

KENDRA MONTGOMERY-BLINN
Durham District Court Judicial Vacancy
Statement of Qualifications

April 18, 2017

Durham People's Alliance
Political Action Committee
1821 Green St, Suite 102
Durham, NC 27705



Dear Fellow Members of the Durham People's Alliance:

It is my honor to submit my name for the Durham County District Court judicial vacancy. I have the deepest respect for Judge Marcia Morey and her commitment to justice and children. I share that commitment, as demonstrated by my career and personal life.

I have experience working in the justice system from multiple angles. I began my career as an Assistant District Attorney specializing in Juvenile Court in Durham. I learned from Judge Morey and Judge O'Neal that Juvenile Court is a place where a compassionate and thoughtful judge can save lives. This early lesson has shaped my career.

After three years in the District Attorney's Office, I became the first ever Executive Director of the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission. Under my leadership, the Commission grew from a staff of three to a staff of eight and was made a permanent state agency by the General Assembly in 2010. Most importantly, during my time representing the Commission, eight wrongfully convicted men were declared innocent and released from prison.

From those exonerations, I learned that our court system is imperfect. A rush to judgment and reliance on shortcuts can have tragic consequences. As a judge, I will never forget that justice must be careful, thoughtful, and never blinded by preconceptions.

Two years ago, I returned to the Durham District Attorney's Office. I now prosecute homicides and other violent crimes. I am always learning from my colleagues on both sides of the bar.

My husband, Sam, and I have called Durham home for 17 years. We are proud to claim this amazing community, and we work continuously to make it even better. Our two children attend Durham Public Schools and are active with us in community events and volunteer work.

I am a long-time member of the Durham People's Alliance and have served on the Board and as co-Chair of the Education Committee. My volunteer work supporting public education has taught me that we must never accept the status quo. I believe that we must always look for ways in which we can personally effect positive change.

In 2012, I read about a child who died from an allergic reaction at her Virginia school. My own son has severe food allergies, but our family has the means to supply him with epipens for his school. I felt compelled to use the things I had learned over the years about food allergies, schools, and government to initiate legislation to

protect children in North Carolina schools. Over the course of two years, I worked closely with allies at the General Assembly and built grassroots support across the state. In 2014, the law requiring schools to stock epipens was passed and has already been successfully implemented. The Herald sun honored me with the Grit Award for my work. The lesson I will never forget is that I cannot be silent when others are struggling.

I am always striving to be a better lawyer and a better person. If appointed, I promise to never stop learning. I will treat everyone who enters the courtroom with respect. If I am given me this opportunity to serve my community, I will do the job with humility, integrity, and compassion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'KMB', is positioned below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Kendra Montgomery-Blinn

KENDRA MONTGOMERY-BLINN

Assistant District Attorney Durham District Attorney's Office

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EXPERIENCE

Durham County District Attorney, Durham, NC

Assistant District Attorney, August 2015-present

Prosecute violent crimes and homicides. Manage and prosecute a caseload of approximately 80 active felonies at all stages, including indictment, motions, plea process, and jury trials. Work extensively with victims, witnesses, and law enforcement. Handles postconviction Motion for Appropriate Relief cases. Serves as office liaison to families of homicide victims, gives regular presentations and attends community events and vigils.

North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission, Raleigh, NC

Executive Director, April 2007-August 2015

Oversaw investigation of over 1,700 postconviction cases and eight exonerations. Hired at Commission's creation and drafted operating procedures, hired and supervised staff of eight, and created and managed budget. Worked on cases at all levels of review and investigation. Conducted hearings before eight-member Commission and represented Commission in other court proceedings. Made legislative proposals to General Assembly. Provided annual legislative and judicial reports and frequent public presentations. Applied for and received federal grant funding.

Durham County District Attorney, Durham, NC

Assistant District Attorney, March 2004-April 2007

Prosecuted felony domestic violence crimes and internet crimes against children. Served as the juvenile court prosecutor. Argued and won a habeas corpus hearing based on a pending appeal.

Internships

Wake County District Attorney, Raleigh, NC

Intern, February 2003-April 2003

Supported all District Court functions, including trial and pleas.

Durham County District Attorney, Durham, NC

Intern, September 2002-December 2002

Assisted in District Court and researched case law and statutes for Superior Court cases.

Orange County District Attorney, Hillsborough, NC

Intern, May 2002-August 2002

Supported all District Court functions, including trial and pleas.

Center for Death Penalty Litigation, Durham, NC

Intern, May 2001-August 2001

Researched and wrote a section of a successful brief to the N.C. Supreme Court, edited Motions for Appropriate Relief, met with clients, and assisted investigations of postconviction cases.

EDUCATION

DUKE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, Durham, NC

J.D., *Cum Laude*, May 2003

Honors: Exceptional Leadership in Public Interest, 2002
IOLTA Grant recipient, 2001 and 2002

Activities: Loan Forgiveness Program, Initiated effort to review and rewrite existing program
Duke Law Innocence Project, Student Director
Public Interest Law Foundation, Executive Board Member

PURDUE UNIVERSITY, West Lafayette, IN

B.A., with Distinction, May 2000, Political Science and Psychology
Spanish Minor with Summer Study Abroad in Toledo, Spain

Honors: Phi Beta Kappa
SCHOLAR Honorary Society, President
Purdue Annual Literary Awards Contest, 1st Place in Politics Category

Activities: Maclure Cooperative Living House, Scholarship Chair and Judicial Board
Guardian ad Litem, Volunteer

AWARDS

The Durham Herald Sun Grit Award, Awarded for championing successful effort to draft and pass an “Epipens in Schools” law, August 2014

Durham Police Department Victim/Witnesses Service Unit Award for Tribute to Silent Victims, Awarded for “Outstanding Prosecutorial Work in Domestic Violence and Child Abuse,” April 2007

North Carolina Bar Association Pro Bono Service Award, 2003

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

North Carolina State Bar Association, admitted to North Carolina Bar in August 2003

14th Judicial District Bar Association

Durham County Bar Association

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Durham People’s Alliance, 2008-present

Board Member, 2014-2016. Monthly Board meetings and planning of major events. Board members guide the 501(c)(4) work of the People’s Alliance.

Education Team, 2008-present, Co-Chair (2014-2016). Led a successful effort to modify Durham Public Schools mandated testing. Created regular roundtable series to share information about public education topics with the community. Serve in advisory capacity regarding education issues to People’s Alliance. Speak at School Board and County Commissioner meetings. Interview candidates for public office and give endorsement recommendations.

Epipens In Schools Law, 2013-2014

Successfully led an effort to draft and pass a law mandating that all public schools in North Carolina maintain lifesaving epipens to treat allergy-induced anaphylaxis. Effort included working with bill drafters and bill sponsors and presented to the General Assembly. The law was passed in 2014 and has been implemented successfully in public schools. Received the Durham Grit Award as recognition of efforts.

Public Schools Parent Organizer, 2011-present

Coordinate box tops campaign. Volunteer time with school fundraising, tutoring, and engagements.

Durham County Bar Association Scholarship Committee, 2010-2014

Review and rank law student applicants for the Adam Lischer Memorial Scholarship.

Mock Interviewer for Duke Law School First-Year Law Students, 2010-present

Conduct mock interviews for law students interested in government and public interest careers.

EQUITY TRAININGS

Implicit Bias: Prosecuting Ethically, Taught by Rachel D. Godsil and Song Richardson of the Perception Institute, Hosted by the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys, January 2017

Race Equity Two-Day Workshop, Hosted by Racial Equity Institute, LLC, September 2016

Dismantling Racism Weekend Workshop, Hosted by dRworks, July 2015

PRESENTATIONS AND GUEST LECTURES

Presenter, “The Court Process for Families of Homicide Victims,” The Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham, February 2017

Guest Lecturer, “Prosecution in the Era of Innocence,” Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy, October 2016

Speaker, Duke University Police Department Citizen’s Academy, October 2016

Presenter, The Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham, August 2016

Panelist, The North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys, New Prosecutors School, Ethics Panel. April 2016

CLE Presenter, Forsyth County Bar Association, February 2015

Panelist, Duke Law School Family Weekend, March 2015

Guest Lecturer, Elon University, November 2014

Guest Lecturer, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, November 2014

Guest Lecturer, Campbell University, November 2014

Presenter, Raleigh Wake Paralegal Association Seminar, October 2014

Guest Lecturer, Johnston Community College, October 2014

Guest Speaker, Raleigh Rotary Club, January 2014

CLE Presenter, 14th Judicial District Bar Association Ethics CLE, February 2014

Presenter, NC Association of Property and Evidence and Blue Line Training Group, LLC, August 2013

Guest Lecturer, Campbell University, October 2013

CLE Presenter, 28th Judicial District Bar Association, June 2013

Guest Lecturer, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill April 2013

Guest Speaker, University of Richmond School of Law, March 2013

Guest Lecturer, Fayetteville State University, February 2013

Panelist, Duke Law Criminal Justice Symposium, April 2012

Guest Lecturer, NC Central University School of Law, March 2012

Guest Lecturer, Wingate University, April 2012

Guest Lecturer, Wake Technical Community College, February 2012

Guest Lecturer, Campbell University, November 2011

Presenter, North Carolina Law Enforcement Association, March 2011

CLE Instructor with Greg Taylor, North Carolina Judicial Center, February 2011

Panelist, National Institute of Justice Conference on Wrongful Convictions in Washington D.C., September 2010

Keynote Speaker, Duke Law School Public Interest Retreat 2010

Presenter, Salisbury Rotary Club, April 2009

Guest Lecturer, Advanced Issues in Criminal Justice Class, Duke Law School, April 2009

Guest Speaker, Duke Law Public Interest Retreat, February 2009

Presenter, Durham Kiwanis Club, July 2008

Presenter and Panelist, Symposium on Prosecutorial Discretion, Hosted at NC Central Law School, April 2008

Presenter, North Carolina Conference of Elected District Attorneys, April 2008

Guest Lecturer, Duke Law School Criminal Justice Class, January 2008

Presenter and Panelist, Duke Law School Orientation, August 2006