

In Fall 2015, the Criminal Defense Clinic (DEF) continued its work on Criminal Court and prisoners' rights litigation.

Students-attorneys represented 15 people charged with misdemeanor crimes in the Queens County Criminal Court. Charges included Assault, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, Endangering the Welfare of a Child, Criminal Possession of a Weapon, Possession of Marijuana, and Resisting Arrest.

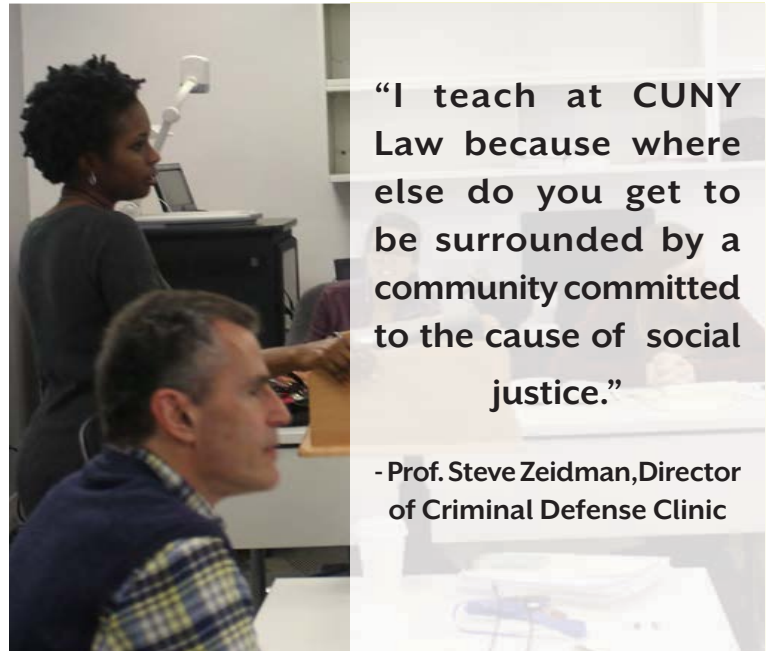
As part of clinic practice, student-attorneys counsel their clients with myriad matters related to criminal cases (e.g., Family Court; Immigration and Customs Enforcement Detainers; Parole Revocation; employment and licensing issues). Students also work toward getting their clients released from solitary confinement at Rikers Island and at prisons across New York State.

Since Spring 2015, the Defenders have ventured into several new areas. At the request of Administrative Law Judge Ray Kramer, the Director of the Administrative Judicial Institute at the New York City Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH), students defended clients against civil forfeiture proceedings brought by the New York City Police Department. They also entered the nascent clemency movement, representing incarcerated persons serving life sentences, in their bids for clemency at the federal and state levels from President Obama and Governor Cuomo.

The clinical program also includes external placements where student attorneys assist solo practitioners and lawyers in criminal defense and other civil rights and social justice organizations. Past host organizations include Emery, Celli, Brinckerhoff & Abady; Brooklyn Defender Service, Bronx Defenders (Criminal Defense Practice and Civil Action Practice (Immigration)); the Center for Court Innovation; the Legal Aid Society (Criminal Appeals Bureau, Criminal Defense Practice, and Special Litigation Unit); and Youth Represent.



L-R: Bridgette Bissonette ('10), Prof. Nicole Smith-Futrell, Emily Sahli ('16), Aleka Asamoah ('16), Somalia Samuel ('14)



“I teach at CUNY Law because where else do you get to be surrounded by a community committed to the cause of social justice.”

- Prof. Steve Zeidman, Director of Criminal Defense Clinic

Professors Steve Zeidman and Nicole Smith-Futrell