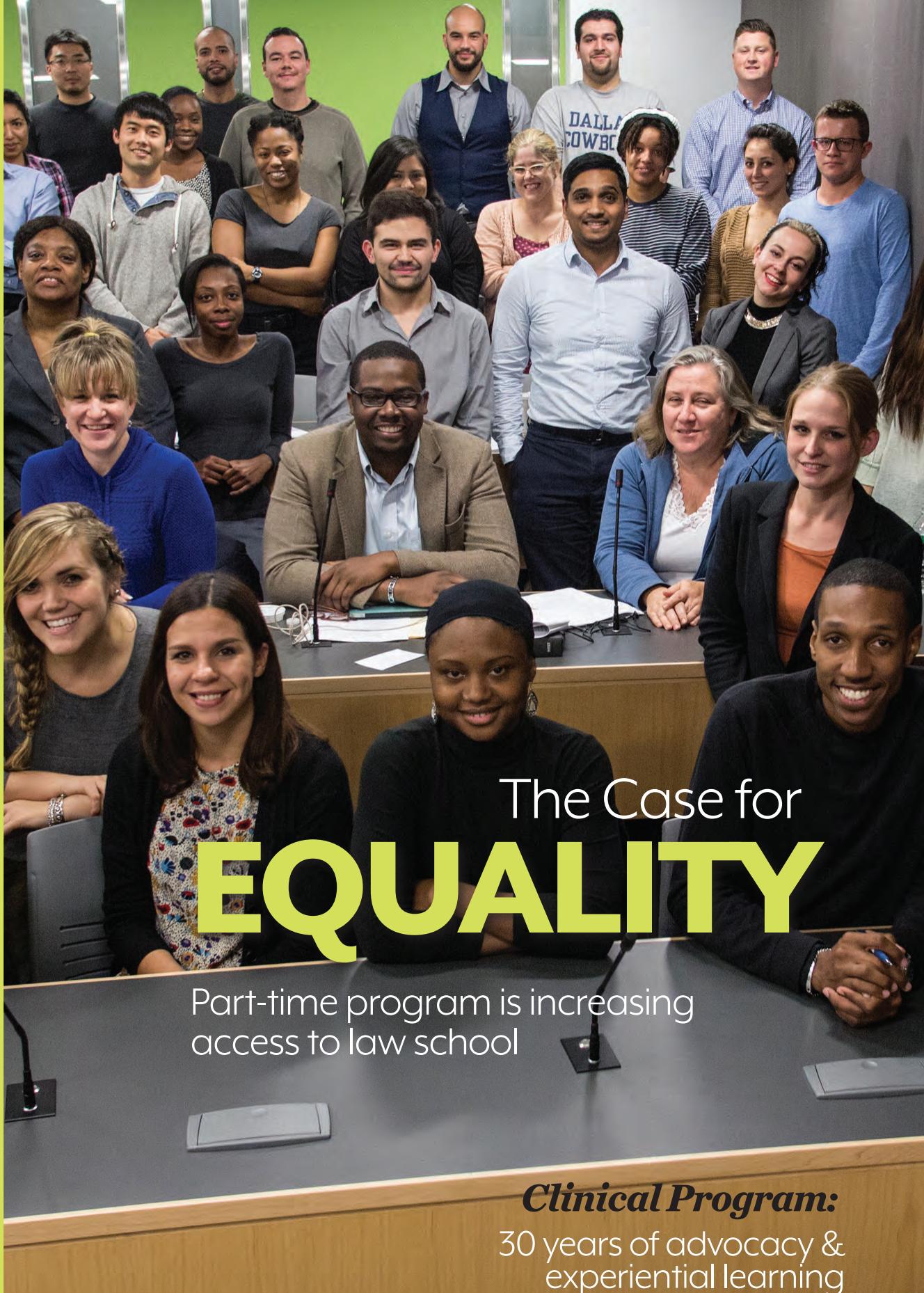


PUBLIC SQUARE

Winter 2016

THE MAGAZINE OF CUNY SCHOOL OF LAW



The Case for **EQUALITY**

Part-time program is increasing
access to law school

Clinical Program:
30 years of advocacy &
experiential learning



Aaron Adler

Scholarships Help Close the Gap

Samuel Bruce and Bryanne Hamill

Scholarships help close gaps, so students can learn more today and worry less about tomorrow.

My family endowed a scholarship to support graduates of CUNY colleges who attend CUNY Law. This year, the committee awarded the Luis Sanjurjo Scholarship to Samuel Bruce, a third-year student who received an M.A. from John Jay College and decided to become a lawyer to work in criminal justice in New York. We applaud Samuel on his attainments, commend his ambition, and wish him well wherever his law degree takes him.

The scholarship provides tangible current benefits to deserving students, a realistic expectation of future benefits to society through these students' contributions, and a historical benefit in memorializing the life and accomplishments of a good man. My family finds this donation trifecta emotionally satisfying and would encourage anybody who wants to help to consider closing the gap by sponsoring a scholarship.

—Bryanne Hamill ('90)

YOUR GENEROSITY CAN HAVE A HUGE IMPACT.

To learn how you can make a difference, contact Institutional Advancement at **(718) 340-4643** or cj.ortuno@law.cuny.edu.

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Photo by Aaron Adler

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PUBLIC **SQUARE**

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opening statement



ARPI PAP

CUNY's Story of Equality

One of the things that attracted me to the CUNY School of Law 10 years ago was the opportunity to serve an institution committed to equality as a primary focus of its educational work.

Many of the structural, programmatic, and physical changes at CUNY Law that we have initiated over the past decade have involved increasing equality. For example, in 2006, we established the extraordinary Pipeline to Justice program. Since that time, Pipeline to Justice has helped nearly 90 students from historically disadvantaged or underrepresented communities become lawyers. As a result of the program's continued vitality, students of color make up 52 percent of our entering class this year and women make up 63 percent.

The move to our new location in Long Island City—just one stop from Manhattan—has also enhanced equality. It has allowed us to increase access to the law school for students, clients, and the neighboring community. It is now easier for our students to get to and from class and internships across the five boroughs and to engage in justice work to advance equality throughout New York City.

Our inaugural part-time program is the latest expression of the law school's work to advance a more equal and just society. The beautiful photo of some of our part-time students

on the cover of this issue of the magazine makes me proud. It illustrates our commitment to increasing access to the legal profession. I have no doubt that this group of 1Ls will join the large cadre of CUNY Law alumni as lawyers working to create a more just and equal world.

Our alumni fight for equality in myriad ways. Thanks to them, students with disabilities have equal access to educational resources. CUNY Law alumni advocate for fair housing, support equal access to healthy food in poor neighborhoods, speak out for a community's right to green space, and defend the civil rights of individuals who are transgender or gender-nonconforming.

These are just a handful of the ways CUNY Law alums bring about greater equality. There are countless others, in New York and around the country.

This fall marks 30 years since CUNY Law's innovative clinics and concentrations began—30 years of well-trained students going out into the world and practicing “law in the service of human needs.” Countless individuals and communities are better off because of the law school's clinical work.

Of course, social and political inequality persist, and they have become worse since the economic downturn. The case for CUNY Law's existence as a law school committed to public interest and public service work is even more urgent now than it was in the 1980s.

Although it is with some sadness that I end my tenure as dean, I am excited to hand over leadership of this great institution to someone new who will bring fresh enthusiasm and insight to the school. Long may we continue to advance equality and produce outstanding lawyers committed to doing the same!

—*Michelle J. Anderson*
Dean and Professor of Law

■ from the public square

Natasha Bannan ('11) Takes the Helm of the National Lawyers Guild



PHOTO: SHANNA MEREOLA (NLG)

Natasha Bannan (in blue and white dress) is joined by several CUNY Law alumni during her naming as NLG president. Pictured (L to R): Kelly Fay Rodriguez ('12), John Viola ('01), Bannan ('11), NLG keynote speaker Alicia Garza, Andrew Adams ('15), Gabriela Lopez ('12), Joey Mogul ('97), Jean Stevens ('13), and Syeda Tasnim ('15).

Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan ('11) was recently named president of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), a progressive community of lawyers, law students, and legal workers. A longtime human rights lawyer, Bannan has been a fierce advocate for reproductive and constitutional rights. Currently, she is associate counsel at LatinoJustice PRLDEF, where she works with low-wage, Latina immigrant workers, as well as on the domestic implementation of human rights norms.

"I am honored to serve as president of the National Lawyers Guild, an organization whose history continues to inspire me and new generations of lawyers, as we fight against issues that include surveillance, spying, repression of activists, discriminatory targeting of people of color, and police violence," said Bannan.

"Now is the time to challenge the structures that perpetuate violence and injustice—structures that CUNY Law students and graduates fight against on a daily basis." ■

Court Square Law Project Begins

Court Square Law Project (CSLP), CUNY Law's new initiative, is expected to welcome its first cohort of legal fellows this winter to begin the work of addressing the chronic civil justice gap.

CSLP launched in the fall of 2015 as a joint venture among CUNY Law, the New York City Bar Association, and 19 of New York City's major law firms, with the goal of increasing access to justice and alleviating underemployment of recent law school graduates.

"Court Square Law Project is a groundbreaking collaboration among NYC's legal community to address a persistent need for affordable, quality legal services for so many New Yorkers in need, and employment opportunities for committed law school graduates," said CUNY Law Dean Michelle J. Anderson.

Through CSLP, recent law school graduates receive specialized training and then deliver legal services to underrepresented, moderate-income individuals. At the end of the two-year fellowship residency, participants will have the tools to transition to a self-sustaining law practice. CUNY Law professor Lynn Lu, who has worked for many years in the law school's clinical and lawyering programs, joins CSLP as a managing attorney.

"I am thrilled to join the incredible team that has done so much work to launch CSLP, which will both mentor new lawyers and serve clients who would otherwise lack access to justice in our community," said the newly hired CSLP executive director, Karena Rahall. ■

Learn more at courtsquarelaw.org.

■ from the public square

Robert Bank ('86) to Lead AJWS

American Jewish World Service (AJWS), an international human rights and development organization, has appointed Robert Bank ('86) as its next president. He has served as the organization's executive vice president since 2009. Bank will start in his new role on July 1 and plans to focus on alleviating poverty and promoting human rights in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Since graduating from CUNY Law's inaugural class, Bank has advocated for human rights in the U.S. and around the world. Prior to joining AJWS, he was the chief operating officer of the Gay Men's Health Crisis and the New York City Department of Law. ■



Meet CUNY Law's Newest Class

CUNY Law's incoming 1L class is a talented, accomplished, and diverse group.

15% have graduate degrees

63% are women

50%
ARE PEOPLE OF COLOR

78% are from New York

are from out of state

22%

Many are immigrants,
25 representing a total of
different countries

32% are the first generation
of their immediate family
to attend college

PREVIOUS PLACES OF
EMPLOYMENT:
United Nations, New York
City Council, Amnesty
International, U.S. EEOC,
ACLU, Drug Policy Alliance

AVERAGE AGE

28

They have served as youth leaders,
pharmacists, translators, Peace
Corps volunteers, and journalists.

Sorensen Center Welcomes Judge Rosemary Barkett

Judge Rosemary Barkett joined the Sorensen Center for International Peace and Justice during the fall semester, as its scholar-in-residence for the 2015–2016 academic year.

Barkett, who took time off from her position on the Iran–United States Claims Tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands, held lectures; seminars; and frequent gatherings with students, faculty, and staff, discussing a range of issues including gender-based violence, the death penalty, and unaccompanied minors.

Along with Professor Victor Goode, she joined Professor Ruthann Robson's first-year class, *Liberty, Equality, and Due Process*, to discuss the role of state, federal, and international courts in addressing inequality and bringing about progressive social change.

"It was wonderful to have Judge Barkett at CUNY Law, challenging us to be better advocates while respectfully pushing back against our opinions, until they were finely crafted arguments," said Andrew Klaben-Finegold ('16).

Prior to her work in The Hague, Barkett served for almost two decades on the

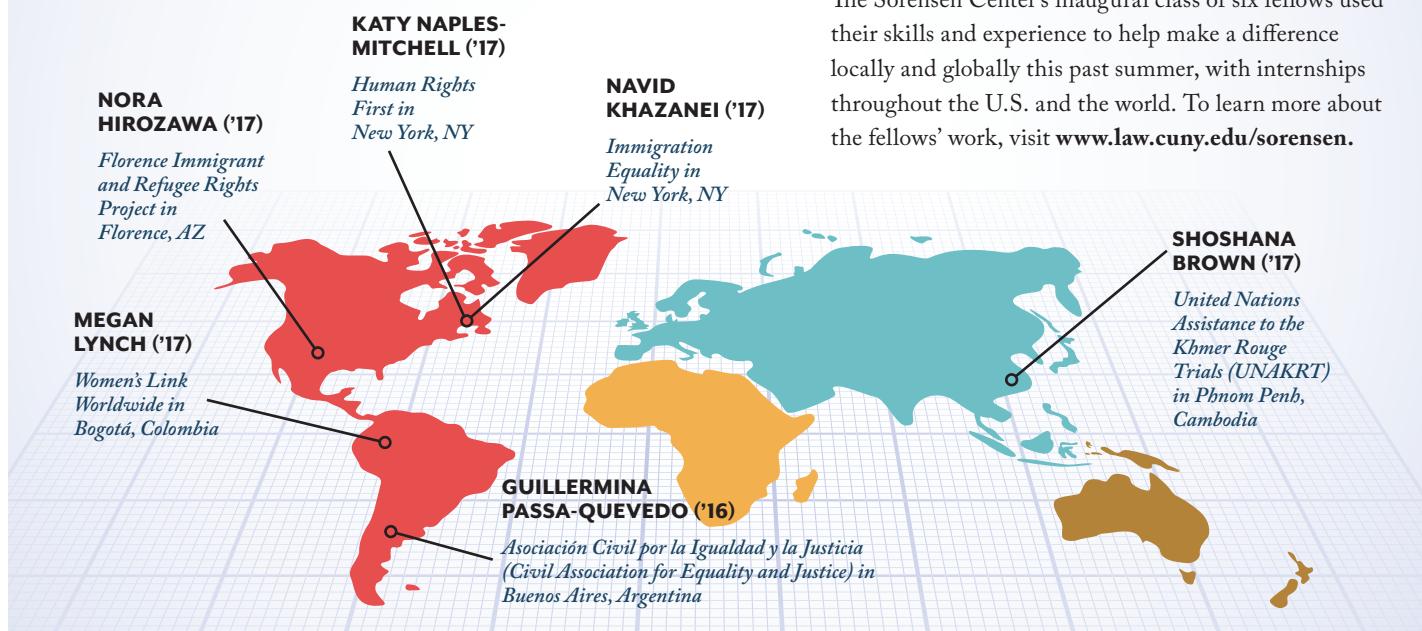


Judge Rosemary Barkett and Katy Naples-Mitchell ('17)

U.S. Court of Appeals, Eleventh Circuit. She has written landmark opinions in many areas, including immigration, constitutional law, labor rights, sexual harassment, disability rights, privacy rights, and rights of speech and association.

Barkett will return to CUNY Law at the end of March 2016. ■

Sorensen Center Fellows Make Impact Around the World



The Sorensen Center's inaugural class of six fellows used their skills and experience to help make a difference locally and globally this past summer, with internships throughout the U.S. and the world. To learn more about the fellows' work, visit www.law.cuny.edu/sorensen.



Susan Bryant Named Great Teacher by SALT

Professor Susan Bryant received the Society of American Law Teachers' (SALT's) Great Teacher award, the highest award given by the organization, along with her frequent collaborator, Jean Koh Peters of Yale Law School.

"This award is a validation of the collaboration; the importance of teaching about culture, race, and language; and the work that Jean and I have done in clinics and the legal profession," said Bryant.

One of the highlights of their two-decade-long collaboration is the article "The Five Habits of Cross-Cultural Lawyering," which has become a curriculum model and a hallmark of the pedagogy of cross-cultural teaching. ■

Fellowships and Awards

CURRENT STUDENTS

Julie Gilgoff ('16), Jonah Nelson ('17), and Alexis Werth ('16): Peggy Browning Fellows, working in public interest labor law

Steffi Romano ('16): Hon. Harold Baer Jr. and Dr. Suzanne Baer Minority Judicial Internship Program at the New York County Lawyers' Association

Radiyah Abdus-Shakur ('17) and Liliana Canela Magarin ('17): New York City Bar Association Diversity Fellows

Hilal Khalil ('16): Ali Forney Alumnus Award

RECENT GRADUATES

Nishan Bhaumik ('15): Equal Justice Works Fellow at the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP)

Nabila Taj ('15): Immigrant Justice Corps (IJC) Fellow

Matthew Grill ('15) and Stephanie Rivera ('15): New York State Excelsior Service Fellows

FACULTY

Rebecca Bratspies was honored by the Eastern Queens Alliance for educating New Yorkers on urban sustainability and environmental justice.

Julie Goldscheid, dean of academic affairs, and **Sharon Stapel ('98)** received the American Bar Association's 20/20 Vision Award, as trailblazers in the passage and implementation of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the creation of the Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence (CDSV). ■

■ from the public square

Sorensen Center Welcomes Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer

U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Stephen Breyer joined students, faculty, and supporters of the Sorensen Center for International Peace and Justice, in December 2015, to discuss his new book, *The Court and the World: American Law and the New Global Realities*, with journalist Jeffrey Toobin. The event was held at Covington & Burling LLP. Read more about Justice Breyer's talk on the CUNY Law website, where you'll find a link to watch the video of the talk.



Justice Breyer addresses CUNY Law students



Justice Breyer with CUNY Law students



Pictured (L to R): Michael Hardy, Gerald Lefcourt, Jamal Joseph, Denise Oliver-Velez, and Cheryl Howard, CUNY Law associate dean of student affairs.

Civil Rights Activists Reflect on Equality

Civil rights activists and lawyers discussed the Black Panther movement and the recent film *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* during CUNY Law's first Public Square event of the school year. The panelists recounted numerous stories of the 1960s movement and its enduring importance. [Watch the conversation at public-square.law.cuny.edu/panthers](http://public-square.law.cuny.edu/panthers)

Student Innovators Bring Justice Behind Bars

In the summer of 2015, three CUNY Law students made a nonprofit, dreamed up in a second-year seminar, a reality. Justice Behind Bars is a newly incorporated organization, founded by Jeffrey Strutynski ('16), Alexandra Roche ('16), and Seth York ('16), that provides individually tailored legal lesson plans to inmates who

feel their rights were violated while they were incarcerated.

"In our classes, we were learning about grave injustices happening in prisons, and we felt like we wanted to do something to help empower incarcerated individuals to advocate for themselves. That's how Justice Behind Bars was born," said Strutynski. The trio hopes an influx of meaningful claims brought by inmates against prison officials will incentivize prison executives to implement fairer policies for the inmates. [Learn more at www.justicebehindbars.org](http://www.justicebehindbars.org).

Jeffrey Strutynski ('16),
Seth York ('16), and
Alexandra Roche ('16)

AARON ADLER



The Damage of McCarthyism

When she graduates in the spring, Julie Gilgoff ('16) will add her J.D. to an already impressive list of credentials, including author. Gilgoff, a former elementary school teacher, Peace Corps volunteer, union organizer, and longtime freelance writer, is also the author of *A Granddaughter's Rite of Passage: Tales from the McCarthy Era*, a journalistic memoir about her grandfather Max Gilgoff, a Brooklyn high school teacher and civil rights advocate who had to defend himself against McCarthy-era charges of being a Communist Party member.



student corner



AARON ADLER

CUNY Law Welcomes First Part-Time Class

CUNY Law welcomed its first part-time class in the fall of 2015, as 41 students embarked on the four-year journey toward earning their J.D. The students range in age from 23 to 56. The class is 63 percent people of color and 68 percent women.

"We are thrilled that the part-time evening program has begun. The students are incredibly dedicated and inspiring. It is rewarding to play a role in helping them achieve their goal of entering the legal profession in pursuit of social justice," said Professor Julie Goldscheid, dean of academic affairs.

IWHR Students on the Ground with Syrian and Iraqi Women

Last fall, five students in the International Women's Human Rights (IWHR) Clinic had the opportunity to attend a landmark meeting of Syrian and Iraqi women's rights advocates in Istanbul, aimed at formulating strategies for sustainable peace and justice. The 3L student team of Hilal Homaidan, Frankie Herrmann, Elizabeth Vulaj, Stephen Marley, and Olga Leyngold conducted interviews with advocates and survivors to document human rights violations based on gender and sexual orientation. The documentation will be compiled in several reports, submitted to the United Nations, and disseminated to stakeholders to raise awareness and propel action.





THE CASE FOR EQUALITY

The quest for equality is a recurring theme in every aspect of U.S. history, from the Revolutionary War to today's struggle for LGBT rights and the Black Lives Matter movement.

At CUNY Law, we examine the possibilities and limits of the law as they relate to moving our society toward equality throughout our curriculum, beginning with Professor Ruthann Robson's first-semester *Liberty, Equality, and Due Process* class and continuing to students' third-year, hands-on experiences in our clinical program.

Our graduates go on to advocate for equality in countless areas of the law, seeking fair access for their clients. Green space, healthy food, housing, and education are just a few aspects of equality that our alumni are addressing, and that we cover in the pages ahead.

There is no question that significant progress toward equality has been made in American society, and there is no question that inequalities of all sorts are still with us.

The work continues. But I am heartened by the fact that our alumni are taking on this task, leading us toward a more perfect union.

—Professor Rick Rossein
Director, Equality & Justice
Practice Clinic

SEEKING housing justice

Recent CUNY Law grads help low-income New Yorkers get the Housing Court justice they deserve.

Maria was like many others in New York City—working hard, paying her rent on time. After years of stability, however, the bottom fell out. Maria's husband left her and their four children. Then she had a stroke, leaving her partially disabled. Within a year, all of her savings were gone. She could no longer pay her \$1,700 rent, and she had fallen \$11,000 behind. Her longtime landlord began eviction proceedings.

New York City data shows that approximately 225,000 cases involving nonpayment of rent are filed each year, of which nearly 30,000 result in eviction. For far too many low-income New Yorkers, an eviction is a trigger for a wide range of negative outcomes associated with housing instability—children failing in school, anxiety and depression, and long-term poverty.

What's more, there is a huge imbalance in negotiating muscle within Housing Court. Typically only about 10 percent of tenants have an attorney, while nearly all landlords have representation. Even if tenants qualify for free legal assistance, most are unable to obtain it, due to lack of funding for legal service providers.

Now, however, Maria and thousands of other tenants have hope, thanks to Poverty Justice Solutions, a new program that funds the cost of placing recent law school graduates in two-year fellowships as paid staff attorneys at legal and social services agencies dealing with

New York City housing issues. Of the first group of 20 fellows, four are CUNY Law alumni.

Poverty Justice Solutions takes its inspiration from New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman.

"I was trying to grapple with the disconnect between more and more students coming out of law schools and not being able to find jobs, and the desperate need by the poor for legal services," says Lippman.

He came up with the idea of linking a new program to the Pro Bono Scholars Program, which he also founded, that permits third-year students to take the bar exam early in return for spending their final semester performing pro bono service for the poor.

The Robin Hood Foundation and the City are splitting the cost of each fellow's salary.

Poverty Justice Solutions is under the direction of CUNY Law alumnus Ignacio Jaureguilorda ('02), who was seemingly destined for social justice work. Born in Argentina, he is the son of politically active parents who were imprisoned for four years by the military junta that replaced Isabel Perón, and then exiled to the U.S. He practiced public interest law for 14 years, most recently as the director of legal services for the AIDS Center of Queens County.

"Our goal is to make Housing Court

"Our goal is to make Housing Court a place where low-income people can seek justice."

—IGNACIO JAUREGUILORDA ('02)

a place where low-income people can seek justice," Jaureguilorda says of the program.

In addition to the long hours the fellows are putting in representing clients, Jaureguilorda has them attend weekly workshops that focus on problem solving and procedural justice issues. In the second year, he plans to have each of them take on an individual project that deals with a legal issue of strong personal interest.

"Our hope for next year is to get an additional class of 20 fellows and double our numbers," he says. "Then we will really begin to build momentum."

The Poverty Justice Solutions fellows are doing their part, case by case. For Maria, who was aided by fellow Joseph Schofield, it involved a complex negotiation that resulted in a lower rent, a new lease, and a reduction in back rent owed. It was a small victory for the fellows, but a lifesaving win for Maria and her children.



CHELSEA BREAKSTONE ('15)

"I always wanted to do social justice work at heart," says Chelsea Breakstone, "but it took going to law school to point me in the right direction."

Breakstone has found a home for her heart at the Bronx program of Legal Services NYC, an agency whose Manhattan program she interned for as a law student.

"Most of our cases involve people who have exhausted all of their resources and come to us in the 11th hour," she explains.

Breakstone likens those instances to the triaging process in a hospital emergency room—cases are grouped according to immediacy of need.

"The successful outcomes," she says, "are those cases where I can keep families, especially those with minor children, in the home and out of the shelter system. Then I can work with them on maintaining affordable housing moving forward."



"I always wanted to do social justice work."

—CHELSEA BREAKSTONE ('15)

MICHAEL CONNORS ('15)

Michael Connors has seen firsthand how the law can help those who cannot help themselves.

"I had a couple of elderly family members with a slew of issues involving the court system," he says. "One was my aunt, who was tricked into signing a quitclaim document in return for a payment of \$10,000 for a piece of property that was worth nearly \$1 million. It was difficult to find an attorney to represent her because she was of modest means, and the only motivation was the piece of property. My dad finally found one. That experience showed me that there

are vulnerable populations in our society who desperately need competent legal representation."

Now Connors finds himself being the needed legal representation for vulnerable communities as a staff attorney at the New York Legal Assistance Group. On a recent Friday afternoon, a client showed up who had just been evicted by the marshal for nonpayment of rent. "I went through the files, found defects, appeared before the court attorney, argued the case, and settled with the landlord to get the individual back into possession of the apartment," he explains.

Dealing every day with clients in dire situations can be emotionally draining, he says, but "the reward for my efforts is having good outcomes and helping people stay in their homes. That gives me more than enough motivation to go to work in the morning."

"Vulnerable populations in our society desperately need competent legal representation."

—MICHAEL CONNORS ('15)

SHARONE MIODOVSKY ('15)

Sharone Miodovsky laughs when asked if her upbringing had anything to do with her career choice.

"I went to Jewish elementary and high schools, and through the curriculum they really hammered social justice values into us," she says, "but this work is also the fulfillment of my adult professional dreams."

The Los Angeles native came to New York a dozen years ago for college and never looked back. She worked for several years after graduating, and her experiences solidified her choices of both career and enrollment in CUNY Law.

"I spent a year in India working in international development," she says. "It changed my whole life and made me want to find a job where I could make an impact."

She later worked for the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, and the experience reinforced her interest in law school. "Many of the attorneys I worked with had gone to CUNY [Law] and urged me to apply there."



"I see my role as providing as much clarity as I can."

—SHARONE MIODOVSKY ('15)

Through the fellowship, Miodovsky is working in the Bronx as a staff attorney for the Legal Aid Society's Housing Help Program.

"The clients I work with are extremely appreciative of my efforts," she says. "Often their court cases have dragged on, and it's a big relief when they can meet with an attorney. I see my role as providing as much clarity as I can. So often they're dealing with ambiguities and getting shuffled around. I try to simplify that."



"The belief that stuck with me most was that an attorney can be a shield."

—JOSEPH SCHOFIELD ('15)

JOSEPH SCHOFIELD ('15)

Joseph Schofield's earliest legal influence was his father, who was an attorney in a small firm.

"The belief that stuck with me the most was that an attorney can be a shield," he says. "When you need one, it can seem like the whole world is against you. In those instances, your attorney is the person standing between you and your problems."

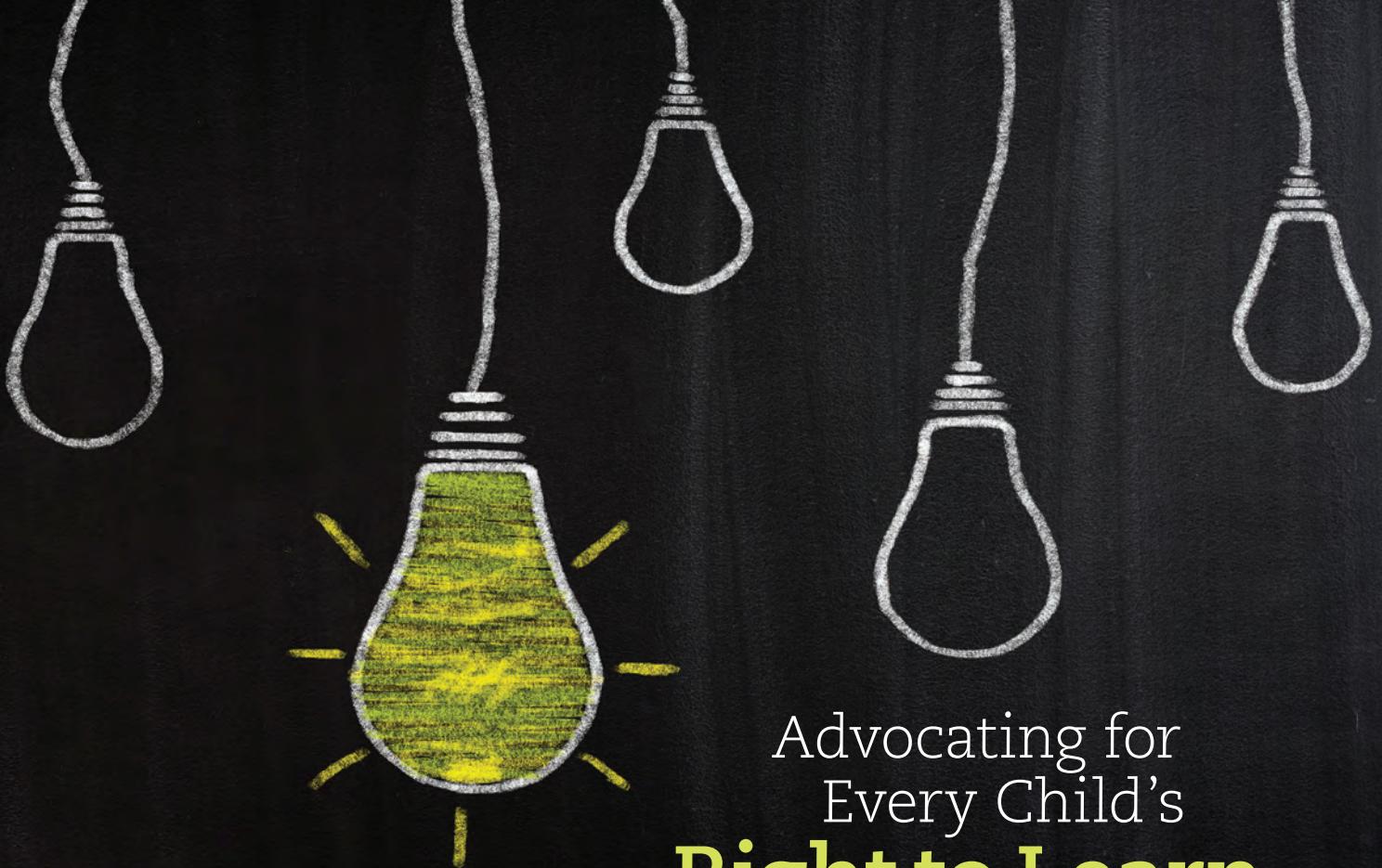
Today, working in the housing division of the New York Legal Assistance Group in Queens, where he also interned as a law student, Schofield represents people who aren't used to having a shield. He had similar experiences during internships at Brooklyn Legal Services and Gay Men's Health Crisis.

"In Queens, there are a lot of two-family homes, and tenants don't have as many rights as they would in a rent-stabilized building," he says.

But working with clients now differs greatly from how it was when he was an intern.

"Something magical has happened," says Schofield. "The responsibility is now ours, and we can fully advocate for the client. The origins of landlord-tenant law go back to feudalism, and the landlord holds most of the power. My job is to create leverage."

—Robert S. Benchley



Advocating for Every Child's **Right to Learn**

Four Alumnae Making a Difference in Special Education Law

For Jennifer Frankola, the case of 14-year-old Alex stands out. On the low-functioning end of the autism spectrum, he was aging out of middle school and in need of a placement in an appropriate boarding school. His resourceful single mom, a Haitian immigrant living in East Harlem, needed help, but had no money to fight the New York City Department of Education. Frankola took the case, winning Alex an appropriate placement. Alex is now 20, and his advocates have prevailed every year.

It's the kind of case—and the kind of long-term relationship—that reminds Frankola of why she got into special education law in the first place. She is one of a number of CUNY Law grads in the New York/New Jersey area waging what many in the field define as an important civil rights battle: the fight for equal access to education for all students, regardless of their abilities or learning styles. That struggle has made great progress in the last 20 years, but all agree there is more work to do.

There are countless cases like Alex's, with not enough lawyers to fight for them, and stubborn economic inequities in the special education world. So says Regina Skyer, who is widely considered the pioneering special education lawyer. "There is still a big dispar-

ity between what a rich kid and a poor kid can get," Skyer says. "How do we fix it? One child at a time."

The fight for equal access to education for all students has its origins in the civil rights movement and especially in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, which struck down the notion of "separate but equal."

But with that ruling's understandable emphasis on the pressing matter of racial justice in America, it took another 20 years, with the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, for the notion to reach the community of students who learn differently, their parents, and their advocates. The deinstitutionalization of persons with mental disabilities in the early to mid-1960s added more urgency to the need to provide educational opportunities for children with disabilities, so that they too might lead independent and productive lives. But it was only with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 that many were given the chance.

We recently spoke to four CUNY Law alumnae who are making significant contributions in the field of special education law and advocacy in New York and New Jersey. Here are their stories.



REGINA SKYER ('91)

Regina Skyer's strong feelings for the education rights of persons with disabilities can be traced to her family's history of surviving the Holocaust. "My mother said, 'The Nazis took everything, but they couldn't take my education,'" Skyer says. "People who can read are thinking people. Education is the key to being able to work and be a contributing member of society. That's why I am impassioned."

Skyer's law firm, Regina Skyer and Associates, is one of two in the city that any parent who has fought the City's Department of Education for services and placement in the past 20 years knows.

Skyer was a social worker and special education administrator who ran a summer camp for special needs children before she attended law school, so she long knew she would fight for the rights of children with disabilities. She had four children at home when she enrolled at CUNY Law, which she chose in part because of its focus on civil rights. Today, more than 25 years later, she has won so many cases that just a letter on her firm's stationery can go a long way toward getting her clients the services they need.

And she has helped many. One example is the case of a 3-year-old child on the autism spectrum. The City's

Committee on Special Education had stingly agreed to give the child just two 30-minute sessions of speech therapy a week, and then failed to provide even that. The mother contacted Skyer to help. Skyer got the child a lot more, including 40 hours a week of intensive one-on-one therapy called Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), considered the state-of-the-art autism treatment.

The needs, and the disparity between what rich and poor children receive in the way of services and access, still weigh heavily on Skyer's mind and on her chosen field. "There are great problems and not enough money to solve them," she says. "We need more lawyers doing this work pro bono." Skyer is also set to publish a series of books to help parents of children with special needs. *How to Survive Turning Five* will be released soon.



JENNIFER FRANKOLA ('07)

For Jennifer Frankola, becoming a teacher was a calling. She was assigned to teach in a public school in a disadvantaged area of the Bronx, under the prestigious New York City Teaching Fellows program.

With an accompanying passion for social justice, Frankola was troubled by the lack of resources for the school, and the evident segregation and inequality in New York City schools. Inspired to do something about it, she applied to CUNY Law, attracted to its mission. "When I started at CUNY, there were only a handful of law firms doing special education work. It was hard because it was such a specialized field," she says. "Through CUNY, and people I met there, I was able to develop connections and skills."

Six years ago, Frankola opened her practice, an education law



APPA/PAP

Communication, LLC, an organization offering services to kids like hers. "Learning about the clinical piece made me feel whole as an attorney," Francullo says.

Because of a parent-led grassroots effort, New Jersey now has three new laws that require school-aged children to be screened for dyslexia, and the State offers professional development on dyslexia for teachers. Dyslexia is now also defined in the State Special Education Code.

Today, Francullo's twins are seniors in high school. "If I hadn't done what I did 10 years ago," she says, "I don't know where my kids would be today."



RUTH LOWENKRON ('86)

group within the firm Lewis Johs Avallone Aviles, LLP. Since then, she has counseled or litigated more than 1,000 cases, by her estimate. "Like a pediatrician, I have a big corkboard with pictures of my kids in my office," Frankola says. "They are my inspiration."



NORMA FRANCULLO ('95)

As was the case for many other advocates for kids with learning differences, Norma Francullo's interest in the field was sparked when it hit home.

She was already a practicing lawyer doing real estate and corporate work in New Jersey when her twins were diagnosed with dyslexia in first grade. "You sit there and think 'I could cry about it or advocate and be a champion for my child.'"

She did the latter, learning about her kids' and other children's rights, about mediation, and about the importance of asking the right questions. "CUNY Law taught me that if you see a void, create something to fill the void," Francullo says.

In 2006, Francullo created the New Jersey non-profit organization C.H.I.L.D. (Children Having Individual Learning Differences) Inc. to help parents advocate for their children who were facing learning challenges. It is a forum that provides parents with support and information. Francullo has surrounded herself with clinicians, experts in dyslexia, and leaders in other fields in order to help parents advocate for their children.

The firm where she is of counsel, Parles Rekem LLP, specializes in special education law and employs women who, like her, have children with learning differences. She also provides advocacy work for Beyond

The fight for the rights of people with disabilities has always resonated with Ruth Lowenkron, perhaps because her father had a disability.

After volunteering in the field after college, she decided to pursue a law degree to be better able to fight for what she and others define as the "civil rights mandate of integration and inclusion." CUNY Law's "go-get-'em" spirit and "network of like-minded people" were very grounding, Lowenkron says of her law school education.

These days, as the senior staff attorney at Disability Rights New Jersey, Lowenkron is overseeing the settlement in a federal lawsuit that requires New Jersey to do more to include children with disabilities in the general education classroom.

It is just another feather in the cap of her long and distinguished career. A settlement of a law reform action while she was at the Education Law Center resulted in improvements in New Jersey's largest school district to the special education "Child Find" mandate, which requires all school districts to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities.

While Lowenkron works on cases that improve the lives of thousands, she is often reminded of the individuals she has helped along the way.

"Two years ago I received a call from someone I had helped when he was in the seventh grade," she says. "He told me he had decided there and then to become a disability advocate himself, and had just earned his Ph.D."

—Janet Allon

Fighting for TRANSGENDER EQUALITY & JUSTICE

The transgender movement has been gaining momentum over the past several years. With magazine covers featuring Caitlyn Jenner and actress Laverne Cox, and TV shows such as *Transparent*, more people are acknowledging that the transgender community exists.

But despite this increased awareness, transgender individuals still face numerous barriers and challenges, from daily indignities to life-threatening and sometimes fatal attacks.

According to a 2011 report by the National Center for Transgender Equality, discrimination is pervasive, and the combination of transphobia and racism is especially devastating. For example, 15 percent of transgender individuals said they were sexually assaulted in police custody or jail. That figure more than doubles (32 percent) for African-American transgender people. Many transgender people also face high rates of employment discrimination, unstable housing, and harassment by officials.

“Policies are changing at a high level, but the impact isn’t trickling down to our clients,” says Nadia Qurashi (’08). “Daily living for trans people is still pretty dire.”

Qurashi and several other CUNY Law alumni have taken up the fight in cities across the country for what has become this century’s civil rights struggle.

“There aren’t a lot of opportunities to work as an attorney for the betterment of trans people in a concerted way,” says Milo Primeaux (’13). “The fact that so many of the positions available are filled by CUNY Law graduates is remarkable. It shows that CUNY Law is attracting people committed to this work, for an exceedingly marginalized community, and is preparing us for positions where we can provide some benefit in a systemic way. I think that’s really phenomenal and noteworthy.”

York City’s foster care system, and often end up homeless.

“Oftentimes,” says Stuart, “we meet clients after every other system has failed them.”

“When somebody is already experiencing homelessness, the added hostility they may face as an LGBTQ individual can exacerbate some of the violence they’re experiencing,” adds Qurashi. For example, for many trans people, staying in a shelter can mean heightened violence and harassment, in an already unsafe environment.

From day to day, the team provides advocacy and a host of civil legal services for their clients; these include help with immigration, public assistance, name changes, updated I.D. documents, or representation in family court. Many times, Stuart and Qurashi simply serve as a sounding board so their clients feel that they have someone who’s listening to them.

“It’s important to remember that there’s not one narrative that our clients have,” says Stuart. “There are multiple narratives, and every narrative is the right narrative for that person. My job is to always remember that each client has their own story and their reasons.”

An equally important piece of Qurashi and Stuart’s work is with judges and court employees, helping train them—formally and informally—to better understand how to refer to a trans person in the courtroom. It may be as simple as calling out only a person’s last name in the courtroom, rather than their

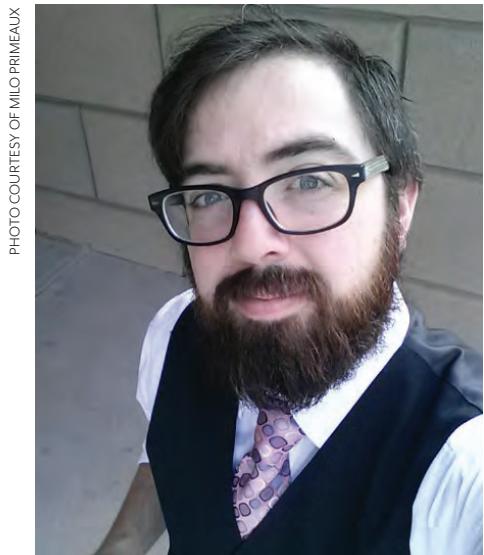
Nadia Qurashi and Megan Stuart

For the past four years, Nadia Qurashi (’08) and Megan Stuart (’09) have served as a critical buffer between their clients and the bureaucracies and discrimination they encounter on a regular basis.

As part of the five-person team at the Urban Justice Center’s Peter Cicchino Youth Project, the pair help homeless and street-involved people under age 25 navigate social service agencies, civil legal issues, and, when they can, the criminal legal system.

The majority of the homeless youth the project serves identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ). Many, they say, identify as transgender, are people of color, have recently aged out of New





given first name, to avoid safety issues of being “outed” in public as transgender.

What may seem like small changes—a new name and gender reference on an I.D., a separate area in a homeless shelter or prison, being referred to by one’s last name in court—can have a huge impact in systems where trans youth are met with a daily barrage of disrespect, discrimination, and harassment, says Qurashi.

“You have these administrative systems in place that are so damaging to certain people,” she says. “The people criminalized, targeted, arrested, and really harmed by these systems are the people who are supposed to be supported.”

years ago while in college, Primeaux says “it became very apparent, very quickly, that the world was not a welcoming or affirming place for trans or gender-nonconforming people.”

He became active in the community, volunteering during and after college, becoming an avid public educator, and learning how to lobby and organize.

At Whitman-Walker, Primeaux helped more than 250 transgender individuals, in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, obtain legal name changes and gender marker changes on their identity documents, a task that was not as easy as it may sound. Requirements for the name change process vary from state to state and, in some cases, from county to county.

“Obtaining accurate identity documents can be an enormous barrier for trans folks,” he points out. “Discrimination runs rampant when one or more of those documents don’t match the others, particularly for trans women of color.”

At Empire Justice Center, Primeaux provides a variety of free legal services to low-income LGBTQ individuals across upstate New York and works on policy advocacy to advance the rights and protections of LGB and transgender communities statewide. He is currently advocating for a regulation that will clarify the rights of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals under the existing protected statuses of “sex” and “disability” in the state’s human rights law.

“This is really a great opportunity for some forward movement and clarity in the law, but there is still so, so much more work to do to address the racial and economic disparities that systematically and disproportionately impact our communities,” he notes.

As he looks toward the future, Primeaux says he would like to use his position to help vulnerable LGBTQ people who are aging and/or who are veterans, and to build a network for resources in more remote areas of New York by training attorneys and community advocates across the state, where there are few, if any, resources for trans and gender-nonconforming people.

Milo Primeaux

Milo Primeaux has found his calling.

“Serving the transgender community was the reason I went to law school,” he says. “To have a job written for me to do this every day was a dream come true.”

Primeaux is speaking of his current position as head of the Empire Justice Center’s LGBT Rights Project, in Rochester, New York, where he started in September 2015. But he just as easily could be speaking of his previous job as an Equal Justice Works Ameri-Corps Legal Fellow at Whitman-Walker Health in Washington, D.C.

Having come out as transgender about 12

“I think I’m in a really prime spot to potentially make some widespread impact for folks across the state,” says Primeaux. “It may take some time, but I’m up for the challenge.”

There are far more CUNY Law alumni working on issues in the transgender and gender-nonconforming community than could be featured in this article. Some are noted below.

- **Eugene Chen (’13)** is in the second year of a two-year fellowship with the New York Legal Assistance Group’s (NYLAG) LGBTQ Law Project.
- **Brendan Connor (’13)** is a staff attorney at Streetwise and Safe.
- **Owen Daniel-McCarter (’07) and Avi Rudnick (’08)** provide legal services to low-income and street-based transgender people in Chicago through the Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois (TJLP). Read their story online at law.cuny.edu/magazine.
- **Yasmine Farhang (’13)** is the LGBTQ legal coordinator for Make the Road New York.
- **Belkys Garcia (’06)** is a staff attorney with Legal Aid Society’s Health Law Unit.
- **Mik Kinhead (’13) and Rage Kidvai (’14)** lead the Prisoner Justice Project and the Immigration Justice Project, respectively, at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project.
- **Danny Kirchoff (’09)** is the legal helpline manager at the Transgender Law Center in San Francisco.
- **Anya Mukarji-Connolly (’02)** is a supervising attorney at Brooklyn Defenders Services, Family Practice. Until December 2015, she was supervising attorney for the NYLAG’s LGBTQ Law Project.
- **Elana Redfield (’08)** is director of LGBTQI Affairs in the Office of Client Advocacy & Access at the NYC Human Resources Administration.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

If you’re a CUNY Law alum working with the transgender community, we’d love to know about your work. Contact us at communications@law.cuny.edu.

COMMUNITY POWER Growing in a Garden

In the raised beds of Brooklyn's Maple Street Community Garden, in Prospect-Lefferts Gardens, neighbors recently harvested kale, eggplant, okra, and peppers. A hand-painted sign (*Stop—Not Ready Yet*) guarded cherry tomatoes that were still green.

But in this pleasant green space, something grander than fresh produce has taken root: a seedbed for community activism, born of a legal battle between gardeners and real estate developers.

At the center of the struggle is Paula Segal ('11). Through her nonprofit, 596 Acres, which she started in 2011, Segal is helping neighborhood residents throughout New York City transform vacant city lots into pastoral community gardens.

Segal's work encompasses more than gardening. It aims to undo a history of urban planning that has been riddled with racism. "It's a question of who has the power in our neighborhoods," she says, "and making sure that the people who are most impacted have a voice in decisions that are made."

"When people are left out of land use decisions, their lives are disrespected," she adds. "We're trying to flip that script."

She criticizes practices such as race-based restrictions on sales of properties and redlining that she asserts have produced stark segregation. "New York is one of the most segregated places by race, as well as by class, in the world. And that's not an accident."

Not surprisingly, the neighborhoods with the greatest number of neglected lots are also the neighborhoods with the fewest white residents.

To "flip the script," Segal started putting up notices. On locked

fences where city agencies had previously affixed *No Trespassing/No Dumping* signs, she has posted signs saying, *This Land is Your Land*. Each sign explains how people can create a neighborhood garden or other asset on the site.

She has guided residents through presentations to community boards, helped them gain media attention and support from elected officials, and steered them through negotiations with city agencies. She's fought for, and alongside, Maple Street residents for their right to hold on to their garden.

"Paula is really good at getting people to organize themselves, and she has a simple pedagogy for people to do it," says Maple Street Community Garden gardener Tom LaFarge.

But untangling the legal knot at Maple Street hasn't been easy.

The last owner of the parcel died in 1990. No heirs claimed the property; the house that sat on it eventually burned down. City workers cleared the lot, and it became a weedy dumping ground for broken washing machines and abandoned cars. In 2012, a block association representative asked Segal for advice on creating a garden there. She suggested that volunteers clean up the lot and start planting. After two years of work, crops were growing in the new beds—but this past summer, a pair of real estate developers claimed they owned the property.

Armed with a restraining order, the developers locked the entrance. Segal, representing the gardeners pro bono, went to the Appellate Division and argued to get the order overturned. She won. (The deed showed signs of fraud, a growing problem in New York's booming real estate market.) The monthlong lockout cost the gardeners some crops, but for now, they can keep gardening as two pending court cases—a "quiet title" action in the Supreme Court and an eviction in the Civil Court—are being resolved.

"There aren't a lot of people doing what Paula is doing," says



"When people are left out of land use decisions, their lives are disrespected... we're trying to flip that script."

—PAULA SEGAL ('11)

Julia Stanat, another Maple Street gardener. “She’s very passionate and driven. She’s the one who finds the pathway to help us keep this an open space. Sometimes we get deflated after our court dates, and she’s the one who rises up and says, ‘Remember what we’re trying to do,’ to keep us motivated.”

Segal is quick to deflect compliments that cast her as an indispensable leader. She believes most people have the desire and the ability to advocate for themselves. By shepherding residents through the process, she is teaching them how to make the system work, and proving that top-down, profit-driven planning isn’t inevitable.

Born in the former Soviet Union, Segal came to the U.S. with her family when she was 8. Her organizing career started early. In her Massachusetts middle school, she successfully rallied for school officials to end the use of Styrofoam trays and return to reusable plastic trays.

After college, she moved to New York, settling in Brooklyn’s Crown Heights neighborhood.

After teaching English to immigrants for a few years, she grew frustrated. She wanted to do more to help people advocate on their own behalf against injustice and inequality. CUNY Law offered her a fellowship and a living stipend. While at the law school, she worked in the Economic Justice Project, representing CUNY students whose benefits had been cut off by the City.

She had thought about specializing in land rights, and even imagined working internationally, but a struggle much closer to home would shape her career.

In 2010, she joined a campaign—stalled for nearly a decade—to turn a vacant lot in her own neighborhood into a park, to be called Myrtle Village Green. That park has yet to be built, but it has served as a thriving community garden since 2012.

While working on that campaign, Segal realized that there were

a great many unused properties in New York. In 2011, city data showed that Brooklyn alone contained 596 acres of vacant public land—thus the name of the organization she founded that year.

596 Acres operates on a shoestring; about a quarter of its budget comes from individual donations. But Segal is effective: So far, her efforts have resulted in 32 new community gardens where fenced eyesores once stood, in Brooklyn and other boroughs.

In addition, together with programmer Eric Brelsford, she’s created a database of vacant City-owned lots in an interactive online map (LivingLotsNYC.org), showing 603 acres of opportunity on 1,264 lots* in New York City that communities could potentially use.

In October 2015, the Maple Street gardeners celebrated recent court victories with a small neighborhood party. New York State Senator Jesse Hamilton and NYC Councilman Mathieu Eugene briefly attended, a testament to Segal’s ability to enlist allies. Senator Hamilton announced that he had just introduced a state bill to make the garden permanent via eminent domain—legislation that Segal requested and helped draft.

Senator Hamilton, whose district includes Maple Street, admires Segal’s organizing prowess: “It is inspiring to see how she has brought together a diverse coalition of neighbors and activists. It’s hard to know if the garden would have any chance without Ms. Segal.”

Because of the real estate industry’s power, Segal says most vacant parcels will end up in the hands of private developers. But she believes steadfastly that increased public participation will eventually change the way land use decisions are made in New York.

In the end, she says, “It’s about the right of people to shape their own city.”

To learn more about 596 Acres, visit www.596acres.org.

*Information accurate at press time.

— Michael Laser



Because of 596 Acres, there are 32 new community gardens where fenced eyesores once stood.



Serving up FOOD JUSTICE AT SCHOOL

1L Maria Brinkmann reflects on her inspiration for law school

With great excitement, Bryan, 12, recited for me every step of his recent home-cooking adventure: preparing Plant Part Salad with Strawberry-Lemon Dressing, a dish he learned to make in school from ingredients grown in the school garden.

But he had to make some substitutions: “I couldn’t find the things we grow in the garden in the bodega, so I changed it up.” The statement wasn’t apologetic—more matter-of-fact.

Bryan is a smart, quick-witted seventh grader at M.S. 7, in East Harlem, who loves basketball and moonwalks on request. When Edible Schoolyard NYC arrived at his school two years ago, he discovered a new passion: cooking. He and his classmates also quickly saw the inequities in our food system when it came to accessing healthy and sustainable food in low-income communities.

Edible Schoolyard NYC launched its signature experiential food education program at P.S./M.S. 7 in 2013, and Bryan and his classmates welcomed it with enthusiasm. The organization operates programs in six New York City public schools, in Harlem, Brooklyn, and the South Bronx. Students from pre-K to eighth grade plant, grow, harvest, and cook their own food, working together to realize the organization’s mission: to “transform the hearts, minds, and eating habits of young New Yorkers through an integrated seed-to-table education.”

For two years, I served as director of partnerships and engagement with Edible Schoolyard NYC, and witnessed firsthand the program’s transformational impact on the kids. I was especially interested in conversations initiated by the middle schoolers. They spoke candidly, and with authority, about the lack of access to

healthy food in their neighborhoods, and the high cost and poor quality of what fresh produce was available. They asked the big question: Why is healthy food only for rich people? Like Bryan, they were forced to make substitutions.

Each day, these students battle the ever-present obstacles of ubiquitous fast-food chains and grocery store shelves lined with highly processed foods that are engineered to be addictive and that have no nutritional value. These limited options don’t align with their education, and they know it. Despite this discouraging reality, these students are advocating for better food environments for themselves, their families, and their larger community. Their commitment to achieving a more equitable food system is what inspired me to pursue a law degree to help advance the cause of food justice for low-income communities around New York and the nation.

So what will it take to effect the critical change so many desire? Alice Waters, chef and founder of Edible Schoolyard NYC, says for the movement to truly catch fire, “All people have to believe that everyone deserves healthy, nourishing food and a place at the table.” Like education and healthcare, food justice must become a national priority. This systemic problem can no longer be singularly addressed by nonprofits and community activists. The weight and fiscal support of government are essential to creating a fair food system.

At the close of every Edible Schoolyard class, students set the table and enjoy what they’ve made together. With fresh ingredients from their school garden, Bryan and his classmates never have to stray far from the recipe. That access reinforces an important value of a just food system: When it comes to nutritious food, no one should have to make substitutions. Just ask the kids sitting at the table.

LOOKING BACK: 30 YEARS of the Clinical Program

From its first year, in 1985, when it was housed in an elementary school, to today, CUNY Law's clinical program has trained thousands of students by plunging them into real-world legal work. While growing and evolving, the program has stayed true to the ideals that shaped it, and has served the public interest in countless ways.

The program has consistently been recognized for its innovative integration of theory and practice. It is now ranked third in the nation for clinical training by *U.S. News & World Report* and is the top-ranked clinical program in New York State.

"The whole concept of CUNY Law was learning through working on people's actual problems in areas where there was a dearth of any kind of available services for people," explains Vanessa Merton, one of the founders of the clinical program. "It was a birth—and like all births, it was very messy and did not go according to plan, but it was the privilege of my life to be part of CUNY Law."

Merton, now at Pace Law School, several other founders, and current faculty members shared the stories of three decades of the program's beginnings, triumphs, and setbacks.

CUNY Law's clinical program was born at a time when clinical

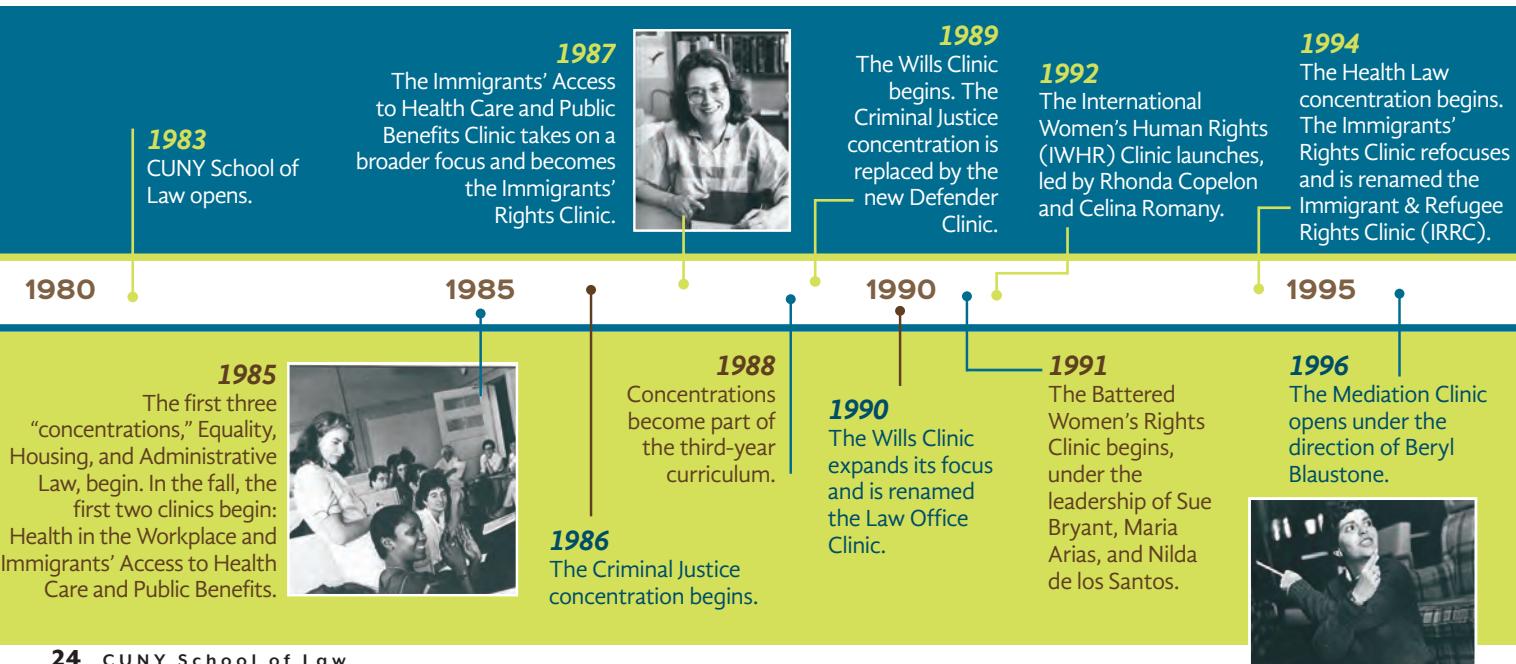
legal education was just starting to get a foothold in the curriculum. For most law schools back in the mid-1980s, such programs were an add-on. For CUNY Law, clinics would become an integral part of learning and practice.

"No other model existed for it," says Paul O'Neil, who, together with Merton, started the Health in the Workplace Clinic. "It was an extraordinary opportunity for students to work with professionals in the field."

CUNY Law professors Rick Rossein, Sue Bryant, Janet Calvo, and Beryl Blaustone, along with Merton and O'Neil (now at Human Rights in China in New York), pioneered the clinical program.

What were called "concentrations" at CUNY Law started first in the spring of 1985. At that time, students had the opportunity to work at an outside law firm or government agency for credit during their second year; they would also participate in an intensive seminar program that examined the theory, doctrine, and lawyering skills related to the practice of a substantive area.

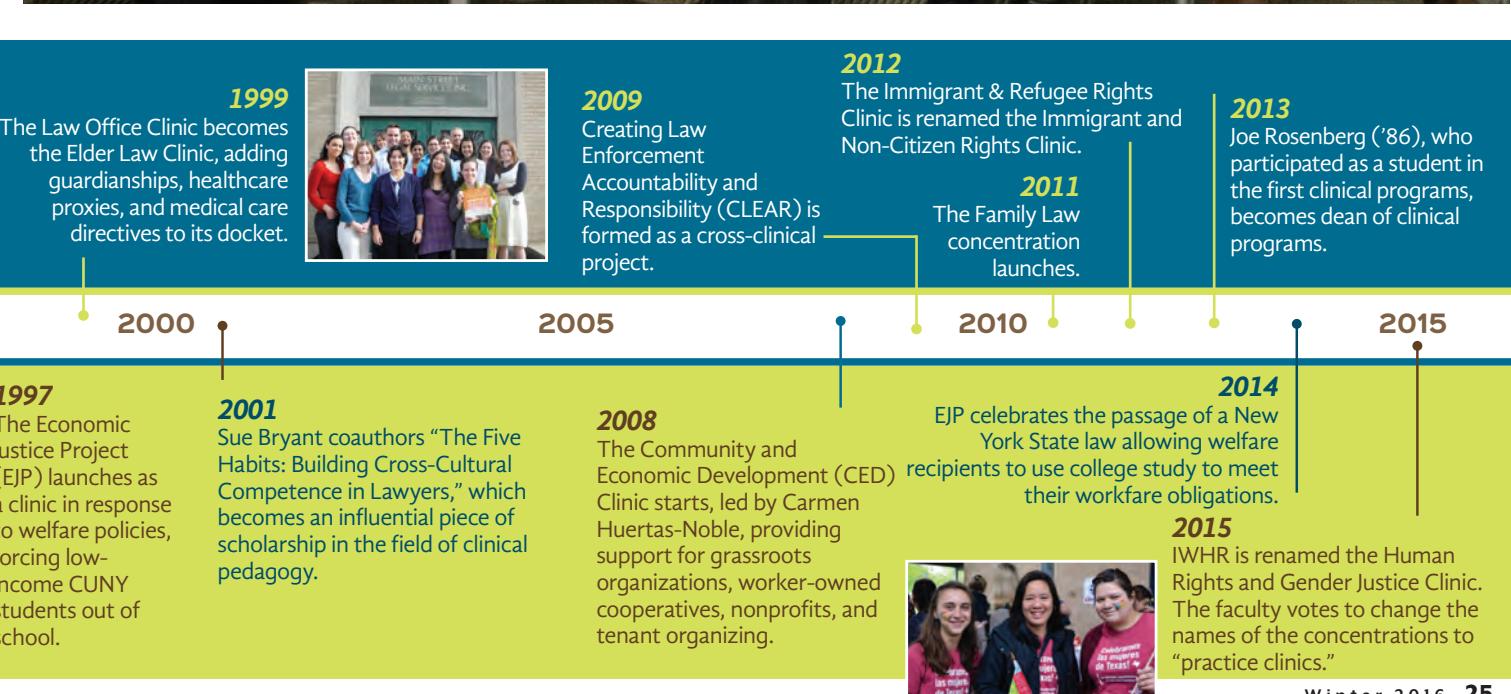
Equality, housing, and administrative law were the first concentrations. These were followed by criminal justice, health law, and, much later, family law.





Founding and current clinics and concentrations faculty and staff (L-R):
Vanessa Merton, Joe Rosenberg ('86),
Steven Godeski ('86), Cindy Soohoo,
Janet Calvo (seated left), Sue Bryant
(seated right), Dorothy Matthew,
Elizabeth Newman ('91), Paul O'Neil,
Ann Cammett ('00), Rick Rossein.

AP/PA/P



Some concentrations have come and gone over the three decades. Housing lasted just a few years. Others morphed into new forms, such as criminal justice, now the Criminal Defense Clinic. Some concentrations replaced clinics along the way. The concentrations continue to evolve. In December 2015, CUNY Law faculty voted to change the names of the concentrations to “practice clinics” to better reflect the clinical program’s coherence.

Rossein praises the efforts of his students, who have worked on several landmark cases, including the historic 2013 *Floyd v. City of New York* lawsuit that challenged the New York City Police Department’s stop-and-frisk program. “Students come out with a tremendous set of skills,” says Rossein, now director of the Equality & Justice Practice Clinic.

Merton credits Howard Lesnick (currently at the University of Pennsylvania Law School) with shaping the philosophical foundations of CUNY Law’s clinical program: to focus on experiential learning and be more immersive than similar programs at other schools. The approach was crucial to the law school’s mission to train public interest lawyers.

“We knew they would be given a lot of responsibility as beginning lawyers,” says Bryant, “and we felt a responsibility to prepare them for that.”

Students also helped develop the clinical program in its early days, including the law school’s first graduating class of 1986.

“We were all in a canoe headed down the river,” Merton recalls, “and we were building the canoe as we went. The students played a key role in shaping our agenda. I think what emerged was a hell of a program.”

Joe Rosenberg, now associate dean of clinical programs, was a member of that first graduating class.

“We were all working together; it was not a prepackaged student experience,” Rosenberg recalls of the nascent clinical programs. “We were part of a law firm, and we would make collective decisions about cases we took and projects we worked on.”

In 1986, the law school moved to a former junior high school on Main Street in Flushing, inspiring the name Main Street Legal Services and providing a space where students could feel like they were working at a law office and not in a law school.

The real-world experiences took students to union group meetings, housing court, prisons—anywhere that clients needed services.

For example, Bryant’s Battered Women’s Rights Clinic often brought her and her students to prisons, where they worked on clemency petitions with clients serving time for assaulting and killing their batterers. “The students learned the importance of listening to clients and telling their stories, even when an immediate victory was denied,” she notes.

Many of CUNY Law’s clinical programs have led to lasting changes in law or social programs.

The Economic Justice Project (EJP) has helped keep hundreds of

CUNY students in school, advocating successfully for a law allowing college study to fulfill the work requirements that must be met by recipients of welfare benefits. The Criminal Defense Clinic has trained many of the public defenders in New York City and around the United States. The Community & Economic Development Clinic, often partnering with community-based organizations, has helped low-income tenants in gentrifying neighborhoods in the city.

Undocumented people in New York are eligible for Medicaid because of a case Calvo worked on, first at NYU Law and then upon her arrival at CUNY Law. Steve Loffredo, who collaborated with Calvo, notes that “in New York, when undocumented people receive Medicaid, it’s largely through the efforts of Janet. Few people know that.”

The clinical program has also had its share of notable figures. Rhonda Copelon was one such giant.

Copelon, a legendary human rights lawyer who died in 2010, founded the International Women’s Human Rights Clinic in 1992 and is recognized for her pioneering work with students, which included winning the right for foreign plaintiffs to sue individuals in U.S. courts for human rights violations and supporting cases that led international tribunals to declare rape a form of torture.

“Her work was pathbreaking,” Bryant says. “Women’s issues at that time were viewed as private, not public, and not related to state human rights violations. She was one of the first to see the persecution of women as a way to exercise dominion over populations.”

Haywood Burns, another giant, was dean from 1987 to 1994, a period during which the clinical program grew substantially. Burns first taught at the law school in the Equality program, drawing from his substantial civil rights advocacy to teach the next generation of civil rights lawyers.

As new social problems emerge, the clinical program finds ways to address them. Wage theft and employers who require workers to live in company-owned houses are two of the new legal fronts that clinics are tackling.

The program’s reputation is impressive. Ever since *U.S. News & World Report* started ranking law school clinical programs, CUNY Law’s has been among the top 10 in the nation.

Over the past three decades, CUNY Law students have served thousands of clients who otherwise could not have afforded representation. And these students have found opportunities to press for systemic change.

Says Rosenberg: “Employers who have hired CUNY Law graduates will tell you that they are ready to hit the ground running when they get out of law school.”

—Michael Laser

TELL US YOUR STORY

What do you remember most from your experience in the clinical program? Let us know. Send us a tweet: @cunylaw or e-mail us at communications@law.cuny.edu.

Blakeley Decktor ('12): Seeking Gender Equality Through the World's Courts



Each year, Women's Link Worldwide, an international organization that works to advance the rights of women and girls, doles out the Gender Justice Uncovered Awards to highlight decisions or statements made during legal proceedings that have a positive or negative impact on gender equality.

Blakeley Decktor ('12), a staff attorney at the Women's Link office in Bogotá, Colombia, organizes the awards each year, together with a colleague in Madrid. "We don't usually see the judiciary as a place with potential to create change," she says. "But the way judges interpret the law can lead to promoting rights or really setting them back."

The awards—"Gavels" for the best decisions and "Bludgeons" for the worst—help ensure that people around the world will hear about key decisions, Decktor explains. This year, India received a "Bludgeon" in part for a judge's decision to clear a man of rape charges because the woman he raped was his wife, and Indian law doesn't recognize forced sex within marriage as rape. Botswana garnered a "Gavel" after the country's High Court overturned the government's refusal to allow an LGBT rights organization to officially register with the state.

"When judges rely on gender stereotypes to interpret the law, the result can be devastating to women and girls," Decktor says. "The awards are a way to hold judges accountable for their decisions."

Founded in 2001, Women's Link uses strategic litigation and public debate to advance the rights of women and girls. Decktor interned there after her second year at CUNY Law, and fell in love with the people and the work of the organization. She returned three years later to continue with the group.

Decktor's work in gender issues has taken her around the world to survey justices on their gender attitudes, and to arm them with data on gender-related cases to help inform their decisions.

Her engagement with gender issues goes back to college, where she majored in women's and gender studies and international studies, and began volunteering as a sexual assault advocate. While hospital nurses conducted exams of women who had reported rape or domestic

violence, she would try to provide whatever the women needed: information about their rights, distracting conversation, or simply a cup of water.

For a 19-year-old college student, the experience was eye opening: "You could see the differences in how people were treated by police and hospital staff, depending on if they believed the person or not, which was often directly linked to socioeconomic background, skin color, age, and other stereotypes we associate with who is 'really' sexually assaulted," she says.

At CUNY Law, she and her classmates in the International Women's Human Rights (IWHR) clinic contributed to a report documenting abuses of women's rights in Guatemala—where more than 5,000 women and girls had been murdered in the previous decade, and where 99 percent of such cases went unprosecuted. Her team presented testimony to the U.N.'s Human Rights Committee, and witnessed the compelling testimony of an indigenous activist who spoke about the violence her community continued to suffer at the hands of the state.

"Reading the sanitized state report and listening to her testimony was like night and day," Decktor notes. "The need for spaces for women to tell their stories became glaringly obvious."

Decktor also credits Professor Lisa Davis ('08) and her teaching as big influences in her career choice. Davis taught the IWHR students about creating safe spaces for survivors of violence, and about best practices when working with translators. "I rely on these lessons, as much as our legal discussions, in my job," says Decktor.

Decktor strongly believes that those who suffer under oppressive laws must play a central role in any movement to change those laws, explaining, "I am a big fan of the theory often promoted by queer activist Dean Spade that 'social justice doesn't trickle down.'"

She adds: "It's essential to centralize movements around the most vulnerable, lifting their voices up to create meaningful change."

—Michael Laser

alumni profile

Angelo Pinto ('08): Fighting for Incarcerated Youth

AARON ADLER

For Angelo Pinto ('08), it comes down to science: Teen brains are not fully developed, meaning teens are incapable of fully assessing risk, and their character and sense of self are still under construction as well.

"To put a teen into a hyper-violent environment, like an adult prison, means shaping the character of that person at a time before they are fully formed," he says. Putting teens in adult environments results in dangerous consequences for both individuals and public safety, he notes.

Determined to make changes, Pinto joined the Raise the Age Campaign at the Correctional Association of New York in 2012 as its campaign manager. The association strives to increase the age of criminal responsibility in New York State from 16 to 18, and to ensure that teens are not housed in adult jails or prisons.

"I always knew I wanted to do public interest lawyering. I knew I wanted to transform society," says the New York native.

Pinto's career choice expands on his passion to create change, especially in a correctional system he views as dysfunctional. Prior to joining the Correctional Association, he designed interventions for formerly incarcerated men in central Brooklyn for the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health and also worked at Rikers Island teaching



a legal research course to incarcerated adolescents and youth.

Pinto's interest in effecting change in the correctional systems started, he suspects, after he read certain books—*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* among them. "There was something there I related to and, over the years, it was nurtured into a desire to bring about social justice," he says.

He also has a personal connection to the issue of youth in New York State's criminal and juvenile justice system. About 17 years ago, when his older brother was 16, he was tried as an adult. That history coupled with his current work brought home for Pinto the unfairness of sending a teenager to an adult facility.

New York is one of only two states that prosecute youth as adults when they turn 16 (North Carolina is the other). Pinto knows that working for legislative change gives him the opportunity to impact large numbers of young people, and transform the system.

"One of the things at CUNY Law that prepared me for this kind of work was that professors, as well as fellow students, were the kind of people who cared about doing work that would impact society," he says.

In the three years that Pinto has led the Raise the Age Campaign—essentially, since its inception—the goal to raise the age of criminal responsibility in New York has moved almost within reach. His aptitude for community organizing, creating coalitions of supporters throughout the state and meeting with key personnel in the state assembly and governor's offices, has aided the campaign's successes.

In January 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo addressed raising the age in his State of the State speech. He later created the Commission on Youth, Public Safety, and Justice to study the proposed age change. In 2015, the commission issued its report, prompting a \$135 million line item in the governor's budget, the majority of which was slated for upgrading facilities to accommodate separate facilities for teens and adults. Although the change did not make it into legislation in 2015, Pinto believes it remains a legislative priority for the governor.

Pinto has expanded his advocacy for youth justice beyond New York. Last year, he testified at the United Nations in Geneva, and this past October he visited the White House as part of National Youth Justice Awareness Month.

Pinto is quick to acknowledge that raising the age when adolescents enter the adult correctional system is just one piece of what is needed to improve youth justice nationwide. He hopes that his experiences, and the success he has gained thus far at the local and state levels, may one day allow him to change federal laws to help even more young people in youth detention centers, jails, and prisons.

—Jeanne Nicholson Siler



PHOTOS BY ARTHUR PAP

Alumni Weekend 2015

CUNY Law's annual Alumni Weekend brought together alumni from nearly all of the graduating classes for an engaging day of lectures, receptions, and a luncheon celebrating 30 years of our clinics and concentrations.

Alumni attended CLE discussions on digital forensics, reproductive health and rights, housing, and immigration. Marnie Berk ('96) and Ryan Dooley ('09) received awards for their service to the CUNY Law community.

In recognition of the 30th anniversary, founding faculty and staff of the clinic and concentration programs were honored: administrator Dorothy Matthew; clinic faculty Janet Calvo, Vanessa Merton (now at Pace Law School), and Paul O'Neil (now at Human Rights in China); and concentration faculty Beryl Blaustone, Sue Bryant, and Rick Rossein.

■ faculty notes

These are highlights of faculty scholarship publications from December 2014 to October 2015. For an expanded listing of all faculty scholarship, including presentations, appointments, and appearances in the media, visit law.cuny.edu/magazine

Michelle J. Anderson contributed the chapter “Marital Rape Laws Globally: Rationales and Snapshots around the World” to *Marital Rape: Consent, Marriage, and Social Change in Global Context*, to be published in 2016. She will also publish “Title IX Resistance” in the *Yale Law Journal* in 2016.

Rebecca Bratspies authored two book chapters: “Using Human Rights to Improve Arctic Governance” in *Diplomacy on Ice* and “Sustainability Is the Answer, Now What Was the Question?” in *Rethinking Sustainability to Meet the Climate Change Challenge*. She also wrote an article, “Do We Need a Human Right to a Healthy Environment?” published in the *Santa Clara International Law Review*.

Susan J. Bryant co-edited the book *Transforming the Education of Lawyers: The Theory and Practice of Clinical Pedagogy*, in which she contributed to more than half the chapters. She also contributed a book chapter, “Teaching the Newly Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Values in a Changing World” to *Building on Best Practices: Transforming Legal Education in a Changing World*.

Ann Cammett’s article “Deadbeat Dads & Welfare Queens: How Metaphor Shapes Poverty Law” was published in the *Boston College Journal of Law and Social Justice*.

Lisa Davis recently published two articles on openDemocracy.net (a website about international politics and culture), “Why Are So Many Syrian Children Being Left Stateless?” and “Lifting the Ban on Women’s Shelters in Iraq: Promoting Change in Conflict.”

Frank Deale’s article “J. McIntyre and the Global Stream of Commerce” appeared in the *CUNY Law Review*.

Kristin Booth Glen authored a report titled *Rethinking SCPA Article 17-A*, which was adopted by the Mental Health Committee of the NYC Bar Association. Her article “Supported Decision-Making and the Human Right of Legal Capacity” was published in *Inclusion*, the journal of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. She also co-authored “The Public’s Interest in Charitable Trusts: Unsettled Issues,” published in the *New York Law Journal*.

Julie Goldscheid’s essay “Gender Violence and Civil Rights” was published as part of the essay collection “VAWA@20: Reflecting,

Re-imagining & Looking Forward,” in the *CUNY Law Review’s* Footnote Forum. She contributed the chapter “The Economics of Gender Violence in Norway: A Comparative Approach” to *Comparative Perspectives on Gender Violence: Lessons from Efforts Worldwide*. Her article “Gender Neutrality, the ‘Violence Against Women’ Frame, and Transformative Reform” was published in the *University of Missouri-Kansas Law Review*. She is also the co-author of a recent American Civil Liberties Union report, *Responses from the Field: Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Policing*.

Natalie Gomez-Velez’s chapter, “CUNY Law School’s Community-Based and Community-Empowering Clinics,” will be published in *Beyond Elite Law: Access to Civil Justice for Americans of Average Means*, forthcoming in May 2016.

Babe Howell published “Gang Policing: The Post Stop-and-Frisk Justification for Profile-Based Policing,” in the *Denver Criminal Law Review*.

Jeffrey Kirchmeier’s book *Imprisoned by the Past: Warren McCleskey and the American Death Penalty*, on the history of capital punishment in the United States, was published by Oxford University Press. He contributed “Racial Terror and the Echoes of American Lynchings” and “All Life Is Worth Saving” to the Oxford University Press blog. He wrote “The Supreme Court’s Legacy on Race and Capital Punishment in *McCleskey v. Kemp*” for *Human Rights* magazine, published by the American Bar Association. He also wrote “Fearmongering in Nebraska: How the Death Penalty Lobby Fights Progress” for theconversation.com, a website devoted to sharing academic perspectives on current issues.

Sarah Lamdan is co-authoring the book *Environmental Information: Research, Access & Environmental Decision Making*, forthcoming from ELI Press. She published “Librarians as Feisty Advocates for Privacy” in the *Urban Library Journal* and “Social Media: A Rallying Cry to Librarians” in the *Library Quarterly*, the peer-reviewed, scholarly journal of the American Library Association.

Julie Lim contributed to the “For the Leader in You” section of the American Association of Law Libraries e-newsletters with columns on motivational leadership, effective communication, learning from failure, and proactive leadership.

Andrea McArdle’s article “Storm Surges, Disaster Planning, and Vulnerable Populations at the Urban Periphery: Imagining a Resilient New York after Superstorm Sandy” was published in the *Idaho Law Review* and chosen for inclusion in the 2015 edition of the *Zoning*

and *Planning Law Handbook*. She also published “Lessons for New York: Comparative Urban Governance and the Challenge of Climate Change” in the *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, “Re-Integrating Community Space: The Legal and Social Meanings of Reclaiming Abandoned Space in New York’s Lower East Side” in the *Savannah Law Journal*, and “Understanding Voice: Writing in a Judicial Context” in *Legal Writing: The Journal of the Legal Writing Institute*.

Ruthann Robson reviewed Nancy Leong’s forthcoming article “Identity Entrepreneurs” in *Jotwell*. She published two op-eds in the *National Law Journal*, “Religion’s ‘Favored Status’ in the Workplace” and “How the High Court Contributes to Racism.” She also authored “Public Interest Lawyering & Judicial Politics: Four Cases Worth a Second Look in *Williams-Yulee v. The Florida Bar*” in the *Vanderbilt Law Review* and “Enhancing Reciprocal Synergies between Teaching and Scholarship” in the *Journal of Legal Education*.

Rick Rossein’s revised treatise *Employment Discrimination Law and Litigation* was published by Thomson Reuters.

Richard Storow contributed the chapter “Surrogacy: American Style” to *Surrogacy, Law and Human Rights*.

Sarah Valentine’s article “Flourish or Founder: The New Regulatory Regime in Legal Education” was published in the *Journal of Law and Education*.

Sofia Yakren published “Removing the Malice from Federal ‘Malicious Prosecution’: What Cognitive Science Can Teach Lawyers about Reform” in the *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*.

Deborah Zalesne co-authored a review with John Guyette (’15) of the book *Marriage Markets: How Inequality is Remaking the American Family*, by June Carbone and Naomi Cahn.

Steve Zeidman contributed “Justice Is Swift as Petty Crimes Clog Courts” to the Collateral Consequences Resources Center blog. His essay “Due Process and the Failure of the Criminal Court” was published in the *Fordham Urban Law Journal*.

IN THE MEDIA

INTERVIEWED

Jeffrey Kirchmeier

International Affairs Forum—“Race and the Death Penalty: Interview with Prof. Jeffrey Kirchmeier”

OP-EDS

Douglas Cox

CNN—“How Serious Is the Clinton Email Controversy?”

Ramzi Kassem

Al Jazeera English—“The End of Injustice for Shaker”

Al Jazeera America—“My Gitmo Client’s Interpreter Worked for the CIA”

VICE.COM—“Why ‘Guantánamo North’ Is a Terrible Idea”; “Three Questions You Should Ask When You Hear about a ‘Foiled Terrorist Plot’”; “Do High-Profile Terrorism Arrests Actually Help the Islamic State?”

Steve Zeidman

HuffingtonPost.com—“A Response to Bratton and Kelling”

QUOTED

Douglas Cox

PolitiFact.com—“Rand Paul: Hillary Clinton’s State Department ‘Admonished’ Ambassador for Improper Email Use”

Babe Howell

The Guardian—“Is the Online Surveillance of Black Teenagers the New Stop-and-Frisk?”

The New Yorker—“A Father’s Fight to Stop the Cycle of Violence”

Ramzi Kassem

Daily Mail—“Free Last Briton in Guantánamo Before He Loses His Sanity, Says Lawyer”

The Guardian—“Shaker Aamer Has Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,

Lawyer Says”

The New York Times—“Yemenis, Thrust into Limbo, Say U.S. Embassy Unfairly Revokes Passports”

The Washington Post—“Shaker Aamer, Longtime Guantánamo Bay Detainee, to Be Freed to Britain”

Ruthann Robson

Associated Press—“Alabama Gay Marriage Fight Echoes Old States’ Rights Battles in Civil Rights, Slavery”

Business Insider—“Here’s Why States Can’t Just Ignore the Gay Marriage Ruling”

Christian Science Monitor—“Why This Montana Lawmaker Is Bent Out of Shape over Yoga Pants”

KPCC—“Northern California School’s Dress Code Raises Questions about Shaming, Equality”

USA Today—“Kentucky County Clerk Invokes God in Denying Gay Marriages”

VICE News—“How Hobby Lobby Paved the Way for the Current Rush of Religious Freedom Laws”

The Washington Post—“Can a Texas County Clerk Refuse to Issue a Gay Marriage License? It’s Complicated.”

WNYC—“Transit Agencies Battle Controversial Ads by Changing the Rules”

Women’s ENews—“Students Say Dress Codes More for Girls Than Boys”

Steve Zeidman

Business Insider—“The NYPD Is Making a Big Mistake by Resuming Petty Arrests, Law Professor Warns”

alumni news

1987

John Hermina successfully defended the government of Egypt in a \$6.8 billion dispute in early 2015, as part of his work with the Hermina Law Group.

Martha S. Jones is one of the editors of the recently published book *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women* (April 2015).

Barbara J. King received the 2015 Stanley A. Rosen Memorial Award from the Legal Project of the Capital District Women's Bar Association (CDWBA) for her work on behalf of domestic violence victims. She is a partner at Tully Rinckey PLLC.

1988

Neal Lewis is the executive director of the Sustainability Institute at Molloy College, where he teaches Introduction to Sustainability and advocates for clean energy alternatives.

Edwina Richardson-Mendelson is returning to her position as a trial judge. She recently served as an administrative judge of New York City's family courts. She was also appointed as cochair of the newly created State Advisory Council on Immigration Issues in Family Court.

1989

Concetta I. Mennella is the chair of the department of law and paralegal studies at CUNY's New York City College of Technology.

Careen Shannon has been named a partner at Fragomen Worldwide, a provider of global immigration services. Since 2014, she has led the firm's pro bono legal services for unaccompanied minors and detained immigrant women and children from Central America.

1992

In her first year as a member of the New York State Assembly representing the 76th district, **Rebecca Seawright** was successful in having two bills signed into law in 2015. The first bill extends New York State's subsidy for the Federal Clean Water State Revolving Fund. The second bill reduces the amount of time divorced parents must spend in court.

1994

Gregorio Mayers was honored by the New York City Association of Minority Contractors for his work in the Bloomberg administration to benefit minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE). He is a professor at Medgar Evers College in the department of public administration.

1995

Kim Dvorchak is executive director of the National Juvenile Defender Center (NJDC), a Washington, DC-based nonprofit that provides legal training and policy advocacy to promote access to counsel for children in juvenile delinquency court.

Margaret McIntyre is celebrating her 19th year as a solo practitioner, representing employees in discrimination and wage claims. She serves as co-vice president of the National Employment Lawyers Association (NY).

1996

Justin C. Frankel has been named a 2015 Super Lawyer by *Super Lawyers Magazine*. He is a partner at Frankel & Newfield, a disability insurance law firm, located in Garden City, NY.

1997

Carla A. Barone joined Cohen Forman Barone, LLP, as a partner in May 2015, handling matrimonial and family law matters.

1998

Sharon Stapel is now president and executive director of the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York. Previously, she was executive director of the New York Anti-Violence Project for seven years.

Rachel Tanguay-McGuane was elected family court judge in Rockland County, NY.

1999

Rebecca Lindhurst received the Washington Council of Lawyers' 2015 Legal Services Award. Lindhurst has been a managing attorney at Bread for the City in Washington, D.C. since 2002 and has demonstrated a devotion to serving members of the low-income community.

alumni news

2000

Joy Mele is practicing union-side labor law with O'Dwyer & Bernstien, LLP.

2001

Amy Harfeld Elfassi is national policy director and senior staff attorney at the Children's Advocacy Institute. She also serves as the pro bono government affairs director for the National Association of Counsel for Children. She lives in the Washington, DC, area with her husband and two children.

Elizabeth Valentin is a partner at Littman Krooks LLP, where she has worked since 2002.

2002

Abdul Lloyd-Bey recently released his memoir, *No Throwaway Boy*.

Kirk Lund serves on the Jefferson County (Wisconsin) Board of Supervisors from the 14th District.

Debra Malone and **Peter Khrinenko** welcomed their second child, Jack Wyatt. Debra was promoted to a supervising attorney at Mendolia & Stenz. Peter became a partner at Brand Glick & Brand, P.C.

2003

David Abrams served as a panelist for a webinar on affirmative claims in housing cases for the National Association of Consumer Advocates.

2004

Nicole Mandarano and **John Salois** launched the nonprofit Homeless Youth Law Clinic (HYLC) in June 2015 to provide legal advocacy, legal education, and legal resources to youth in Portland, OR. John also serves on the Juvenile Appellate Panel at the Office of Public Defense Services in Oregon.

2005

Chirag D. Mehta is an attorney at Buckley Madole, P.C., in New Jersey.

2006

Erin Lloyd married **Lee Stetson ('09)** in May 2015. She has been named a Rising Star by *Super Lawyers Magazine* in the field of employment law for 2014 and 2015.

2007

Andrew Sta. Ana was named a Movement Maker by the NoVo Foundation's Move to End Violence campaign.

2008

Julia Busetti and her husband welcomed their first child in March 2015. She is senior appellate counsel with the Center for Appellate Litigation.

2009

Keith Allen is working in the compliance field at Citigroup in Long Island City, NY.

Lindsey Blank Bodner is managing director at the Naomi Foundation.

Catalina Cruz has been appointed special assistant for labor and workforce by New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo and will serve as director of the Exploited Workers Task Force and the Joint Enforcement Task Force on Employee Misclassification.

Estelle Davis has moved back to New York City after three years in Buffalo, NY. She is working as counsel at the Division of Immigrant Policies at the New York State Department of Labor.

Farah Diaz-Tello, a senior staff attorney with National Advocates for Pregnant Women, got a manslaughter conviction overturned before the New York Court of Appeals of a pregnant woman whose baby died days after she crashed her car. She also successfully argued before the Arkansas Supreme Court for another pregnant woman's conviction to be overturned, explaining that an Arkansas law making it a crime to introduce a controlled substance into the body of another person cannot be used to punish women who give birth to a baby who tests positive for a controlled substance.

Shelley Goldfarb is working at Casa de Esperanza in Bound Brook, NJ. She represents immigrant children from Central America in their asylum and special immigrant juvenile cases.

Allie Robbins and **Lisa Zayas ('11)** welcomed their son, Henry Thomas Zayas-Robbins, on August 22, 2015.

alumni news

2010

Maryam Arif is working as an Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies Fellow with the Office of Congresswoman Judy Chu (D-CA), and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. She was also selected as a 2014 Asia Society India Pakistan Young Leaders Initiative Fellow.

Shirley Lin's article “And Ain’t I a Woman?: Feminism, Immigrant Caregivers, and New Frontiers for Equality” was published in the *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* in early 2016.

Danon Singh is working in the compliance field at Citigroup in Long Island City, NY.

2011

Cesar Vargas has joined Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders' campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. Vargas is a cofounder of the Dream Action Coalition.

2012

Kyle Carraro is a full-time associate at Lloyd & Patel LLP, run by fellow alums **Erin Lloyd ('06)** and **Yogi Patel ('06)**. He is the father of two children.

Brendan Conner is working as an attorney with Streetwise and Safe in New York. His article “Locked In: Interactions with the Criminal Justice and Child Welfare Systems for LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YWSW Who Engage in Survival Sex” was recently published by the Urban Institute.

Cynthia Cheng-Wun Weaver received the Pioneer Spirit Award from Asian Americans for Equality for her work with Manhattan Legal Services and her fight, along with her colleagues, for the rights of tenants at 43 Essex Street in Manhattan.

2013

Alfia Agish had one of her legal victories covered on the front page of the *New York Law Journal* in October. She filed a successful motion to vacate an agreement between her tenant client and the landlord that would have pushed her client out of her rent-subsidized apartment.

Danny Alicea conducted an online training through Fragomen Worldwide, a provider of immigration services, about deferred action for childhood arrivals in immigration law in August 2015, along with **Careen Shannon ('89)** and **Harlene Katzman ('95)**. It is available at www.lawline.com.

2015

Robert Hupf, Jr. is a staff attorney with the Bronx Defenders.

In Memoriam

Larry H. Abrams ('86)

Larry Abrams was a real estate manager, lawyer, and longtime trustee of Gould Farm, a Massachusetts-based therapeutic community that promotes recovery for adults with mental health and related challenges.

Tonya Gonnella Frichner ('87)

Tonya Gonnella Frichner was a lawyer and professor who became a global voice for Native Americans in the U.S. and indigenous people worldwide. She founded the American Indian Law Alliance and served as North American regional representative to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Sam Adolph Oakland ('95)

Sam Oakland had a lifelong enthusiasm for travel and adventure. At age 79, he most recently was a park ranger with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service. He had also recently been accepted to the Peace Corps as a volunteer in Albania.

Robert Spergel ('96)

Robert Spergel was a Nassau County District Court judge, where he presided over cases involving driving while intoxicated and under the influence of drugs. He was a longtime member and support group leader of the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America.

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—CJ Ortúño, Executive Director, Institutional Advancement



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We inadvertently omitted the names of some donors from the Winter 2015 donor listing. We apologize greatly for the error. The following donors should have been listed and we thank them for their support:

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final word

The Path to Equality

On November 24, 2014, I stood with residents, activists, and lawyers in front of the police department, in Ferguson, Missouri. It was moments after a prosecutor announced the grand jury decision not to indict a police officer for killing an unarmed black child. There was a chill in the night air. There was despair, frustration, and anger in the air. And, on that night, there was tear gas in the air. As we drove to a place to rest, I thought about what the path to equality truly means.

The next night, I stood outside the Clayton County Courthouse, in St. Louis—this time with lawyers attempting to gain access to Ferguson residents jailed during the previous night's show of police authority. The jail staff denied us access—“Only essential personnel,” they said. We reminded the jailers that the people in their custody had the right to confer with their attorneys, a right guaranteed to them by the U.S. and state constitutions and state statutes. After two hours, we were inside the jail and interviewed nearly 40 people, hearing stories of aggressive, violent policing, each story with its own pain. We contacted loved ones to shed light on the chaos and began to develop strategies.

We did what public defenders do. We pursued justice for each client on a path to equality.

When I ask people what equality means, the response is often an example of inequality. Whether it's income and wealth disparity, the chasm in pay between men and women, or mass incarceration for certain groups, folks are well versed in what inequality looks like. How then do we translate that knowledge and experience into affirmative conceptions of what equality is, or the recognition of equality when it is present?

For me, a world with equality is a world where my daughter's life matters. Equality is the time and place where she will experience the world unencumbered by how she looks or whom she loves. Where her classmates, teachers, and police will approach their encounters with genuine hearts and open minds. My equality will be when my daughter has the peace to be heard and the space to be herself.

My purpose in “the work” is to stand with poor people of color who seek justice down the path to their equality. Whether the struggle takes place in Ferguson or the South Bronx or the heart of Baltimore—in courtrooms or community meetings—my



Michael Oppenheimer, in November 2015, with his newly born daughter.

AARON ADLER

commitment is unwavering.

I do not give my clients a voice. Each client I have ever represented has his or her own voice and understanding of his or her equality.

I chose to be a public defender to help my clients shatter the silence of institutions that seek to snatch from them the most precious aspects of their lives. I continue to be a public defender because the criminal justice system remains too quiet and unequal.

CUNY Law has prepared each of us to amplify the voices of those who are often ignored. We travel the path to equality with our clients. We trumpet each client's cause. Our work, our struggle for equality, is about the dignity of people.

The work that we do might not change the world tomorrow, but it might make a difference for an individual client. Maybe, in turn, that difference will change the world for our children.

Michael Oppenheimer ('06) was an E. Barrett Prettyman Fellow in Georgetown University Law Center's Criminal Justice Clinic. He worked for seven years with the Bronx Defenders and is now an assistant federal defender in Baltimore's Third Circuit. Oppenheimer is part of CUNY Law's Board of Visitors.

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