



The City University of New York

CUNY SCHOOL OF LAW

Law in the Service of Human Needs



Justice Organizers respond to an audience Q&A on Protecting Fairness and Justice at Saturday's Primer for the Social Justice Legal Community.

To the CUNY Law Community,

The Executive order issued by President Trump barring admission to our country of Syrian refugees and imposing a 90-day ban on immigrant and non-immigrant entry from seven Muslim-majority countries is a clarion call to those of us who believe in the fundamental principles of law forbidding discrimination on the basis of religion, nationality, and national origin. Preservation of these fundamental principles requires rigorous scrutiny by the courts, preceded by the work of lawyers in the service of their clients, and in the service of their responsibility to steward the rule of law.

This weekend, our CUNY School of Law colleagues in Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility (CLEAR), Immigrant & Non-Citizens' Rights Clinic (INRC), and the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), worked tirelessly at JFK and fielding inquiries from many seeking counsel about travel for themselves and their families to ensure that the law is used to its full extent to protect the bedrock principles of fundamental rights and to serve human needs.

This was not a one-off for CUNY Law. Our students, faculty and alumni have represented immigrants, helped strengthen immigrant communities, and promoted accountability and responsibility in the enforcement of the law with respect those seeking entry to, refuge in, and the chance to thrive in our country. Through the work of CLEAR, INRC and IRAP with individual clients at the airport, in concert with lawyer networks across the country, and in their clear and [helpful guidance online](#), members of the CUNY Law community are advancing our mission to use the law to promote social justice and serve human needs.

On Saturday throughout the day, 300 CUNY Law students, faculty, alums, and social justice partners gathered at the Law School to explore the challenges and opportunities for lawyers intent on using the law to promote equality and fairness at the full-day CLE co-sponsored by the Law School, the [National Lawyers Guild-NYC Chapter](#), and the [Society of American Law Teachers](#). At "The Presidential Inauguration and the Unfolding Legal Era: A Primer for the Social Justice Legal Community," 32 lawyers, community activists, and law professors engaged, educated and reminded us of the long history of struggle using the law and organizing allies to protect and promote the values that form the bedrock of a civil society.

Our words and actions this weekend as a community in the auditorium, at the airport, and in the press – Professor Robson in "[Scholars: Many more legal challenges likely for Trump's executive order on immigration](#)" in Sunday's *Washington Post* and Professor Kassem in "[Lawmakers Warn of a 'Constitutional Crisis' as Refugees and Green-card Holders Remain in Detention](#)" in today's *The Nation* – speak loudly and clearly of our commitment to our mission and capacity to join together as one community – students, faculty, alumni, and social justice partners – to impact the operation of the law on vulnerable communities and to promote justice and fairness.

As many have reminded us, our leadership and work as individuals, as an institution, and as a community are more important now than ever. For some of us, this work will be on the front lines, for others it will be in the background supporting, resourcing, and promoting this work. We will redouble our efforts to meet the day's challenges and those we anticipate in the future – in our classrooms, clinics, centers, offices and through partnerships – to best support the work of our faculty, students and alumni. For some, I hope this moment inspires you to invest in our efforts to empower our students to carry on our mission through careers of justice.

I know that each of us will have spent some time reflecting on how best to move ourselves, the Law School, and justice forward. We are indeed fortunate here at CUNY Law School that simply reinvesting in the goals and values that brought many of us here puts us on a path towards justice and law in the service of human needs.

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[P.S. ~ If you are CUNY Law School alum motivated by everything you have seen this weekend and want to join with your CUNY Law community to take action, there is an organizing meeting at the law school this Wednesday, February 1st from 6:30-9:30 pm. Click here to RSVP.](#)