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PUBLIC SQUARE
A Community of Justice

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Alice Reyes-Lynch, future CUNY Law alumna and daughter of Joseph Lynch, director of digital media services
Family Matters

That’s my daughter, Eavan. When this picture was shot, she had just stepped up to my desk and said, “I’m the dean now!” Deciding to have her was the best choice of my life.

When a person decides to make a family, life changes permanently. Choosing a life partner or deciding to parent a child changes the course of our lives and alters all of the central relationships we have. The ability to make choices around having a family and how we constitute our families is central to our identities, but not everyone enjoys free options.

Law constrains choice. Poverty, imprisonment, state supervision, and discrimination can stress and fracture families. Family law has traditionally been thought to focus on divorce and custody, but today family lawyers address immigration, housing, incarceration, employment, and many other areas of the law as well. The need for public interest lawyers specially trained in family law has never been greater.

In this issue of Public Square, we explore the effect that CUNY School of Law is having on family law. For our cover story, we gathered a group of alumni making an impact on families in New York and beyond. You can read profiles of each of these graduates in our special series, “Law in the Service of Family Needs,” on our website.

In a new feature, “Conversations,” Professor Ann Cammett (‘00), who returned to CUNY Law last year to direct the Family Law Concentration, talks with retired family court judge Bryanne Hamill (‘90) and student Hannah Kaplan (‘14) about how the practice of family law is changing.

This issue of the magazine also discusses the perspectives and experiences of three students who have worked in the field of family law in different capacities: Alex MacDougall (‘14), Dalourny Nemorin (‘14), and Lucas Cuéllar (‘14).

It also includes an essay in which I reflect on the outlook of the CUNY School of Law family itself during a time of substantial change. The future of legal education is filled with uncertainty. The contraction of traditional postgraduate employment opportunities vexes law school graduates. Enrollment across the country has declined, as has the number of those taking the LSAT. At CUNY Law, we understand the urgency of these changed conditions, and the need to respond affirmatively to them while we remain true to our enduring mission.

CUNY Law students and alums carry out our unchanging mission in the field every day. This magazine shares a slice of our family life with you, in hopes that all families can be chosen and nurtured.

—Michelle J. Anderson
Dean and Professor of Law
The spirit of the late CUNY Law professor Rhonda Copelon was palpable at a recent Public Square event honoring international women’s rights advocate Madeleine Rees.

Dean Michelle Anderson, Clinical Professor Lisa Davis of the International Women’s Human Rights Clinic (IWHR), and other women from around the world gathered at the law school in March to present Rees with the Dean’s Justice Award.

Rees is the secretary-general of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. In her previous role as a gender expert for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and head of office in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rees worked on the rule of law, gender and post-conflict issues, transitional justice, and the protection of social and economic rights. She also helped expose human rights abuses related to the sex trade.

After receiving the award, Rees spoke about her work facilitating women’s organizing for peace, justice, and accountability. Most recently, she brought together Syrian and Bosnian women to discuss women’s inclusion in the peace-making process. Rees recalled what she heard from some Bosnian women with whom she spoke: “If you don’t participate in peace negotiations now, you’ll have to have your own revolution, again, 20 years later.”

If women are not included in peace negotiations, Rees said, “What you end up with is a peace agreement that essentially sets the pattern of the division of power in the old way.” Rees is optimistic, however, about the potential that women’s organizing around the world holds. She said, “This could be the beginning of a social movement of women who are opposing conflict based on their experiences.”

You can watch a video of the event at: www.law.cuny.edu/youtube
CUNY School of Law recognized Joey Mogul ('97) and Andrea Costello ('98) with the inaugural Distinguished Alumni Awards, while PILA honored Jeremy Scahill, the Central Park 5 and their legal teams, Professor Babe Howell, and Raquel Batista ('03).
PILA Gala + Alumni Weekend 2014
from the public square

Equal Justice Works Fellowships Awarded to CUNY Law Alumni

Eugene Chen (‘13), Rage M. Kidvai (‘14), and Molly Coe (‘14) were each awarded a two-year Equal Justice Works fellowship, to begin in September. Chen will be working at the New York Legal Assistance Group, serving low-income LGBT people from communities of color facing housing issues, particularly those who are aging, transgender, or affected by HIV/AIDS, or who have children in the household.

Kidvai will be at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, providing legal representation on asylum applications for low-income transgender, gender nonconforming, and intersex (TGNCI) immigrants. Kidvai pursued the fellowship to address the “huge gap in providing asylum and deportation defense services to TGNCI people with criminal records.”

Coe will be representing undocumented immigrant students in New York City. Her project will identify students who are eligible for special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS), an underutilized pathway to citizenship for young people who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by one or both parents.

New Report Released on Remedies for Criminalized Trafficking Victims

Women who are trafficked into the sex industry face the added threat of criminal prosecution for acts they were forced to commit. Resulting criminal convictions can continue to haunt trafficking survivors, preventing them from rebuilding their lives.

In 2010, New York State passed the first law in the country to help trafficking victims get a fresh start by allowing some of these convictions to be removed from their records. Since then, 12 other states have enacted similar legislation.

A new report from CUNY Law School’s International Women’s Human Rights (IWHR) Clinic, Clearing the Slate: Seeking Effective Remedies for Criminalized Trafficking Victims, addresses the implementation of the law to identify several best practices for these types of “vacatur” remedies. The report authors provide recommendations for a variety of institutions, including federal and state agencies, state law enforcement agencies, district attorneys, public defenders, service providers, and legal aid organizations, to help reduce the criminalization of trafficking victims.

In February, IWHR hosted a Public Square LIVE event at CUNY Law to discuss the report’s recommendations.

Participants in the February Public Square event, from left: John Temple, New York County District Attorney’s Office Human Trafficking Program; Suzannah Phillips, IWHR Clinic; The Hon. Toko Serita (‘89), Queens County Human Trafficking Intervention Court; Sienna Baskin (‘07), Sex Workers Project of the Urban Justice Center; Kate Mogulescu, Trafficking Victims Advocacy Project at the Legal Aid Society; and Cindy Soohoo, IWHR clinic.
Camille Massey ('95) Returns to CUNY Law

L. Camille Massey ('95) has been named the founding executive director of the Sorensen Center for International Peace and Justice. Massey will lead CUNY Law’s effort to establish and then direct the new center, named after the late Theodore Sorensen, longtime close advisor and speechwriter to President John F. Kennedy. Sorensen went on to help emerging democracies embrace and carry out the principles of freedom as a partner at the New York law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, LLP.

Opening in September 2014, the center will honor Sorensen’s legacy with named fellows, scholars-in-residence, and conferences. It will prepare outstanding attorneys committed to practicing law in the service of global justice. The center will engage in international advocacy, collaborating with other institutions around the world.

Massey joins CUNY Law from the Council on Foreign Relations, where she was vice president for global strategy and programs. Prior to joining the council, she was the founder and CEO of Cue Global, a consulting business that designed and implemented strategic policy, legal, advocacy, communications, and resource mobilization plans for global organizations.

In her years at CUNY Law, Massey helped found the Mississippi Project. Her efforts go on today, as students travel to Mississippi and Louisiana each January to work with community and public interest legal organizations.

CUNY Law Welcomes Melanie Hart to CLRN

“Hi, I’m Melanie Hart,” says the new director of the Community Legal Resource Network (CLRN) and External Affairs with a firm handshake, a broad smile, and seemingly boundless energy. We’re meeting in her office with an expanse of Queens as the backdrop. Hart comes to CUNY Law with a lifelong commitment to public service.

“Doing good work and doing it well,” the native New Yorker says, is what she has always wanted. “That was my goal growing up in New York City, seeing the great need the community has and thinking about what things I need to do to be able to lend a hand and to lead and collaborate in those efforts.”

It started with education. Hart received her undergraduate degree from Cornell University, a master’s degree in urban policy at the New School for Social Research, and a J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law.

Afterward, Hart grounded herself in work, serving as a manager of nonprofit organizations and as a transactional attorney in a law firm. In whatever she has done, her approach has been to ensure that there are measurable outcomes. With students, data must show improvement; there must be set goals. Just before CUNY Law, Hart served as interim CEO at Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT).

“We taught people how to self-advocate in New York City Family Court in every borough and served 30,000 people citywide,” says Hart. “It’s based on the idea of creating the most access to justice with deliberate outcomes and sustainable programming.”

Hart’s approach to public service, as well as the varied work she has done, gave her the skills to create, fund, manage, and run organizations that can thrive and grow—skills that make her an asset to CUNY Law. “Melanie has done nonprofit and program design, and funding, sustainability, and measurement. This is what CLRN, as a program, needs,” says Senior Associate Dean for Institutional Advancement Glenn Kaufhold.

—Paul Lin
from the public square

Why I Give Back

I attended CUNY Law in the 1990s, back when the hallways felt like high school and the view was of the graveyard, but you knew you were being trained for something important and everyone in the building shared a vision of social justice. When I tell people I attended CUNY Law, most have a visceral understanding of my devotion to serving the public. I tell them about my start representing immigrant victims of domestic violence in the CUNY clinics. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) had just passed, and we filed one of the first VAWA petitions on behalf of an immigrant victim of violence. That project propelled me into the work I so love today, representing immigrant women and victims of sex trafficking.

After graduation, forging my own career working as the dean of the Center for Public Interest Law at Columbia Law School, my attentions were elsewhere. I lost connection with the law school. Recently, I started having conversations about CUNY with colleagues, alumni, and faculty from other law schools, and it dawned on me how unique CUNY Law is. Public interest lawyering is embedded in the core values and curriculum of the school in a way that does not exist in other law schools. It was hard to appreciate that fact as a student, but striking in retrospect. I regarded CUNY more closely as it moved into its new space, hired faculty with unique academic and real-world experiences, and launched incredibly innovative programs, like the Pipeline to Justice. Again, I found myself thinking: No other law school does anything like this.

I've recently attended CUNY events with classmates and have been surprised by the connection we still have to the law school's core values. Whether we work for a nonprofit, the government, or the private sector like me, we are still connected around a common goal: law in the service of human needs. This connection reinforced that I am the best version of my professional self in this public interest law community, doing the work CUNY taught me to do, with values CUNY helped instill in me. So, for the first time, I pledged my financial support and became a Justice Roundtable member.

The support of alumni is vital to meeting many of the needs of current students, including CUNY’s ability to offer summer fellowships, scholarships, and bar support. These initiatives exposed us to important issues and gave us practical experience when we were in school. We owe it to current students to make similar opportunities available to them.

Although some of us may not be in a position to give $100 a month, many of us are, and I ask you to join me in becoming a Justice Roundtable member. Show CUNY Law students that our love for the school and our commitment to social justice go far beyond our last semester.

— Harlene Katzman ('95)

Harlene Katzman ('95) is pro bono counsel and director at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP.

The Justice Roundtable is a community of donors who have committed to donating $1,200 or more over the calendar year. Many members of the Justice Roundtable choose to give $100 monthly. For more information, please contact C.J. Ortuno at cj.ortuno@law.cuny.edu or 718-340-4643.
Building a movement of economic justice. That’s a big goal for CUNY Law’s Community & Economic Development Clinic (CEDC) and the clients in its worker cooperative docket.

Since teaming up last year with Mondragon USA, a subsidiary of the largest worker-owned cooperative in the world, clinic faculty and students have started to create a legal framework for a new labor model launched by Mondragon, the United Steelworkers union, and the Ohio Employee Ownership Center—the unionized, worker-owned cooperative.

“During a time of economic crisis, at a time when union density is low and wages are stagnant, there needs to be a renewed, more cohesive, powerful movement to achieve transformative economic justice on behalf of workers,” said CEDC Director Carmen Huertas-Noble.

With traditional companies making up the bulk of today’s U.S. economy, income inequality is greater now than it has been since before the Great Depression, she said.

In worker-owned cooperatives, employees own the business and share in its profits. Worker equity and equal-share ownership mean each person receives only one share and is entitled to only one vote. By contrast, in traditional corporations, the more money an investor puts in, the more voting rights he or she has. Worker-owned cooperatives also tend to pay more fairly than traditional companies and have better-quality working conditions.

Partnering with a union brings additional benefits, such as greater bargaining leverage when it comes to negotiating contracts, healthcare, and retirement plans, as well as more support when grievances occur.

Beyond working on the legal framework for Mondragon’s model, CEDC has been advising the group on the process of seeking funding, and making sure the group can meet the requirements of its grants. CEDC has also been offering key legal assistance to individual clients that incorporate Mondragon principles, including Pittsburgh Clean & Green Laundry, an eco-friendly commercial laundry.

“Our students have already formed the official company for Pittsburgh Clean & Green and are in the process of counseling the board on its operating agreement,” Huertas-Noble said. The operating agreement serves to define workers’ powers and how those powers are distributed and exercised.

The CEDC’s work to advance Mondragon’s new labor model could not have come at a more appropriate point, according to Huertas-Noble.

“There are people who are working even harder than their counterparts [did] years ago but are being paid less,” leaving an increasing number of people unable to provide for themselves and their families and making economic mobility more elusive than it should be.

—Paul Lin
The legal academy is going through a period of unprecedented reflection. In this issue of Public Square, Dean Michelle J. Anderson offers her perspective.

In October 2013, I delivered a keynote lecture at the Association for Canadian Clinical Legal Education Conference on the critique and reform of legal education in the United States. It is a topic on the minds of many law school deans lately.

Seismic shifts in the legal profession are having a profound impact on law schools across the country. This is a time of hand-wringing in the legal academy. Deans and commentat- tors from the professoriate are positing a "new normal" in legal education.

Our home, CUNY School of Law, has never been a "normal" educational institution, in the sense of average or ordinary. For 30 years, we have charted an exceptional and
innovative path. But as unique as we are, we are not immune to the larger structural changes in the profession.

We try to avoid hand-wringing, though. We want to roll up our sleeves. At CUNY Law, we want to use the opportunity of self-reflection to enhance our ability to deliver the best progressive legal education.

Let us put what is happening to legal education in the United States today into context.

There are three long-standing critiques of legal education, each of which became louder and more salient after the collapse of the economy in 2008. First, law schools fail to prepare students for actual practice. Second, jobs are scarce, and law schools have not been transparent about graduates’ limited employment options. Third, law schools cannot justify their high costs and the massive debt that law students must incur.

**Preparing for Practice**

In 1890, Dean Christopher Columbus Langdell pioneered the case method of teaching at Harvard Law School, one in which students examine appellate opinions rather than a set of abstract legal principles. The case method has been the signature pedagogy at American law schools ever since.
More than a century later, the clinical legal education movement was taking hold, aided by a 1992 report from the American Bar Association, *Legal Education and Professional Development: An Educational Continuum*. The document, known as the “MacCrate Report” for the chair of the task force that created it, detailed the skills and values that a law school should teach in order to better prepare graduates to participate effectively in the profession. It argued that students should be afforded the opportunity “to perform lawyering tasks with appropriate feedback and self-evaluation.”

When CUNY School of Law opened its doors nine years before that report, it adopted the case method of teaching the law, but it equally adopted a pedagogy based on the same lawyering skills, feedback, and self-evaluation that the MacCrate Report later called for. The founders of this institution were prescient in their assessment of what lawyers need to learn to practice law well.

Two significant reports followed in 2007. Roy Stuckey and others published *Best Practices for Legal Education*. The authors advised law schools to shift from a content-based curriculum to one focused on learning goals and outcomes. It suggested that schools teach knowledge, skills, and values progressively through the three years of law school and that they regularly engage in assessment.

That same year, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching published an in-depth report, *Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession of Law*. The authors concluded that law schools were very good at teaching students to hone their analytic skills through Langdell’s case method, but that they were not very good at teaching the practical skills and professional responsibility most crucial when entering the field.

The Carnegie Foundation praised CUNY Law in *Educating Lawyers* for its integration of theory and practice. “Some law schools are already addressing the need for a more dynamic, integrated curriculum,” it noted. CUNY Law, it explained, “exemplifies” the needed changes:

At CUNY, we discovered close interrelations between doctrinal and lawyering courses, including a resource-intensive investment in small sections in both doctrinal and lawyering seminars in the first year and a heavy use of simulation throughout the curriculum. The school also provides extensive clinical experience linked to the lawyering sequence.

### Finding Jobs

A second critique that the legal academy has suffered is that it has failed to make prospective students aware of the limited legal job opportunities available for recent graduates. This critique gained traction when the financial markets collapsed, because jobs at large firms—the aspiration of many new graduates—became scarce. Clients of these firms were no longer willing to pay for junior associates to learn the skills of being a lawyer on the job. As clients tightened their budgets, large firms were forced to reduce costs, through fewer positions for new associates and lower pay. Many firms are now declaring that we need fewer lawyers overall.

CUNY Law graduates, however, tend not to focus on elite law firms. We send a greater percentage of our graduates into public interest and public service practice than any other law school in the country.

The legal profession needs more lawyers like those who graduate from CUNY Law, not fewer. The financial crisis did not harm only elite law firms, and the harm that wealthy individuals and institutions suffered because of it does not compare to what happened to the middle class and impoverished individuals.

As a result of the financial crisis, people lost homes and
life savings; middle-class individuals slid into poverty. Economic inequality increased concurrent with funding cuts for civil legal services that might have addressed this inequality in labor and employment, housing, immigration, domestic violence, poverty, public benefits, and family law. The middle class cannot afford attorneys but also cannot qualify for legal aid.

At CUNY Law, we have one of the strongest clinical programs in the country. Our clinics teach students how to engage in the social justice–oriented practice that society most needs. We also pioneered law school incubators to help new attorneys open their own small or solo practices or non-profits. We are now examining all aspects of these programs so that we can continue to innovate in response to changes in the legal profession.

Curbing Costs

The third critique of law schools is that many law students incur staggering debt to finance their legal education. Over the past decade especially, law schools have increased tuition far faster than the rate of inflation, with no obvious benefit to students.

Some observers have, as a result, called for a two-year law degree as a way to curb costs. For those programs that do not have integrated and enriched clinical educational opportunities for students, the third year appears to be an expensive opportunity to take electives that do not always relate to practice readiness. The two-year, accelerated programs so far developed, however, have exactly the same tuition and fees as three-year programs, and thus are just as expensive.

At CUNY Law, we have bucked the trend in spiraling tuition. Our in-state tuition is the lowest in the state of New York, and it is among the lowest in the nation. PreLaw Magazine has ranked CUNY Law as having had the sixth-lowest tuition increase from 2000 to 2010 among the 200 or so law schools in the country. We are committed to producing graduates who can meet the unmet legal needs of low- and moderate-income clients. Our affordable cost is fundamental to that goal.

Reflecting on the Crisis

Many groups are tackling questions relating to the changing nature of the legal profession and the academy. In 2012, the New York City Bar Association assembled the Task Force on New Lawyers in a Changing Profession. (I served on the task force and chaired its Committee on Unmet Legal Needs.) The same year, the American Bar Association assembled the Task Force on the Future of Legal Education.

The crisis in legal education provides us with an opportunity to reflect. We in the legal academy should be asking ourselves a few fundamental questions: Who do we serve? What is the purpose of a legal education? What should the purpose of a legal education be given the challenges society faces today?

Law schools are the funnel through which the profession repopulates itself, so legal education defines the contours of the future of the profession. We have a role to play in helping solve the problems of limited access to affordable legal services for people with moderate and limited means.

There is room for vision, dialogue, creativity, and innovation. Three decades ago, we opened our doors and set a high bar for what an excellent, progressive legal education should be. Now, 30 years later, other schools are following our lead. We need to take this opportunity to grapple with how we can continue to innovate our program for a new generation facing new challenges. There is massive unmet legal need among low-income communities, and we should focus on how we can change legal education to best serve those communities.
Although family law was once considered the domain of divorce and custody cases, recent years have seen family law attorneys and judges addressing issues connected to housing, employment, immigration, poverty, and more. In this feature, our alumni, students, and faculty explore a broader view of the family law field and its impact on the legal profession and society.

Pictured here are just some of the CUNY Law alumni who are working within different facets of family law. Clockwise from top left: Karen Simmons ('94), executive director of the Children's Law Center; Toshia McKnight ('94), court attorney referee at Kings County Family Court; Edgar Irizarry ('12), court attorney to Judge Tracey Bing ('96); Andrew Sta. Ana ('07), supervising attorney at Day One; Justice Pam Jackman-Brown ('86), Supreme Court of Queens County; Michael Scherz ('90), director of the Domestic Violence Project at Lawyers for Children; Lenina Trinidad ('00), senior staff attorney in the Family Law Unit of Manhattan Legal Services; Judge Tracey Bing ('96), New York City Civil Court; Administrative Judge Edwina Richardson-Mendelson ('88), New York City Family Court; Demetra Frazier ('94), staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society’s Juvenile Rights Practice; and Kerry Toner ('09), supervisor of legal programs at CONNECT.

You can read more about each of these alumni and their work on the law school’s home page at www.law.cuny.edu or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cunylawschool.
How has family law practice changed in recent years?

Bryanne Hamill: It has become highly specialized. To really serve clients well, lawyers have found that they have to specialize. The courts have specialized, too, believing that even a judge can’t be an expert in the various specialties. It’s somewhat controversial because there are those who think maybe we don’t serve families and children as well as we could, if we are so highly specialized and don’t address all the legal issues affecting the family together.

Ann Cammett: Family law has also become more segregated into inequalities. There seem to be two distinct family law systems, one for families with resources, like divorce courts, and one for the poor, where the state tends to employ more enforcement mechanisms against families. People tend to
think about family law solely as matrimonial law, distribution of property, custody, visitation—but those aren’t the only kinds of issues that our low-income clients experience. More routinely, our clients are disproportionately caught up in child support proceedings and the child welfare courts. Unfortunately, those courts are also segregated, by class and, largely, by race.

BH: The definition of family law and the various proceedings have expanded to encompass these issues. We now have many advocates and specially trained counsel to represent various litigants in these highly specialized proceedings, in a way that the traditional family lawyer just simply wasn’t prepared to do.

AC: The lawyers representing these clients tend to be public interest lawyers, like the ones we produce here at CUNY Law. They are trained more specifically than pro bono or 18-B lawyers, and they tend to do a better job on these types of issues. One of the more positive advances of this bifurcated family law system that I am speaking about is the development of institutional providers, specifically skilled to handle cases like parental defense, child abuse, and neglect.

Hannah Kaplan: The relatively recent introduction of institutional providers specializing in parental defense has also enabled larger-scale advocacy and more awareness about what is happening to parents and children in family court. The public needs to be better informed about the family court system, generally. As you were both saying, it is largely lower-income communities of color that have to appear in family court. Another change is our improved understanding of developmental brain science and its positive impact on juvenile delinquency.

1 Pursuant to Article 18-B of the County Law, the Assigned Counsel Plan has been providing quality legal services to indigent persons within the Bronx and New York County Criminal Courts since 1966. The plan provides compensation to private attorneys for representing indigent clients charged with criminal offenses.
petitions. While I hope this will continually lead to fewer delinquency petitions and less-severe dispositions, the dialogue about why youth commit certain acts and appropriate dispositions has certainly evolved.

BH: Yes, and thus, lawyers are litigating many more important issues. Judges are deciding novel issues and creating more case law, thereby providing more precedent from appeal. Institutional providers have been extremely successful at lobbying the Legislature for changes in law that will provide more rights and truly benefit the litigants before the court. This enhances due process and the court process. It has become a much more exciting area of law, where there is not only meaningful opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of children and families, but also to actually implement positive social change.

How does family law intersect with other practice areas?

BH: Many family court proceedings have state action, as in child abuse, neglect, parental termination, and juvenile delinquency. These cases raise a host of constitutional issues, and may lead to related proceedings, like domestic violence, custody, criminal, and housing.

AC: We would be hard-pressed to find an area of law that doesn’t affect families. We’ve not looked closely enough at the effect that mass criminalization has had on families and, by extension, the practice of family law. All of the civil consequences that flow from criminal convictions in the aggregate have a negative impact on families in terms of their ability to reintegrate, reunify, and thrive. Obstacles arise from criminal convictions that restrict public and private housing, jobs, occupational licenses, public benefits, and many other critical areas of life where low-income people need access. These barriers have an impact on families and affect their ability to obtain the resources they need to minimize the risk of state intervention in the first place.

BH: Law students should consider that family court proceedings intersect with poverty law to a great extent.

HK: When working on delinquency and neglect and abuse cases, every individual that I worked with had other struggles going on in their life. In many ways, it relates back to whose lives the state gets involved in. The young people that I help represent on delinquency cases almost always live in highly policed, low-income neighborhoods. Therefore, they have many more encounters with the police and more delinquency petitions filed. There is more state monitoring of low-income families in the city through the criminal justice system, the shelter system, welfare, and publicly funded hospitals.

What should readers know about family law?

AC: People make assumptions about family law, based on their own experiences, and don’t realize that there is an underbelly of inappropriate state intervention into poor families that is widespread and routine. People organize around child welfare intervention, for example, but their voices don’t necessarily carry substantial weight in the Legislature or in front of the judiciary, where changes need to be made. I think the courts are doing as good a job as they can, but they’re also under-resourced. When your day-to-day lived experience is one of marginalization, it’s hard to fight back. It’s sometimes difficult to organize and create a power base when you’re trying to survive. But people continue to fight for dignity in the courts, especially in child welfare cases, where many neglect filings stem from poverty.

BH: There are also significant issues with our foster care system. When children are removed from their homes and placed in foster care, states obtain federal funds. This creates a financial incentive for children at risk to be placed in foster care.

AC: Follow the money.
BH: Foster care is a huge business, in which some are profiting at the expense of the children and their families, although there certainly are times when foster care is imperative to protect children. In my child emergency removal part in Brooklyn, I found 50 percent of the children could remain safely in their homes, with additional services and funding in place to mitigate the risk. In my Citywide Youth Transition Planning Court, I found dozens of adoptive parents receiving the adoption subsidy for children they no longer cared for, having returned them permanently to foster care as teens.

HK: On the flip side, there is no financial incentive for successfully returning children to their parents. We need to rethink how we can use the limited resources available to better support children in foster care and their parents.

AC: Parents accused of abuse and neglect are more maligned than criminal defendants; they don’t have a very strong support base within the larger community. Some children do need to be removed for their own safety, but many of the problems arise from poverty, from parents’ inability to provide adequately for their children. That’s not abuse in the way we understand it in common discourse, but once a parent gets involved in a neglect case, there’s not a lot of sympathy. It took a long time for institutional providers to make clear that what many parents really needed was resources to help their families survive, not automatic removal of their children.

**How can CUNY Law address the challenges of family law?**

HK: When you are dealing with the legal system intervening in the most personal and intimate relationships in people’s lives, it’s really important to empower and facilitate clients to make the decisions that will so intensely affect their lives. CUNY Law does a good job of attracting and supporting students who probably already have this inclination. The client-centered, holistic representation that this school focuses on is of enormous importance when you’re dealing with family relationships.

AC: It’s so true. We are practicing “law in the service of human needs.” We have a particular mandate to talk about family issues in a way that’s different from what is traditionally discussed among the matrimonial bar. We also have a relationship with communities that is unparalleled. They are our source of knowledge and have a sense of how to deal with their own problems. Part of the uniqueness of CUNY Law alums is that we tend to listen more to the communities with which we work. We prioritize the areas within family law that don’t get a lot of attention. There has been a lot of discussion around marriage equality, for example, as an emerging contemporary issue of family law. And that conversation is important for many reasons—chief among them advancing the cause of basic equality. But for many of the low-income clients we deal with, it is not necessarily a priority or focus. Of course, we all deserve the same rights, and we need to advocate for equality, but you can have equality and still not have justice. We can’t forget in this conversation that the most marginalized people, especially LGBTQ people in poor communities, might have different immediate goals and need our advocacy and resources.

BH: I’ve heard so many judges ask, “Why aren’t there more changes taking place for these communities of color that find themselves in the court? Why isn’t there more grassroots work and collaboration to make some fundamental changes?” We all know that some of the consequences of the problems are the disproportional representation of the children and youth of color in our foster care system and in our juvenile justice system. How do we change that? CUNY Law School, with its talented faculty and passionate students, is a great place to start, with courses, seminars, concentrations, clinics, symposia, fellowships, and the like.

AC: I couldn’t agree more.
While rummaging through her bag last spring, Dalourny Nemorin ('14) came across a business card she had received about a year before from New York City Family Court’s chief administrative judge, Edwina Richardson-Mendelson ('88). As a first-year student, Nemorin had met the judge at an awards luncheon, after winning a scholarship from the Association of Black Women Attorneys.

“I wrote the judge a long email, explaining that I wanted to work in family court and asking her for advice in finding an internship,” she recounted.

The judge recommended a spot that Nemorin ultimately secured, as a student clerk in Bronx Family Court.

Under the supervision of her family court referee, Nemorin learned about custody, visitation, and order of protection cases; she also observed other judges and referees in family court. Nemorin had the opportunity to write two pieces for a court referee and to shadow defense attorneys from Legal Aid and the Administration for Children and Families.

During the rest of the summer, Nemorin interned at the Legal Aid Society of Nassau County, working with underage defendants accused of misdemeanors in criminal court.

Among all her summer experiences, what made the biggest impression on Nemorin was custody and visitation proceedings in family court, and seeing fathers trying to get the same rights as mothers to see their kids and raise them.

“It’s really disheartening. I’m not sure whether laws or statutes can decide situations like those, because how children, parents, and other people feel is really not best decided in the courtroom,” she said.

Nemorin continued to gain clinical experience through her concentration in family law. The concentration, she felt, helped her understand how issues of poverty, homelessness, prostitution, and human trafficking all interact with family law and affect family court on a daily basis. Her Family Law Concentration placement in Queens with the Legal Aid Society gave her the chance to represent children in Article 10 abuse or neglect proceedings.

It also cemented her passion for family court—“the only court that still focuses on rehabilitating individuals,” she said—and her desire to pursue public interest work. As an attorney or public defender, she would like to provide preventive justice for underrepresented minorities or the poor, whose lives might otherwise spiral down toward criminal court and jail.

“People fall on bad times, and good people do bad things. But it’s not so black and white. Family court recognizes this,” said Nemorin. —Paul Lin
It’s not every day that you have the opportunity to work on a bill for the New York State Legislature, but that’s exactly what Lucas Cuéllar (’14) did during his internship in the summer of 2013 at the Legal Aid Society in Brooklyn.

Working under supervising attorney Emily Ruben on a number of projects, Cuéllar helped draft a bill proposal to the State Legislature to increase and standardize spousal support.

“The court system is not a very human place, even though family law is all about people and families and humans,” noted Cuéllar. “It was amazing to see how my supervisor navigated that difference and how vital a zealous advocate is for clients. It really sharpened my passion for family law.”

After graduating from Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, Cuéllar worked as an activist for the Thurston County Food Bank and POWER, a community-based organization for low-income parents and allies organizing for welfare and economic justice. He eventually headed back to the East Coast, where he began working for his father’s video production company, Catama, and submitting applications to law schools.

Each year, Catama produces videos featuring the winners of the Hon. Edmund S. Muskie Access to Justice Awards, which honor commitment to the public good, advanced through hard thinking, deep feeling, a voice of eloquent civility, and a passion for justice.

“I sought out all the Muskie Award videos, so I could talk to people who were doing legal services work and interface with those organizations,” Cuéllar said.

The awardees’ stories stoked his desire to help low-income people gain access to legal services, and reaffirmed his commitment to pursue a legal education at CUNY Law.

As a third-year student, Cuéllar is wrapping up his work in the Immigrant & Non-Citizen Rights Clinic with several cases, including an asylum claim.

Going forward, Cuéllar will seek to work with the transgender community and the larger LGBT community, with a focus on low-income, poverty, and civil rights law, although family law has become a draw as well.

“I have a passion for providing legal services to low-income people. That’s fundamental to any law practice that I would want to do,” Cuéllar said. Drafting legislative bills could also be in the cards. To be able to change laws so social workers can do more for their clients is appealing to him.

“Right now I have more passion for direct legal services than policy work, but we will see what the future brings,” Cuéllar said. —Paul Lin
Almost every move she made was deliberate, reasoned—from her path across the living room to the kitchen to slowly lifting the baby out of the bath to minimize the sound of splashing. Sometimes it was important to be absolutely silent, invisible. Other times she knew she needed to be lively, to make conversation and respond to his sexual advances, no matter how much she wanted to pull away. Physical violence was routine and rationalized. He felt bad for causing her welts and bruises, but lamented that if she had just used her head, these things wouldn’t have happened.

To scare her, he would pick up the phone and tell her to say goodbye to her kids because he was calling Immigration Services. She was terrified of being deported and never seeing her children again, and knew her abuser was capable of making that happen.

This is a familiar story—abusers using their partner’s undocumented status to threaten, intimidate, and maintain control. Living in the United States without immigration status can heighten a domestic violence survivor’s already intense feelings of fear, vulnerability, and isolation.

Acquiring lawful immigration status and the work authorization that comes with it can be a powerful legal remedy for domestic violence survivors. It helps them establish independence and safety. At my internship with CONNECT, I helped domestic violence survivors with applications for U nonimmigrant status. The U visa, as it is more commonly known, gives legal immigration status to victims of crime who are helpful to law enforcement and meet other qualifications.

I worked with law enforcement, social workers, and medical staff to obtain evidence of the physical and mental abuse our clients experienced. I conducted interviews with clients who shared the intimate stories of their relationships and the abuse they endured. I drafted affidavits to demonstrate to immigration officials that a client had met the U visa standard, by identifying the physical and emotional abuse that resulted from particular, qualifying incidents of domestic violence. It was gratifying to share in my client’s excitement when her U visa application was finally signed, assembled, and submitted.

Working at CONNECT gave me the opportunity to better see and understand how domestic violence affects clients in and out of the courtroom, which strengthened me as both an advocate and a future lawyer. The media, popular culture, and our legal system often portray domestic violence survivors as fragile and weak people. The domestic violence survivors I worked with are some of the bravest and most resilient people I have ever met, and I will always be grateful for the opportunity to assist and learn from them.
Many of your classmates have a lot of news to share, including business addresses, marriages, children, and photos—more than we can fit in the magazine! For expanded Alumni News, please visit the alumni section of www.law.cuny.edu.

1986

Vincent Maher has been invited to teach organizational behavior and management at the University of Caen in France in March 2014.

Suzanne Sangree is the chief of police legal affairs for the Baltimore City Police Department.

1987

John Hermina is a partner at Hermina Law Group in Washington, D.C., which handles multiple-plaintiff and class action employment discrimination, consumer fraud litigation, and international law. He most recently served as the resident ABA Rule of Law liaison to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Martha Jones is in residence at the National Humanities Center as the William C. and Ida Friday Fellow, as well as a fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies. She is completing a book titled Birthright Citizenship: Race and Rights in Antebellum America.

Assembly Member Daniel O’Donnell was appointed to chair the New York State Assembly Correction Committee. He has begun to advocate for progressive reform to the correctional and parole systems and plans to tackle the issues of juveniles tried as adults, and the overuse of solitary confinement.

1988

Amy Saltzman became an officer of the Women’s Bar Association of the State of New York and is serving as the recording secretary for the organization. She was designated a Super Lawyer in 2013 in the New York Times magazine.

Susan M. Scharbach joined the law firm of D’Agostino, Levine, Landesman & Lederman LLP as special counsel. The firm specializes in all aspects of real estate law, including acquisitions, financing, leasing, closings, taxes, and litigation.

1989

Marni Gangel has worked at the Defender Association of Philadelphia since graduation. For the last seven years, she has served as the assistant chief of the Child Advocacy Unit. The unit represents approximately 3,200 children who have been identified by the Department of Human Services as having been neglected or abused in some manner.

Angie Martell is the founder and managing partner of Iglesia Martell Law Firm, PLLC, a holistic law firm in Ann Arbor, MI. She envisions a world where lawyers are valued as healers, helpers, counselors, problem solvers, and peacemakers. She is a Reiki master and mediator.

1990

IN MEMORIAM: Elizabeth Campbell passed away in June 2013, after a fight against aggressive cancer. Her husband died of a heart attack suddenly in October 2013. They leave behind two teenage sons, one of whom is a special-needs child and had lived at home with his parents. Elizabeth previously served as Bread for the City’s Northwest Center Legal Clinic Director. A fund has been set up for the couple’s sons at www.danielanddavidfund.com.

1991

Marie Tatro completed seminary education and was ordained to the priesthood. She serves as the curate (assisting priest) at St. Gabriel’s Episcopal Church in East Flatbush, Brooklyn. She has established a legal clinic at the church with the help of her spouse and fellow legal advocate, Meghan Faux. Pavita Krishnaswamy ('02) and Judge Rita Mella ('91) have also provided support.

1992

Marc A. Reitman owns and operates a criminal defense law firm in Albuquerque, NM.

Peter C. Walsh was installed as director of the Suffolk County Bar Association in 2013.

1994

Karl Jacob Ruppert enters his sixth year as court counsel and district hearing officer for the Louisiana State Judiciary and his fourth year as president of the Louisiana Hearing Officers’ Association (LaHOA).
The Hon. Todd M. Turner was elected to his fifth two-year term as a member of the Bowie, MD, City Council. He is employed as a legislative officer for the Prince George’s County Council. He and his wife, Anita Gauhar Turner ('94), an assistant state’s attorney for Charles County, MD, recently celebrated their 18th wedding anniversary; they reside in Bowie with their two daughters.

1995
Sam Oakland has been invited to Hawassa University in Ethiopia to help develop a public service law school, teach environmental law, and establish and edit a law journal, beginning in the fall of 2014.

1996
Ira Sessler and associate P.M. Natasha Chang are offering Old World personal services to today’s clients. Sessler & Sessler LLP now offers estate and Medicaid planning as well as probate and administration services to clients both in their homes and at the firm office.

1997
Kevin Heffernan took a job with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development in Boston. He is a litigation attorney in the Emergency Assistance program, which provides shelter to more than 4,000 homeless families across the state. He is the father of two boys.

Mary Elizabeth Ostermann is sad to report that her daughter, Emily Ostermann, passed away on December 21, 2013, after a brief struggle with addiction. Emily attended the CUNY Law School Children’s Center and “graduated” with her mother in 1997. While at CUNY Law, Emily delighted in singing songs over the PA system. Over the years, Emily achieved many honors in musical performance with both clarinet and voice; she had been learning audio engineering and sound mixing.

Jill Poretta, manager of library services at the international Cozen O’Connor law firm, will serve as the cochair for the American Association of Law Libraries’ 108th Annual Meeting.

Jeanne Vagell Rowlee is an assistant public defender for Broward County in Florida. She is the lead attorney for the juvenile division.

2000
Craig Acorn is now assistant public defender in the felony division of the New Mexico Public Defender Department.

2001
Kiva James is pursuing a master’s degree in fashion marketing from LIM College and signed on as legal/marketing advisor with apparel startup UPNORF.com. She plans to fulfill her dream of launching a line of yoga dresses this fall.

2002
Jeff Martino is chief of the New York Office of the antitrust division of the U.S. Department of Justice. The antitrust division prosecutes collusion among competitors and other anticompetitive conduct.

Mark S. Silver has published Handbook of Mitigation in Criminal and Immigration Forensics: Humanizing the Client Towards a Better Legal Outcome (Revised Fourth Edition, 2014), the only volume in the United States to assist criminal and immigration attorneys with an outline of psychosocial issues that can improve advocacy.

2003
Deirdre A. O’Brien is director of annual giving and alumnae relations at School of the Holy Child Rye. Holy Child is an all-girl, private, independent Catholic school dedicated to the mission of developing women of conscience and action.

Neil Singh is corporate house counsel for Progressive Casualty Insurance Company. He is licensed to practice law in New York, New Jersey, and Florida. The Law Offices of Neil V. Singh consist of civil trial attorneys defending a volume of more than 2,000 suits in South Florida. His civil trial litigation practice is based in Ft. Lauderdale.

2006
Tara Jensen has joined the law firm of Cary Kane LLP, where she will continue to practice labor and employment law on behalf of employees.
Erin Lloyd, former principal of the Law Office of Erin Lloyd, and Yogi Patel (’06), founding member of the Patel Law Firm LLP, have formed a partnership, Lloyd Patel LLP. The new firm will be a general practice with a focus on serving the needs of small businesses as well as representing employees in all manner of labor and employment disputes, real estate transactions, commercial litigation, and more.

Marina Meyerovich is a Russian-speaking immigration attorney working at Ilona Dzhamgarova and Associates PC. in Brooklyn, NY. She focuses on immigration litigation, asylum, deportation defense, appeals, and motions with the Board of Immigration Appeals. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband.

Dave Palmer stepped down as executive director of the Center for Working Families. He is now a vice president at the Roosevelt Institute and national director of the institute’s Four Freedoms Center, a progressive think tank. Dave ushered in the New Year with Yogi Patel (’06), Ivan Pantoja (’06), and their respective families.

Farwah Raza is celebrating five years with the Mental Health Law Project at Nassau/Suffolk Law Services Committee.

2007

Jen Hope is a trial attorney in the Philadelphia District Office of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. She is married to Matt Monroe (’08), who recently joined Spruce Law Group after launching a practice focused on land use, zoning, smart urban development, and community empowerment in Philadelphia. Jen and Matt recently finished their first Olympic-distance triathlon. They live in Philadelphia with their boxer/Great Dane pup, Ponyboy.

Yasmin Tabi has worked at the Office of the Bronx District Attorney since 2011 and was promoted to the Rackets Bureau in 2012, where she works on a range of cases, including sex trafficking and criminal misconduct by police officers. Her husband, Jesse Levitt, opened a restaurant called 1 Knickerbocker in Bushwick, Brooklyn.

2009

Lee Stetson and Erin Lloyd (’06) recently became engaged. The couple met at CUNY Law’s 2012 PILA Auction. They are planning a 2015 wedding.


2011

Alicia Armstrong recently opened a boutique immigration law practice in Sun Prairie, WI. Her firm aims to reach underserved immigrant communities in surrounding rural and agricultural areas, as well as metropolitan Madison, with affordable services. Alicia’s son recently turned 2.

Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan has been elected executive vice president of the National Lawyers Guild and serves as the cochair of the International Committee. She recently filed a petition on behalf of the National Lawyers Guild before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) against the United States for severe human rights violations in the Puerto Rican island of Vieques.

Lisa Zayas and Allie Robbins (’09) were married in October in Carle Place, NY.

2012

Alison S. Mitchell is an assistant district attorney at the Office of the District Attorney, Bronx County. Prior to working at the Bronx District Attorney’s Office, she spent a year as a law clerk to the Honorable Andrea G. Carter in Middlesex County Family Court in New Brunswick, NJ.

Rebecca Pendleton is living and working in Bogotá, Colombia, on human rights and public policy issues. In August 2013, she gave birth to a daughter.

2013

Alex van Schaick joined the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Solicitor in Washington, DC, as an honors program attorney. He is establishing a network of CUNY Law alumni doing worker and union-side labor and employment law with Garrett Kaske (’13) and Colleen Normile (’13).
Highlights of faculty scholarship from February 1, 2013, through December 31, 2013. For expanded Faculty Notes, please visit the Public Square magazine section of www.law.cuny.edu.

Michelle Anderson presented “Rape Law Reform in the United States and Europe as a Human Rights Issue” at a national workshop in Port-au-Prince. The Department of Defense appointed her to serve as a member of the Victim Services Subcommittee of the Response Systems to Adult Sexual Assault Crimes Panel.

Alex Berrio Matamoros presented “Flipping the Classroom in Legal Skills Courses” at the CALI Conference for Law School Computing. He also presented “The Good Stuff: Using High-End Educational Technologies to Teach Legal Research” at the American Association of Law Libraries Annual Meeting.

Beryl Blaustone coauthored the article “Autonomy—Mastery—Purpose: Structuring Clinical Courses to Enhance These Critical Education Goals” in the International Journal of Clinical Legal Education.

Kristin Booth Glen presented “Ethical Obligations of Representing an Incapacitated Client” at the ABA Annual Meeting. She was the keynote speaker at the Annual Conference of the National Association for Rights Protection and Advocacy.


Susan J. Bryant presented at the 2013 AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education on clinical programs. She participated in developing the training for the Attorney Emeritus Program of the New York Unified Court System.

Janet Calvo presented “The Impact of Immigration Reform Proposals on Immigrant Women” at the Law and Society Association in Boston and “Health Care for All: The Intersection of Health Care Reform and Immigration Reform” at the AALS conference on Poverty and Immigration.


Nina Chernoff coauthored “16 Things Every Defense Attorney Should Know about Fair Cross-Section Challenges” in The Champion, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers magazine.

John Cicero testified before the NYC Council at a hearing to address the issues underlying the ongoing labor dispute between Cablevision and the Communications Workers of America (CWA). He testified at a forum convened by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education & the Workforce on the problems workers encounter in negotiating first contracts after organizing a union.

Douglas Cox, along with Ramzi Kassem, published an op-ed on Jurist titled “The NSC, Drone Killing Accountability and New FOIA Litigation.”


Pamela Edwards and Natalie Gomez-Velez presented the workshop “Seeking Constructive Approaches to Address Retention Failure Involving Faculty and Staff of Color” at the CUNY Diversity and Inclusion Conference.

Raquel Gabriel coauthored “Law Libraries and Librarians Transformed” in the International Legal Technology Association’s Peer to Peer magazine. She wrote the column “Diversity Dialogues: Challenging the Status Quo” for the Law Library Journal.

Julie Goldscheid’s article “Rethinking Civil Rights and Gender Violence” was published in the Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law. She edited Gender and Equality Law, which was published by Ashgate. Her previously published article was republished as “The Parallel Processes of Law & Social Change: Gender Violence and Work in the United States and South Africa” as a chapter in Feminist Perspectives on Transitional Justice (Intersentia).
Natalie Gomez-Velez presented “The Challenge of Providing Quality Supervision and Mentoring in Nontraditional Practice Settings” with Janet Calvo on a panel at the AALS Clinical Conference.


Babe Howell presented “Prosecutorial Duty to Seek Justice in an Overburdened Criminal Justice System” at the Southeastern Association of Law Schools Annual Meeting.

Carmen Huertas-Noble made presentations about the union cooperative model at the 27th Annual Ohio Employee Ownership Conference, the American Bar Association’s Forum on Affordable Housing and Community Development Law, and the 2013 Left Forum.


Julie Lim’s article “Seen It All, Heard It All, Done It All. Is It All Worth It?” was published in the AALL Spectrum.

Stephen Loffredo moderated the panel “The Future of Welfare in New York City” at the New York City Bar Association.


Andrea McArdle wrote the introductory essay of volume 16.1 of the CUNY Law Review commemorating the school’s 30th anniversary.

Alizabeth Newman conducted a pro bono training, “Immigration Relief for Survivors of Domestic Violence,” at Touro Law Center.

Suzannah Phillips’s review of two recent books about the U.N. Human Rights Committee was published in the American Journal of International Law.


Rick Rossein submitted a report on the equal employment opportunity, diversity, and inclusiveness practices of the FDNY and recommendations for reforms in his role as EEO compliance consultant in the case of U.S. v. City of New York.

Franklin Siegel and three co-counsel to the Class in Handschu v. Special Services Division filed a motion in federal court to enjoin the New York City Police Department’s surveillance program targeting legal First Amendment activity in Muslim communities. The motion also asks the court to appoint a monitor to ensure NYPD compliance with guidelines adopted under the Handschu decree.


Cynthia Soohoo’s article “Hyde-Care for All: The Expansion of Abortion-Funding Restrictions under Health Care Reform” was published in the CUNY Law Review.


Alan White’s article “Market Price, Social Price, and the Right to the City: Land Taxes and Rates for City Services in Brazil and the United States” was published in the University of Miami Inter-American Law Review.

Deborah Zalesne’s article “Racial Inequality in Contracting: Teaching Race as a Core Value” was published in the Columbia Journal of Race and the Law.

In Support of Lifelong Learning

While teaching in a junior high school in the 1960s, I met and became close with several students and mothers who were victims of domestic abuse. Trying to help, I referred them to the police. The police did not take the problem seriously and often let the abusers, once sufficiently calmed, go back home. The injustice of this struck a chord with me, and that’s when the idea of becoming a lawyer first took hold.

Life had other plans for me, however, and I didn’t become a law student until I was in my 50s. Although I thought I was probably too old to go back to school, I decided that I would not let life pass without trying to achieve my dream. I applied to CUNY Law because of the work the clinic engaged in for battered women, and spent three wonderful years in the classroom with many young people who inspired me, as did the mission of the school. This was where I belonged.

After graduating, I volunteered with Sanctuary for Families, a nonprofit organization that represents victims of domestic violence who cannot afford attorneys. At Sanctuary, we had women who earned above the dollar threshold set by the organization. The staff took on as many of these cases as they could handle, and could only find one volunteer to help them out by representing a few clients a year.

Not wanting to let further injustices slip by, I decided to open my own practice to take on those cases. On the first day I opened my office, the phone would not stop ringing. The work was emotionally draining, but also very rewarding.

Running my own practice was demanding work. Luckily, I was connected to CUNY Law’s Community Legal Resource Network (CLRN). It was a marvelous opportunity for a solo practitioner to have a network of other committed CUNY Law alumni to rely on for help.

These days I am retired, but I still serve on the Legal Advisory Board of Sanctuary for Families and the Board of Visitors of CUNY School of Law. CUNY Law’s motto, “Law in the Service of Human Needs,” is something I have carried with me beyond the walls of the school.

I am so glad that I didn’t give up on my desire to become a lawyer, no matter my age. And I’m equally glad that I maintained—even pursued—my relationship with CUNY Law. The school has stuck by me all the way. —Judith Flamenbaum (’95)
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