their health insurance, **resulting in a total savings of \$179,520 for the remainder of 2020.**

### Want to learn more or volunteer?

Visit [pisgahlegal.org/aca](https://pisgahlegal.org/aca) for details or call (828) 210-3404. Special thanks to the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust for its ongoing generous support of this work!

Pisgah Legal's CED program provides technical assistance, legal expertise, and education for projects, organizations, and public policy initiatives that promote economic inclusivity and equitable development. Here are a few examples of recent or ongoing partnerships:

**Racial Equity Homeownership Project** – Pisgah Legal drafted a legal termination of a racially restrictive covenant Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity discovered in the title history of property they are developing. The new covenant acknowledges the history of redlining and Urban Renewal, and is consistent with their work to close the racial homeownership gap.

**Empowerment Resource Center/Community Radio Station WRES** This leading voice in Asheville's Black community is looking to the future with plans to grow its staff and programming. Pisgah Legal's CED Director, Justin Edge, serves as Secretary/Treasurer and is working with its development committee and staff in creating fundraising and financial sustainability plans.

**Asheville-Buncombe Community Land Trust** – This newly formed community-based nonprofit that creates permanently affordable housing has made a great deal of progress in the past year: hiring its first executive director, putting its first home under contract and forming numerous partnerships with nonprofit affordable developers. PLS has championed this new nonprofit from its beginning and continues to assist in negotiating funding agreements with the City of Asheville.

**Expunctions** – For the past three years, Pisgah Legal has partnered with the Justice Resource Center in Buncombe County by matching volunteer attorneys with individuals who wish to expunge past criminal records for non-violent offenses. By doing so, barriers to employment, education, housing and other opportunities are removed.

**Beloved Village** – Beloved Asheville will develop a 12-home community for the formerly homeless, helping to address health and racial disparities exacerbated by housing instability. Pisgah Legal has advised them on program design and legal structure.

**Cenzontle Language Justice Cooperative** – This worker-owned cooperative provides Spanish-English translation and interpretation services, reducing barriers to language access and creating employment opportunities for the worker-owners and the broader Spanish-speaking community. PLS assisted with incorporation and governance documents.

**YMI Cultural Center, Inc.** – When the YMI decided to create an incubation program for businesses owned by people of color, Pisgah Legal supported them with guidance in program design to secure \$175,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding.

For more information, please contact Justin Edge at (828) 407-4493.

## DACA Upheld

**SUPREME, FEDERAL COURTS  
RULE IN FAVOR OF DREAMERS,  
BUT PROGRAM STILL IN LIMBO**

This summer, the Supreme Court ruled that the current administration could not immediately end protections under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, better known as "DACA." This was followed by a federal judge's ruling that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services must fully reinstate the program. However, USCIS has announced that they still will not accept first time DACA applications, though they will accept renewal applications.

Pisgah Legal's immigration attorneys and staff are working hard to file DACA renewal applications for eligible immigrants.



Shoshana Fried (left), director of Pisgah Legal's Justice For All immigration program, says, "**We encourage**

**current DACA recipients to call us to renew their applications. For those who may be eligible to apply for the first time, we would advise that you talk to one of our attorneys or accredited representatives about your options. The policies are constantly changing, and it's important to get the most up-to-date advice."**

She adds, "Many of our DACA clients have been working on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic, with jobs in hospitals and care facilities."

Fried says DACA's future remains uncertain, but encourages clients to renew their protections and work authorizations as soon as possible. Call Pisgah Legal at 828-210-3437.

To support this important work, make a gift to the Jones Byrd Memorial Fund for PLS. Contact Ally Wilson at 828-210-3444.





**PISGAH**  
LEGAL SERVICES

*Standing for Justice and Dignity since 1978.*

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**“Empathy should not be contingent on our proximity to suffering or the likelihood of it happening to us. Rather, it should stem from a disdain that suffering is happening at all.”**

**– Clint Smith**

## Stand With Pisgah Legal

IT'S AS EASY AS ONE, TWO, THREE. JOIN US TODAY!

### 1. Attend the 10th Annual Justice Forum

Join us online on October 1st with Clint Smith. Learn more inside.



### 2. Spread the Word

Invite your friends to learn more about the importance of Pisgah Legal's free legal aid and its impact on our community.

### 3. Make A Gift

Go online to [www.pisgahlegal.org/give](http://www.pisgahlegal.org/give) or use the enclosed envelope.

For more info on different ways to give (donating stock, giving through your IRA, becoming a monthly donor), please contact Ally Wilson at 828-210-3444.



## NC Bar Recognition

ASHEVILLE ATTORNEYS TAKE TOP STATE HONORS

The North Carolina Bar Association recently selected McGuire Wood & Bissette Attorney **Matt Roberson** as the recipient of the 2020 *William L. Thorp Pro Bono Award*. Matt generously volunteers his time and expertise to serve our clients.



Executive Director of Pisgah Legal Services and Attorney **Jim Barrett** received the 2020 *Deborah Greenblatt Outstanding Legal Services Attorney Award*. Jim has devoted his 37-year career to Pisgah Legal, including 27 years at its helm, growing the nonprofit to serve more than 18,000 local people annually.



*Thank you both for your outstanding and selfless work!*

***Stand With Us: For Justice and Dignity for All.***