

My name is Jilisa Milton and I am nominating myself for First Vice President. I have been a member of NLG for four years, starting when I was a law student at The University of Alabama School of Law. As a legal professional and community organizer, NLG has been critical to my development. When I first joined, there was no opportunity to join or start a student chapter at school, so I became one of four founders of Black Lives Matter Birmingham Chapter and continued as an active member of the Alabama state chapter of NLG.

As an NLG member, I have supported mass defense efforts and contributed toward other essential advocacy efforts. One example was when Emantic (EJ) Bradford Jr., a Black man in my hometown of Birmingham, was shot by police--sparking a span of protests and community demands. I helped with legal response efforts as well as engaged with the strategy of fellow community organizers. I later represented NLG and BLM in a committee of dissenting activists when the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute reversed its decision to present Angela Davis with the Fred Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award. I've interned alongside NLG members at organizations such as Center for Constitutional Rights and a local NDLOA affiliate, and I was a recipient of NLG's 2018 Haywood Burns Fellowship, which provided financial support for me while I completed a summer internship at Equal Justice Initiative.

I am currently an Equal Justice Works Fellow, implementing a project in the rural Black Belt Region of Alabama providing advocacy for children with mental health-related disabilities in juvenile court to disrupt the impact of the school to prison pipeline. I identify as a radical black feminist, and I serve on the board of Yellowhammer Fund, a southern abortion fund and reproductive justice organization that has been fighting against recent threats to abortion and reproductive rights. We have grown rapidly, and I have developed skills related to board development, human resources, finance/fundraising, program development, and governance.

In 2019, I became the first person in the state of Alabama to graduate from a joint JD/MSW dual degree program from the University of Alabama; expanding my knowledge base to program development, mental health treatment, trauma-informed lawyering, reproductive justice, and case management. This has given me the tools to work through interdisciplinary interventions/perspectives to address problems in the legal system. In fact, prior and recent experience as a legal worker has helped make me keenly adaptable to address the nexus between social and legal praxis.

I am committed to NLG, and I understand how important it is to center marginalized voices, constantly re-evaluate the ways that the legal profession can be utilized and critiqued, and remove barriers for our work so that we can be transformative. The role of Vice President is a great way for me to expand and share my diverse knowledge base, build and bridge relationships, and contribute my experiences to the broader NLG community. Thank you.