
By Gizem Demirel

Aleesha Kazi is one of the Multnomah Bar Association (MBA) Bar Fellows of 2022. Kazi was this summer's intern at the Legal Aid Services of Oregon (LASO), sponsored by the OWLS Foundation through the MBA Bar Fellows Program. She is a law student at the University of Oregon and a 2021 cum laude graduate of Willamette University, where she majored in politics, policy, law and ethics.

The MBA Bar Fellows Program is a highly selective program that aims to diversify the Oregon bar by supporting diverse first-year law students through paid summer internships, scholarships, networking opportunities and judicial mentorships. Successful applicants must demonstrate their potential for success in the legal profession and their commitment to practice law in Oregon and must contribute to the diversity of the Oregon State Bar.

Kazi wanted to be a lawyer since she was a young girl, especially after going through hard times when her family needed legal assistance for a potential medical malpractice case and could not attain it. Not having any lawyers in her family, Kazi saw the power lawyers have and their role in shaping the legal system. She resolved to become a lawyer and bring change not only to her family but also to her community.

Kazi is well ahead in her path to achieving those dreams. In her undergraduate years, she worked as a legislative assistant for Sen. Rob Wagner at the Oregon State Legislature. There, she learned how laws are enacted, directly participated in the legislative process and witnessed how lawyers can change public policy. With the help of the MBA Bar Fellows



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Program, she is one step closer to her goal of practicing law in Oregon.

At LASO, Kazi learned how to help vulnerable communities by working directly with clients, researching to find groundbreaking precedent, matching clients with lawyers, drafting letters to clients and adverse parties and even representing a client at an administrative hearing.

Although it was her first time doing a hearing, Kazi presented the opening statement, questioning and objections with confidence. She made a successful closing argument for her client's unemployment benefits before the administrative judge, thus winning the first case of her blossoming legal career.

Through the support of the OWLS Foundation and MBA Bar Fellows Program, Kazi experienced the joy of helping people directly at LASO, which made her more hopeful and ambitious for the future. Kazi is more determined than ever to move forward with her goals to fight injustice and help the people who most need our legal system, such as those affected by the lack of housing and domestic violence. She looks forward to joining the Oregon legal community. The OWLS Foundation thanks our donors for making this opportunity possible for Kazi.

Gizem Demirel is an attorney licensed in Oregon and Turkey. She is a member of the OWLS Board and OWLS Foundation Board.