

# Mary Philbrook Public Interest Award Celebration

est. 1986

*The Thirty-Eighth Annual*

## MARY PHILBROOK PUBLIC INTEREST AWARD

is proudly presented to

**Jodina Hicks**

### Student Honorees

Michael Bauder, Class of 2024  
Thomas Boisvert, Class of 2024  
Lindsey Eveland, Class of 2024  
Nicholas Gangemi, Class of 2023  
Allison Jones, Class of 2024  
Haajra Mirza, Class of 2024  
Emily Schurr, Class of 2023  
Rachel Tavani, Class of 2024  
Kassidy Tirelli, Class of 2024  
Morgan Walsh, Class of 2024  
Rachael Wolfram, Class of 2024

### Presented By:

The Association for Public Interest Law  
The Camden County Bar Association  
Rutgers Law School Alumni Association  
The Women's Law Caucus



**RUTGERS**  
Law School



**RUTGERS**  
School of Law | Camden  
Alumni Association

Mary Philbrook  
Public Interest  
Award Celebration  
est. 1986

## WELCOME

**Jill Friedman**

Associate Dean, Pro Bono and Public Interest Program

**Hon. Stephen M. Holden (Ret.)**

Board Member, Camden County Bar Foundation

**Brittney Cafero**

Chancellor, Rutgers Law-Camden Alumni Association

**Olivia Hunt & Paige Kaercher**

President, Women's Law Caucus

President, Association for Public Interest Law

**Johanna Bond**

Dean and Professor of Law

## PRESENTATION OF STUDENT HONOREES

**Kaitlyn Doyle & Alexis McDonough**

Mary Philbrook Chair, Association for Public Interest Law

Vice President & Mary Philbrook Chair, Women's Law Caucus

## INTRODUCTION OF

## MARY PHILBROOK AWARD HONOREE

**Rhasheda Douglas**

Assistant Dean of the Minority Student Program

## HONOREE'S REMARKS

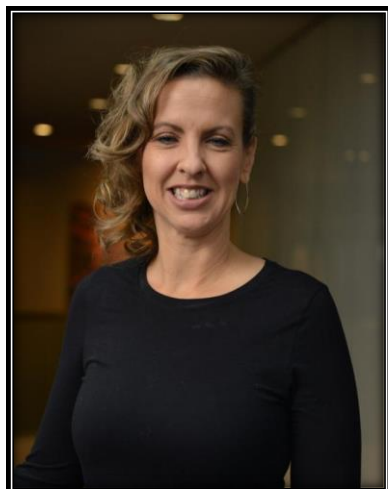
**Jodina Hicks, '02**

President, Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania

## CLOSING

**Ann E. Freedman**

Associate Professor of Law and Mary Philbrook Celebration Founder



## **Jodina Hicks**

Jodina Hicks is the President of Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania (VOAPA). In her role, Jodina has executive responsibility over 180 staff serving vulnerable populations, primarily focused on health equity, community health, and housing. Before VOAPA, Jodina was Executive Director of UrbanPromise Ministries in Camden, NJ. Jodina began her community and missional based work with UrbanPromise in 1988, creating the StreetLeader program, which is a teen employment and leadership initiative, and the UrbanPromise Academy, which serves as an alternative high school for at-risk teens in Camden. Two thousand teens have been employed in Camden through the StreetLeader program, and it has since been replicated in 18 cities and countries. In 2000, she joined Public/Private Ventures, where she helped plan and launch the Amachi children of prisoners initiative and the Ready4Work national reentry model (President's Reentry Initiative). Both Amachi and Ready4Work were highlighted in the White House's State of the Union addresses and both led to the creation of new federal funding streams, with replications in all 50 states. In 2002, Jodina earned her Juris Doctor from Rutgers Law School (Camden). She served as Vice President and Chief Program Officer of the Safer Foundation in Chicago, which is the premier prisoner reentry program in the nation. Her policy work at Safer included the writing and passage of state and local legislation aimed at reducing barriers for formerly incarcerated individuals, writing federal recommendations and testimony (including for then U.S. Senator Obama) and contributing to the State's blueprint policy book. Jodina received the Mary Philbrook Student award in 2001, the New Jersey Hero Award in 2014, the Martin Luther King legacy award from Rutgers Law School in 2018, and was named in the top 100 Pennsylvania Non-Profit Leaders in 2022. Jodina remains committed to the City of Camden, as she helped to found the Volunteer UP Legal Clinic and remains on its board, as well as on the boards of CASA South Jersey and the UrbanPromise Community Development Corporation.

## STUDENT HONOREES



### **Michael Bauder, Class of 2024**

Mike Bauder, an Army veteran and father of two, comes from a family of public servants and has avidly pursued public interest activities throughout his life and career. After completing one combat tour in Iraq in 2004, Mike studied at Luzerne County Community College while volunteering at a local school as a tutor, gym teacher, chaperone, track coach, and basketball coach. He later received a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Misericordia University and an MBA from Delaware Valley University. His dedication to serving others has brought him all over the world, from the United Kingdom and Jamaica, to India and Bahrain. At home, Mike has been a volunteer with The United Way of Greater Hazleton, Catholic Social Services, and other non-profits. He is an active member and volunteer with his church, helping to teach Sunday school and English as a second language. During law school, Mike has served as a volunteer law clerk with Christian Legal Clinics of Philadelphia, where he has conducted intakes, interviewed clients, and drafted estate planning documents, deeds, and expungement petitions. His passion has also extended to the Rutgers Center for Immigration Law, Policy, and Justice; the Planning Estates Pro Bono Project; and the Concerned Citizens for Democracy. He currently works for the Defense Logistics Agency as a Contract Specialist.



### **Thomas Boisvert, Class of 2024**

During his time in law school thus far, Thomas Boisvert has contributed hundreds of hours of pro bono service to the South Jersey community where he grew up. Thomas has been particularly active as a student leader for the Honorable Judith H. Wizmur Pro Bono Bankruptcy Project and a co-leader for the Rutgers Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Project. He also recently began to assist the Rutgers Newark Honorable Morris Stern Pro Bono Bankruptcy Project students. Through these projects, Thomas has been honored to help the community and to offer his experience while helping to train other law students. After his 1L year, Thomas interned for Magistrate Judge Matthew Skahill at the District Court of New Jersey, Camden Vicinage, where he wrote court orders and inner chambers memoranda to assist the judge and his clerk. Currently, he interns at the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General in the Transportation Section, where he researches New Jersey law to create resources and helps attorneys with trial preparation. After graduation, he plans to continue serving the South Jersey community and staying connected to pro bono projects, which are a source of joy for him.



## **Lindsey Eveland, Class of 2024**

Lindsey Eveland has dedicated much of her career to helping survivors of domestic violence. Before law school, she worked with the domestic violence unit of the Ingham County Prosecutor's Office; and the Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention team. As a student director for the Rutgers Pro Bono Domestic Violence Project, she has supported and empowered survivors of domestic violence through the restraining order process, as well as helping to train law student volunteers. Lindsey has also represented clients under attorney supervision in landlord-tenant and restraining order matters through South Jersey Legal Services, Inc. and the Domestic Violence Clinic. She has interned for a state trial judge and a federal bankruptcy judge. Lindsey has also volunteered with the Planning Estates Pro Bono Project and led the Family Law Society as a Co-President. After graduation, Lindsey will serve as a clerk for the Honorable Ronald Susswein in the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court. Following her clerkship, she plans to continue public interest work by supporting survivors of domestic violence.



### **Nicholas Gangemi, Class of 2023**

Nicholas Gangemi has made a measurable impact on the residents of New Jersey as a champion for domestic violence survivors. Prior to law school, Nicholas worked as the public information officer for the Burlington County Board of Freeholders (now Commissioners); Deputy Chief of Staff to the City of Trenton; and Chief of Staff and Legislative Aide to W. Reed Gusciora, Esq. Under the direction of Professor Ruth Anne Robbins, Nicholas worked on three different legislative initiatives, including the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (“Senate Bill 1517”). He authored a resolution, which was passed by both the Camden and Newark Student Bar Associations, along with concurrent supporting resolutions from the two campuses' faculty unions, which urged the removal of the discriminatory mental health question from the Character and Fitness Questionnaire. Nicholas also represented several clients through the Rutgers Domestic Violence Clinic. Thanks to Nicholas’s extensive work, Governor Murphy signed Senate Bill 1517 into law on July 24, enhancing civil protections available for victims of cyber harassment and stalking. On September 19, the Supreme Court also adopted changes to the mental health question to narrow the scope of inquiry into candidates' mental health in the bar application process. After graduating cum laude from Rutgers Law School, Camden in May, Nicholas began working for Hon. Jeanne Covert, A.J.S.C., of Burlington County as a Law Clerk.



### **Allison Jones, Class of 2024**

As an active member of the public interest community at Rutgers Law and beyond, Allison Jones has made her commitment to public service central to her life. While at Rutgers, Allison has participated in the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project and the Street Law Pro Bono Project. She spent the summer of 2022 working for the affordable housing enforcement organization Fair Share Housing Center, Inc. and the summer of 2023 working for the Philadelphia District Attorney's office. Allison has been an active member of If/When/How, an organization dedicated to reproductive rights, and the president of the Jewish Law Student Association. She has also spent over 35 hours helping domestic violence survivors in New York file for orders of protection with the Courtroom Advocates Program, and this year participated in the law school's Domestic Violence Clinic. As a research assistant to Professor Margaret Zhang, Allison has researched the burdens imposed on plaintiffs in civil disability law. She also co-wrote an op-ed for the Penn Capital Star on the steps needed to file suit under the new federal Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. Outside of school, Allison is a board member for Rescue Kitty, a cat welfare organization, and volunteers many hours to help cats in need.





### **Haajra Mirza, Class of 2024**

Haajra Mirza has been a dedicated advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion. Prior to law school, she worked as a litigation paralegal in the areas of personal injury, workers' compensation, civil rights, employment discrimination, and Social Security disability. During law school, Haajra interned with the Hon. Yolanda C. Rodriguez in the Superior Court of New Jersey in 2022 and the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania in 2023. She is the Diversity and Inclusion Chair of the Student Bar Association, and has served as President of the Muslim Law Students Association and the South Asian Law Students Association. In her capacity as President, Haajra organized and hosted the 2nd Annual Groundbreaker Gala, highlighting prominent Asians & Muslims within the profession. This event raised approximately \$6,000 to create community spaces for Asian and Muslim students, and to support their legal careers. She helped plan and organize the spring 2023 APIL auction, participated in the Rutgers Domestic Violence Pro Bono project, and has served as a BARBRI representative. After graduation, Haajra will intern with the City of Philadelphia. She spends her free time volunteering at Morris Animal Refuge and Trinity Soup Kitchen.



### **Emily Schurr, Class of 2023**

During her time at Rutgers Law, Emily Schurr volunteered in a wide variety of pro bono and public interest projects, showing how her values align with those of Mary Philbrook. She served as a student leader for the Planning Estates Pro Bono Project, where she drafted wills, powers of attorney, and medical directives for elderly and low-income clients. Emily participated in Street Law and the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project, and worked with Professor Ruth Anne Robbins to create a Bar Exam Reform project, leading to a bar exam fund for Rutgers students struggling with the financial burdens associated with the bar. Emily's passion for domestic violence and animal advocacy culminated with her internship at the Animal Welfare Institute in Washington, D.C., where she wrote manuals detailing domestic violence laws and how survivors can include pets in their protective orders. In addition, she served as the events coordinator and president of the Animal Legal Defense Fund and volunteered with the Domestic Violence Project. After graduation, Emily returned to Begley Law Group, where she had previously interned, as an Associate Attorney with a focus on special needs trusts for children and adults with disabilities.



## **Rachel Tavani, Class of 2024**

A teacher, Moot Court coach, Career Ambassador, Admissions tour guide, and Lead Notes Editor of the Journal of Law and Religion, Rachel Tavani is an exemplary public interest law student and role model. Rachel has completed over 200 hours of pro bono hours, including monitoring polls on Election day, escorting clients during expungement clinics, preparing tax returns for low-income individuals and families through VITA, interning at the Prosecutor's office, and working with the Rutgers Name Change Project to help individuals affirm their gender identity. Her passion for educational equity began as a high school English teacher through Teach for America, which inspired her to pursue a Masters degree in Educational Policy and Leadership and attend law school. As APIL President during her 2L year, Rachel helped to raise \$700 for the Anna Sample House; organize various collection drives for women and children in need; and raise \$24,500 in donations for student pro bono summer stipends through the club's annual auction. She also became a fellow, and later teaching assistant, for the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy fellowship, where she coaches and trains Camden High School seniors to compete in a national moot court competition. This semester, Rachel is participating in the Expungement Clinic. After graduation, Rachel will clerk for the Honorable Judge Tarantino of Burlington County Superior Court, Criminal Division. She hopes to pursue a career in criminal law as a litigator.



### **Kassidy Tirelli, Class of 2024**

As a first-generation college graduate and small business owner, Kassidy Tirelli has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to public interest work. Through her tireless work as a student director for the Rutgers Domestic Violence Project, Kassidy has had the opportunity to offer resources and support to hundreds of domestic violence survivors throughout the state of New Jersey. She continues this work as a member of the Domestic Violence Clinic, where she represents clients in final restraining order hearings under attorney supervision. She has served as a judicial intern for the Honorable Benjamin Podolnick, an extern with the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General, Department of Children and Families, and an intern for Martine, Katz Scanlon & Schimmel, P.A. Kassidy has also served as a teaching assistant to Professor Jacob Hale Russell, as a research assistant for the Child and Family Advocacy Clinic under the supervision of Professor Meredith Schalick, and as a co-president of the Family Law Society. Upon graduation, Kassidy will serve as the 2024-2025 Judicial Law Clerk to the Honorable Benjamin Podolnick, J.S.C. in the New Jersey Superior Court. Following the completion of her judicial clerkship, Kassidy plans to focus her legal practice exclusively in family law.



### **Morgan Walsh, Class of 2024**

Morgan Walsh, a passionate student leader with an unwavering commitment to justice, equality, and legal empowerment, has witnessed firsthand the transformative power of law through her participation in over 150 hours of pro bono service. As a 1L, Morgan volunteered with the Street Law Project, teaching legal life skills to 10th grade students at LEAP Academy. She has volunteered with the Rutgers Name Change Clinic since its inception, and with the Planning Estates Pro Bono Project. Morgan has also participated in the Hon. Judith H. Wizmur Bankruptcy Pro Bono Project and the ABA Tax Settlement Conference. As an Immigrant Justice Fellow at the Rutgers Immigrant Community Assistance Project, she has helped draft asylum, DACA renewal, and adjustment of status petitions and organized an inaugural naturalization ceremony at the law school. She has also served as an intern for The Vanguard Group, Inc. and a law clerk for Mintzer Sarowitz Zeris Ledva & Meyers LLP. One of Morgan's proudest achievements was serving as APIL's Auction Chair, where she helped to raise over \$25,000 to fund stipends for law students working in unpaid public interest or service summer internships.



## **Rachael Wolfram, Class of 2024**

Despite her demanding schedule as a law student and EMT, Rachael Wolfram concurrently interns for the Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commissions. She is active with Girl Scouts, having served as a Brownie Leader and Technology Chair for the Moorestown Service Unit. Rachael proudly served as the first Immigrant Justice Fellow, where she worked with and represented Rutgers students on various immigration matters and helped organize Rutgers Law's first on-campus naturalization ceremony. She is also a part of the Domestic Violence Clinic and the 2024 Eagleton Class, where she plans to further her service to the people of New Jersey with a governmental externship in the Spring through the Eagleton Institute of Politics. Rachael has completed upwards of 120 pro bono hours through expungement clinics, sentencing reform foundations, name change projects, and a confidential research project for the Women's Law Project. She was also the Rutgers Law School-Camden recipient of both the New Jersey Women Lawyers Association and the Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey's 2023 Scholarships. Her submission to the New Jersey Women Lawyers Association on the gender inequality in private law firm promotions was published in their 2023 Gala Journal. Upon graduation, Rachael will serve as a law clerk to the Honorable Hany Mawla in the New Jersey Appellate Division for the 2024-2025 term.

## 2023 Philbrook Honoree Selection Committee

**Ann Freedman**, Associate Professor & Mary Philbrook Celebration Founder

**Jill Friedman**, Associate Dean, Pro Bono and Public Interest Program

**Olivia Hunt**, RLAW 2025  
President, Women's Law Caucus

**Paige Kaercher**, RLAW 2025  
President, APIL

**Paris McPherson**, Assistant Director, Minority Student Program

**Pam Mertsock-Wolfe**, Director, Pro Bono and Public Interest Program

**Nancy Rubert**, Assistant Dean, Admissions

## 2023 Philbrook Student Honoree Selection Committee

**Kaitlyn Doyle**, RLAW 2025  
Mary Philbrook Chair, APIL

**Ann Freedman**, Associate Professor & Mary Philbrook Celebration Founder

**Jill Friedman**, Associate Dean, Pro Bono and Public Interest Program

**Paige Kaercher**, RLAW 2025  
President, APIL

**Kayalyn Kibbe**, RLAW 2025

**J.C. Lore III**, Distinguished Clinical Professor and Director of Trial Advocacy

**Pam Mertsock-Wolfe**, Director, Pro Bono and Public Interest Program

**Jasmyn Montgomery**, RLAW 2025

**Thomas Tran**, RLAW 2020

## 2023 Philbrook Celebration Planning Committee

**Kaitlyn Doyle**, RLAW 2025  
Mary Philbrook Chair, APIL

**Ann Freedman**, Associate Professor & Mary Philbrook Celebration Founder

**Jill Friedman**, Associate Dean, Pro Bono and Public Interest Program

**Olivia Hunt**, RLAW 2025  
President, Women's Law Caucus

**Paige Kaercher**, RLAW 2025  
President, APIL

**Alexis McDonough**, RLAW 2025  
Vice President & Mary Philbrook Chair, Women's Law Caucus

**Pam Mertsock-Wolfe**, Director, Pro Bono and Public Interest Program

# Mary Philbrook



Mary Philbrook was born in Washington, D.C., on August 6, 1872. The daughter of a feminist and a lawyer, she only received formal education through high school, and a course in stenography. Mary became educated in the law only through a job with the firm of Russ and Oppenheimer, where she met James Minturn, who later became a New Jersey Supreme Court Justice. It was Minturn who encouraged Mary's interest in the law and made a motion for Mary to be admitted to the New Jersey Bar, which was initially denied.

In 1895, a bill was passed in New Jersey stating that "no person would be denied admission to examination for license to practice as an attorney..." and following another motion by Minturn, Mary was admitted to the New Jersey Bar on June 6, 1895. Subsequently, Mary became the first woman appointed to Chancery Court and the second to be a notary public. In 1906, Mary also became the first New Jersey woman to be admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court.

After beginning to practice, Mary began a lecture series in which she endorsed "plain justice," upholding that women not receive any special treatment. She began working for Legal Aid, as well as championing such causes as child labor reform, extension of the probation system, a state reformatory for women, and separate juvenile courts. She participated in investigations into white slavery, leading to the passing of the Mann Act, while also fighting for the right to vote.

After 1919, however, Philbrook's focus became the complete emancipation of women, especially in New Jersey. Mary proceeded to organize several committees and write various petitions to amend the state constitution to include an equal rights provision and reword the preamble to affirm women's rights. Mary's final major triumph was the replacement of references to "men" in the New Jersey Constitution with references to "persons."

After prolonged illness, Mary Philbrook passed away on September 2, 1958. We should all be grateful for the many achievements she accomplished throughout her life.



# **The 2023 Philbrook Planning Committee**

**would like to give a special thanks to:**

Kelly Carlucci, Events

Shanida Carter

Patty Legge, VolunteerUP

Arlene Lentini

Louis Thompson

Denise Johnson-Steinert

Lisa Alston

Hon. Karen M. Williams

Warden Karen Taylor

Jonathan Boyd

Jo Astrid Glading, PRCSC

*Without your support, direction, and help,  
Philbrook Week would not have been such a major  
success!*

Mary Philbrook  
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Award Celebration  
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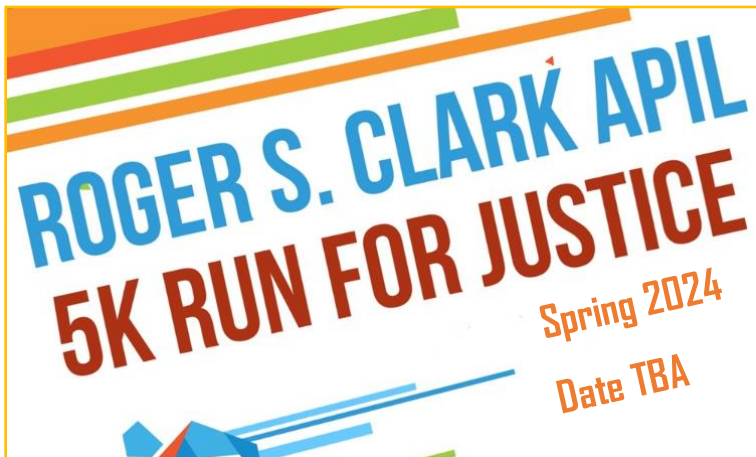
*Be on the Lookout for These  
Upcoming Events!*



**APIL Auction**

Spring 2024

Date TBA



The APIL Auction and the 5K Run for Justice both fund students in unpaid summer public interest jobs.

Please join the effort and join the fun to raise money for APIL and social justice!

To volunteer, contact our APIL Auction Chair at [rutersapil@gmail.com](mailto:rutersapil@gmail.com)!



# REMEMBER TO VOTE!

**If you have any questions or concerns,  
please call the Election Protection Hotline:**

English: 866-Our-Vote or 866-687-8683

Español: 888-VE-Y-VOTA or 888-839-8682

中文 (简)/中文 (繁)/한국어/Tiếng Việt/Tagalog: 888-274-8683

عربي (Arabic): 844-YALLA-US or 844-925-5287