

The First 25 Years: 1968-1993

1968

The "Durham Legal Aid Clinic" was established as the field office for the Duke University Center on Law and Poverty in October 1968. The clinic was designed to advocate for Durham residents who couldn't access the legal system due to a lack of financial resources.

1971

Client Lillian Caulder, a public housing resident, sought assistance from Legal Aid when her lease was terminated without adequate notice or a prior hearing. The case brought positive change to Durham. Along with *Thorpe V. Durham Housing Authority, Caulder v. Durham Housing Authority* resulted in improved standards and increased rights for tenants in public housing.

The Office of Economic Opportunity officially funded the Durham Legal Aid as a legal services agency and non-profit foundation. This marked the end of the fiscal affiliation with Duke University.

1972

Durham Legal Aid represented Grace B. Blue on a case to compel the Department of Social Services to provide transportation to and from medical service providers. The case became a class action and later resulted in state-wide policy changes.

1973

Durham Legal Aid represented the Crest Street Community when the North Carolina Department of Transportation attempted to take their homes and neighborhood in order to build a highway in a "urban removal/renewal" effort that had already obliterated other predominantly black communities.

The case spanned more than a decade and resulted in a \$10 million settlement for the Crest Street community which enabled the neighborhood to successfully redevelop. The settlement was the first time in U.S. history that highway relocation funds were used to benefit an entire neighborhood instead of individual homeowners.

1977

Durham Legal Aid was renamed the North Central Legal Assistance Project (NCLAP) program and expanded its service area with a new office in Henderson.

1979

Durham Legal Aid (as NCLAP) handled the *Lassiter v. Department of Social Services of Durham County*. Legal Aid asserted that if a parental right of an indigent parent were being terminated, that parent was entitled to appointed counsel under the Constitution. The case caused North Carolina and other states to enact legislation requiring appointment of counsel for indigent parents in parental rights, abuse and neglect cases.

1980's

A shift in the political climate created a dramatic reduction in legal aid funding. The organization was forced to cut staff and freeze salaries. Then President of the Board of Directors, Wiblur "Wib" Gulley and a Private Bar Involvement Committee enlisted the help of local attorneys to provide pro bono services to clients. The effort led to the foundation of the Private Attorney Involvement Program.

1993

Chief Justice Justice Henry E. Frye delivered the keynote address at the 25th year anniversary of Durham Legal Aid at the Omni Durham Hotel on October 2nd.



"In the past, we fought the good fight with faith, persistence and endurance."

*- Judith E. Washington,
Former Executive
Director*



LEGAL AID
of NORTH CAROLINA