



### **Dan Bryson 2021-2022**

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**Dan Bryson:** Hi. My name is Dan Bryson. My firm is Milberg Coleman Bryson Phillips & Grossman. I live in Raleigh, North Carolina. I am the current President of Public Justice [2022].

I've been involved in Public Justice for over 10 years. I had a friend, Andrew Lemon, who invited me to a Public Justice function, I believe, in Vancouver, Canada 10 or 12 years ago. He said, "You might like these people." I really enjoyed it and as a result, I joined Public Justice.

I wasn't on the board originally. I was just a nobody attorney from North Carolina. And I got involved and asked, "Where do you most have a need?" I was told, "Well, no one really wants to be on the Membership Committee." I said, "Okay, I'm happy to serve on the Membership Committee."

I joined that and then I went to a board meeting in Cleveland. Jack [Landskroner] was President [2012-2013]. Then we had the board meeting or dinner at the Rock and Roll

Hall of Fame. I thought it was a wonderful time, it was a wonderful evening. We came back to Jack's house and as a result of that, I really felt like I had found a home of like-minded people.

When I got involved with Public Justice, I was really looking for an organization to plug into to amplify my impact. In North Carolina, I would handle a case and that would be the end of it. But with Public Justice, I saw them doing national cases, having a national impact. I thought, "Well, I would really like to plug into this organization, do my little bit, my little part to help the overall organization and the great cases that they were working on to try to get justice for people."

A lot of the cases caught my eye. I was kind of mesmerized. At the board meeting, a lot of staff attorneys gave presentations – they gave little talks about the cases they were working on. I was just blown away at some of the things they were doing. Paul Bland with access to the courts -- [fighting arbitration clauses](#), which is a real [kudzu](#) on our legal system, choking it out. If you got to go to arbitration, you can't get into court. That has so many ramifications.

[Adele Kimmel](#) with the great work she was doing -- Title IX and various discriminatory practices that would happen -- bullying type cases that would happen in school systems that were known by the school board members or the school system. Horrible bullying -- it would take your breath away some of the things that happened. And then they wouldn't fire that teacher or they wouldn't really do anything.

Adelle and Public Justice would come in and file a lawsuit to stop that type of practice that was occurring. I was just so proud of the work they were doing in these areas because they were really trying to file impactful lawsuits to have systemic change.

I have seen a lot of growth in the organization over the decade that I have been really in the trenches and heavily involved. The organization has gone from a small organization of just a handful attorneys to where I think there's 22 lawyers today that are really divided into certain program areas – the Food Project, the for-profit prisons, environmental, access to justice, civil rights and the organization has become more organized into these different program areas that I think has been very positive development for the organization.

Early on, a lot of the cases were handled by the attorney working the case and sometimes they would partner with other law firms. But I think today, the staff and Paul and the attorneys are often in collaborations with other law firms to more aggressively be able to pursue these cases so that the defendants on the other side see not only is it the Public Justice lawyers who are brilliant in the work that they're doing, but they have some other law firms behind them to give the additional resources.

I think a lot of a lot of states are subcontracting prisons to for-profit prison organizations. If you've got a company that can come in on a for-profit basis and run a prison, that gives rise to all sorts of terrible things that can happen. There's really not a good or proper oversight of that. You have prisoners who are really-- Your imagination is the reality of prisoners being abused in a for-profit way.

What little money they may earn in the prison is taken away by the for-profit prison because they're doing this for profit. There's just a lot of prisoner abuse that happens with the prisoners as a result of giving it to these companies.

Not only that, but they're also not getting proper health care. They're not getting a lot of things like that. A prisoner will have, maybe, a terrible health condition where they need immediate medical attention. But because the for-profit organization is just wanting to maximize profits, they don't have proper medical care there and then that prisoner dies or has some other terrible thing that happens.

That's a lot of what we're seeing. It's just a terrible industry that should be totally shut down.

I think early on in my tenure, the organization looked for impactful law- suits to file. But because they were smaller, they would come in and file an impactful lawsuit maybe against the school system to change their bullying tactics and then would hope there would be publicity from that that would dissuade other school systems from engaging in that same type of terrible behavior.

The organization has evolved though, in our mission. The mission, of course, is to file impactful lawsuits to create systemic change and so today, we have a much more robust marketing and communications department so that when decisions come down that are excellent decisions or impactful decisions, we're able to promote or broadcast results of that so much better than we did before.

Again, trying to force systemic change – not, maybe, the result of just one lawsuit, but to change an entire industry, or area that might need changing.

There's a case selection committee that the board has that considers case requests. If somewhere in the country there's a case request, or if someone within the staff or some of the staff attorneys have a case idea, they bring it to the case selection committee to consider. One of the key criteria is -- is this a case that can be an impactful case, a high impact case? Is this case a case that can help us cause systemic change? That's the biggest criteria. It could be a very important case, but if it's not a high impact case, that could give national publicity or help cause systemic change, then perhaps it's not a case that we should take. That's the debate that the case selection committee has all the time.

Do you want to help make a difference? Do you want to support an organization that is out there fighting for justice? It doesn't matter if there's a fee involved. It doesn't matter if they can make money at it. What matters is this an area where we need to bring justice. We need to try to find justice for these people that don't have justice.

If that's important to you, then support this organization because that's what they're out there doing every single day. Paul Bland and the other 21 attorneys in Public Justice every single day are out trying to bring justice in a way that private law firms are not doing. Private law firms are out trying to get good results for their clients, but they're also trying to make a fee and make a living.

Within Public Justice, they're trying to bring justice to people in these various sectors that we were talking about.

Public Justice is fighting for "the little guy." That is their mission. If you've been bullied or if you've been discriminated against, Public Justice is the organization that's out there fighting for you every single day. This is an organization that you should care about. Even if you're not an attorney, this is an organization that you should support because here are attorneys that are going to battle to try to have a better society, a more just society and that is their mission.

That is what they're fighting for -- they're fighting for you. The people who aren't -- they'll support this organization that aren't lawyers. Public Justice is fighting for you and that's what people need to understand.

The only day you're promised is today. A Past President in this organization, Jack Landskroner, recently passed away and it really had a heavy impact on me. He lived every day to the fullest, and he did all he could every day of his life. And it's impressed upon me that I need to do everything that I can to help this organization -- to do my little bit because you're not promised any day but today.

A lot of us, we've won the lottery of life. We're able to sit here and be involved in this organization, make a good living and have a good life. But a lot of people have not been dealt the same hand that we have. If I don't do my little bit, to try to help make the world a better place, to try to bring justice to people who aren't able to find justice, who don't have a lawyer to help them out -- Public Justice is out trying to help them. If I don't do my little part, what kind of person am I? Not a very good one. 6:24:27

I think the organization's in a very, very good place today. Under Paul Bland's leadership, we have a great leader who is very smart, knowledgeable about the cases, who's a great ambassador for the organization. We have a number of staff attorneys within the organization who are doing great things, have all varying levels of seniority. In the past when the organization was a lot smaller, I think a lot of the board members had to really pitch in a lot to do all the things that needed to be done.

Arthur Bryant was a great leader for many, many years of Public Justice. Today though, the staff is doing a great job. As a board, we need to continue to think: how can we best support this organization? What can we do to really help?

I think a challenge that we have is to challenge the staff of Public Justice to remember that -- as brilliant as all of you guys are -- remember that you've got a board that is equally talented in many areas and let's make sure we don't lose that collaboration between the board and the staff. I think if the staff listens to the advice of a lot of the board members, they'll make the organization even better and stronger.

I hope in another 10 years, Public Justice is a lot larger than it is today. I hope that our communication and marketing efforts are even more robust than they are today, so that whenever there's an issue of injustice that comes up, whether it be police misconduct or Black Lives Matter or whatever the issue is -- people think Public Justice is there helping to force systemic change and that all of the media outlets call Public Justice for comment. That's what I would like for it to be, that Public Justice would be synonymous with those types of things.

The one thing that I would like to say is that it was pretty humbling to become President and it was a little bit intimidating because we have so many incredible Past Presidents in this organization that are so incredibly accomplished and they did such great things when they were President of the organization. The challenge for me is to try to be just half as good as is virtually all of them and it will have been a pretty good year for me.