



IAN MARCUS AMELKIN '09 GIVES CONVOCATION SPEECH

Thank you Dean Revesz and good morning everyone! I am honored to be speaking to you today. I remember vividly looking around the classroom on my last class of our 1L year and thinking, "wow, these people are brilliant, it is so exciting to go to school with and to learn from them." Now, two years later, having gotten the chance to know many of you well, I am so proud to be graduating with such wonderfully accomplished people.

I don't think I have any pearls of wisdom to share with you, knowledge to impart, or lessons to teach. We all climbed up the same ladder, and we are now all standing on the top of the same water tower, together. What I hope to do with this time is only to talk about what law school meant to me and to speak about what I hope for myself, and by extension each of you, now that we have completed our schooling.

A water tower often stands in the middle of a field, with a 360-degree expansive view in all directions. To get to experience the view, people must climb a ladder, often a tall one. Today, I think, we have finished climbing this ladder—not just by receiving our J.D.s and LL.M.s, but also, for hopefully the overwhelming majority of us, by finishing our time in school. Each of

continues on page 2

Yoshino is Interim Faculty Director



During the 2009-10 academic year, Faculty Director Meg Satterthwaite is on leave. Meg and her partner Alison Nathan, Associate White House Counsel, will spend this year in Washington, D.C. with their newborn twins, Nathan Robert Satterthwaite and Oliver Satterthwaite Nathan. While Meg is away, the RTK Program is delighted to welcome Professor Kenji Yoshino as its interim Faculty Director.

Yoshino is the Chief Justice Earl Warren Professor of Constitutional Law at the

Law School. Prior to coming to NYU, he was the inaugural Guido Calabresi Professor of Law and Deputy Dean of Intellectual Life at Yale Law School, where he taught from 1998 to 2008. He received his undergraduate degree from Harvard College, took a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University, and earned his law degree at Yale Law School. A specialist in constitutional law, antidiscrimination law, and law and literature, Yoshino has published in major academic journals, such as *The Columbia Law Review*, *The Stanford Law Review*, and *The Yale Law Journal*. His award-winning book, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* (Random House 2006) has been chosen as the "first-year book" (the book read by incoming students as part of their orientation experience) by Pomona College, University of North Carolina, University of Richmond, and Virginia Commonwealth University.

He has also written extensively in other popular venues, such as *The L.A. Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*. He is currently working on a book titled *Justice in Shakespeare* to be published by Ecco Press in 2010.

Deb Ellis, RTK Program Director, stated, "I'm grateful to Kenji for his energetic leadership during this year. He has quickly become integral to the Program and a wonderful mentor to the scholars." ■



us has had a different climb with unique struggles, courses, tests, choices—but all of us have reached the top of the tower. We are sitting in this theatre, in this wonderful city, enjoying the view.

In my climb up the ladder, I learned a lot about myself as well as the world around me. I was the first person in my family to pursue a professional degree and the fear, excitement, and hopes that came with that, at times, felt heavy. With each step higher, I learned more about myself, what I was able to accomplish, what I could take, and gained more strength and knowledge.

Along the way up, I was also able to watch as things around me on the ground, some of which I may have taken for granted, changed. Words and ideas in the law lost meaning, as we struggled to feel safe from terror; the financial system we trusted to provide us with work fell weak in the knees; but we also witnessed a historic, and in my opinion, hope-renewing election. We are now looking out into the world as it is, and not how it was.

But just as the world is different from when we began our climb, so, too, are we. To me, the beautiful thing about our new degrees is that we are looking out into the world, and can plot the direction we want to walk. All around us is field, and we have agency and power to go out into it.

In thinking about this question, and particularly how to address it in this speech, I was reminded that smarter and more creative people than me have spoken on occasions like this in the past. David Foster Wallace, one of America's greatest writers, who we lost last year, spoke to Kenyon College's graduating class of 2005. He opened his speech with a simple parable: there are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to pass an older fish swimming in the opposite direction. As they pass, the older fish says, "Morning boys, how's the water?" The two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and says, "what's water?"

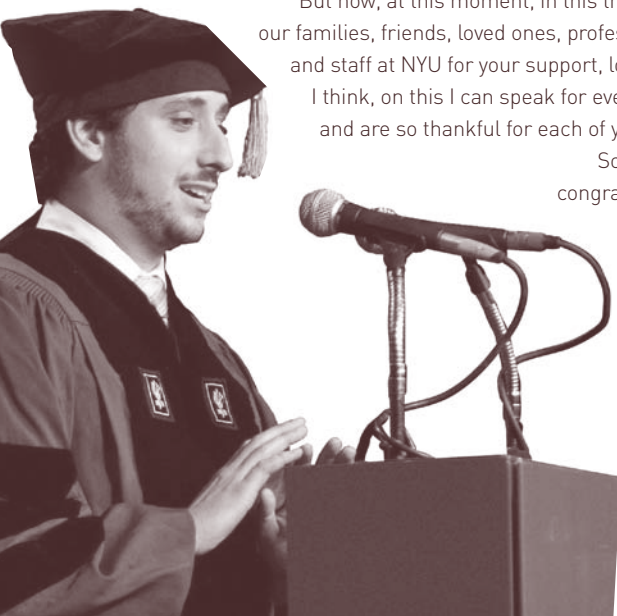
...We are looking out into the world, and can plot the direction we want to walk.

Wallace's point in telling this story was twofold: first, that the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about, and, second, learning how to think really means exercising some control over how and what you think about. Wallace goes on to talk about our day-to-day lives, be it sitting in a crowded subway car, waiting in traffic, and says those moments—the minutia of life—is the water. And that we can choose to look for the good in those moments and focus on the joy—to embrace "the water" instead of succumbing to feeling negative about modern life, or our chosen profession, or our path, our choices, the field.

My goal, for myself, and my hope for each of you, is that more than finding success—which I am certain everyone here will do and already has done—is that we will all find happiness. That, as we swim through the water, walk through the field, that we have love and joy in our lives or, at the very least, that we try to recognize all the good that surrounds us, "the water," instead of focusing on the bad.

But now, at this moment, in this theatre, on this day, I want to thank our families, friends, loved ones, professors, and the entire community and staff at NYU for your support, love, and dedication to each of us. I think, on this I can speak for everyone, when I say we love you and are so thankful for each of you.

So, counselors, Class of 2009, congratulations to each of you. As I listen to those 1,000 names being called, and as each of you walk across this stage, I will be thinking about all the great memories I have from climbing the ladder with each of you, and I plan to think, "This is water, this is water." Thank you, I wish us all so much more than luck. ■



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Root-Tilden-Kern Alumni/ae,

This has been a year of transitions: for our nation, for our students, and for the program. The historic inauguration of President Obama last January has reverberated in our RTK community. As you'll see on page 3, two of our 2009 graduates are beginning their careers in highly-coveted federal honors programs, and the Class Notes include several alumni who have been appointed to high level positions within the Administration.

We are pleased to report that despite the challenging economy, our graduates fared well in obtaining prestigious public service jobs and fellowships. We are especially pleased that this year 100% of our RTK graduates are working in a public interest job or a judicial clerkship.

In program transitions, Faculty Director Meg Satterthwaite became a proud mother of twin boys in July. While Meg and her family spend the year in Washington, D.C., Professor Kenji Yoshino graciously agreed to be our interim Faculty Director for 2009-10. (For more details, see page 1). Warm congratulations to Meg and deep appreciation to Kenji!

Reflecting on RTK transitions, this year also marks the 40th anniversary of women as RTK scholars. In fall 1969, three women became scholars: Barbara Burnett, Erica Steinberger McLean, and Mary Morgan. It is hard to believe today – when over half of our Scholars are women – that there was strong opposition to including women in the program. On behalf of all of us women RTK graduates, we salute the women alumni (Susan Deller Ross, Janet Goodman) who worked so hard to change the policy.

On the gratitude front, we are grateful to all of you who have invested in the next generation of RTK scholars by contributing to the program during the past year. In my opinion, there is no better way to express gratitude for the gift of our scholarships than to continue the cycle of giving.

During this difficult economic time, your support is needed more than ever. As the Law School's Capital Campaign draws to a close in spring 2010, we are still trying to achieve a higher annual participation rate. Our goal is to have a 75% giving rate for each Root class. To that end, this year we have calculated the percentage of giving for each class in the Honor Roll that appears at the end of the Newsletter. The classes that lead with 70% or greater participation are: 1956, 1965, 1974, 1984, and 2009. If your name is not on our honor roll of donors, won't you please consider a gift and increasing your class's participation rate? Online giving is easy by going to www.law.nyu.edu/giving.

We wish you all the best for a healthy and happy New Year.

Deb Ellis

Deb

Awards at Convocation

THE THEATER AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, MAY 15, 2009

FOR SERVICE TO THE LAW SCHOOL

Vanderbilt Medals "for outstanding contribution to the School of Law" to

Shanti W. Hubbard

Anna G. Purinton

Dorothy L. Smith

SUBJECT AREA AWARDS

Black, Latino, Asian Pacific American Law Alumni Association (BLAPA) Award for Clinical Service to **Shanti W. Hubbard**

Black, Latino, Asian Pacific American Law Alumni Association (BLAPA) Public Service Graduation Prize "for commitment to a career in Public Interest Law" to **Gabriel Diaz**

Hy Frankel Award in Law and Social Welfare "for demonstrated commitment to practice in a public interest setting" to **Katherine M. Mastman**

Ann Petluck Poses Memorial Prize "designated by the Dean in recognition of outstanding work in a clinical course requiring student practice" to **Edget Betru**

Katherine L. Evans

Ian Marcus Amelkin

Anna G. Purinton

Flora S. and Jacob L. Newman Prize "for the greatest contribution by a third-year editor to the Review of Law and Social Change" to **Anna G. Purinton**

Flora S. and Jacob L. Newman Prize "to the graduating student who has written the most outstanding note for the Review of Law and Social Change" to **Katherine L. Evans**

Class of 2009 Employment Destinations

We are proud to announce that 100% of the Class of 2009 is employed in a public interest job or a judicial clerkship!

Elizabeth Bakale-Wise

Capital Post Conviction Project of Louisiana, New Orleans, LA

Edget Betru

Equal Justice Works Fellowship, Immigrant Children Advocacy Project of Catholic Charities, Atlanta, GA

Anjali Bhargava

Santa Clara County Counsel, Impact Litigation and Social Justice Fellowship, San Jose, CA

Russell Crane

New York Legal Aid Society, Civil Re-entry Project, Bronx, New York

Gabriel Diaz

Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, Washington, D.C.

Katherine Evans

Judge Harriet Lansing, Minnesota Court of Appeals, St. Paul, MN
Judge Thomas Kalitowski, Minnesota Court of Appeals, St. Paul, MN (2010 term)
Judge Diana Murphy, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, Minneapolis, MN (2011 term)

Seth Gurgel

NYU School of Law U.S.-Asia Law Institute, Shanghai, China

Shanti Hubbard

Prettyman Fellowship, Georgetown University Law Center, Washington, D.C.

Sara Johnson

Judge Mary M. Schroeder, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, Phoenix, AZ

Ian Marcus Amelkin

Judge Myron H. Thompson, U.S. District Court, Middle District of Alabama, Montgomery, AL
Judge Chester J. Straub, U. S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, New York, NY (2010 term)

Katherine Mastman

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Solicitor General Honors Program, Washington, D.C.

Margarita O'Donnell

Judge Louis Pollak, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
Judge Julio M. Fuentes, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, Newark, NJ (2010 term)

Anna Purinton

Relman & Dane Civil Rights Fellowship, Relman & Dane, Washington, D.C.

Dorothy Smith

CLASP, Washington, D.C.

Sirithon Thanasombat

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Attorney Honors Program, Los Angeles, CA

Jerrold Thompson-Hicks

Orleans Public Defender, New Orleans, LA

ADDITIONAL FELLOWSHIPS AWARDED IN 2009 TO 2008 ALUMNI

Ryan Downer

Skadden Fellowship, NAACP, New York, NY

Sonia Lin

Ottun & Golden Employment Law Fellowship, New York, NY



Announcing Enhanced Alumni Online Directory

The Law School is excited to announce the anticipated fall launch of an enhanced online alumni directory. The new directory will include updated and user-editable alumni user profiles (with image and video posting capabilities) as well as the ability to create, join and share in groups. All currently existing features will be retained, including the current search option where graduates can search the alumni database by participation in certain student programs such as the RTK scholarship, as well as by standard search criteria (name, degree, employer, region, etc.). As with our current directory, the new directory will be password-protected and only accessible to Law School graduates who have authenticated their alumni status.

Please note that you will be identified as an RTK graduate in the directory unless you request to be excluded. If you do not want to be included, please send an email to the Alumni Relations Office at law.alumni@nyu.edu no later than January 31, 2010.

In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), NYU School of Law is required to notify alumni prior to disclosing information related to their participation in activities, groups, or scholarship programs as students. If you would like more information on FERPA, please contact the Office of Academic Program Review at 212.998.2310. ■

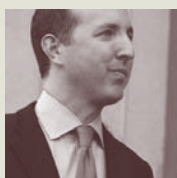
Leaders in Public Interest Series 2008–09

The Public Interest Law Center's Leaders in Public Interest Series welcomed four alumni of the Root-Tilden-Kern program this past year. The speakers discussed subjects ranging from achieving work-life balance to the future of national security law.



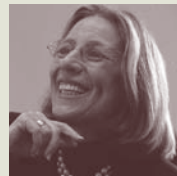
Jim Marston RTK '78,
Regional Director of
the Texas Office of the
Environmental Defense
Fund, advocated for
the implementation of

a cap-and-trade system as a way to solve global warming and improve the nation's economy. Explaining the finer details of several proposed cap-and-trade systems, Marston argued that these systems promise to provide the incentive American companies need to make the shift toward a greener lifestyle. Marston responded to concerns that India and China are absent from international environmental agreements like the Kyoto Protocol by pointing out that the U.S. and other more developed countries initiated this problem.



Ben Wizner RTK '00,
staff attorney for the
American Civil Liberties
Union, discussed
the challenges of
endeavoring to protect

civil liberties in the post-9/11 era. "So far, every single case that's been brought by a torture victim seeking to hold US officials accountable for widespread torture policies, every single one of those cases has been dismissed at the outset without any adjudication of either the facts or the law." Looking toward the future, he applauded President Obama's executive orders ending torture, shutting down the CIA's prisons, and requiring the closing of Guantanamo. He urged Obama, though, to confront the mistakes of the past in order to "change the architecture of immunity and secrecy that's been used to shield all of these abuses from oversight and accountability." Otherwise, Wizner warned, "there will be nothing to prevent a future administration from repeating these same mistakes."



Geri Palast RTK '76,
Executive Director
of the Campaign for
Fiscal Equity (CFE),
spoke about making
the right to a sound

basic education a reality for New York City public school students. The CFE won a landmark lawsuit against New York arguing that it underfunded the New York City public school system, violating students' constitutional right to a sound basic education. Years of appeals, however, made implementing the landmark decision a challenge. In 2006, the Court of Appeals of New York finally ordered the state to provide \$2 billion annually to New York City public schools. Palast spoke about transforming CFE into a watchdog group to ensure that these important education reforms are implemented.

Two graduates who are married, Joanne Lin RTK '97, Legislative Counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, and Gregory Chen '97, Director for Legislative Affairs for the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, delivered a candid lecture, titled "Advancing Immigrants' Rights in the Post 9/11 World (While Raising Kids on Two Public Interest Salaries)." Lin and Chen discussed the challenges of trying to balance their careers with life's other commitments. Although Lin and Chen approached the topic of work-family balance from very personal perspectives, they came together to speak about their career passion—the fight for comprehensive and humane immigration reform. ■

Root-Tilden-Kern and D'Agostino Class of 2012

Valerie Brender

COBEN SCHOLAR



Valerie graduated *magna cum laude* in Economics from Wake Forest University in 2006, where she was awarded the Richter

Scholarship to study microfinance in Benin and the Creativity and Innovation Fund Grant to develop an after-school enrichment program for low-income youth. She also spearheaded the fair labor campaign that eventually led to Wake Forest's affiliation with the Workers' Rights Consortium.

After graduation, Valerie served in Panama with the Peace Corps for two years working with a rural microfinance cooperative to improve their contracts, organization, and technology usage. She also served on the Corps's Gender and Development board where she helped promote sex education and gender rights in local communities. After the Peace Corps, she was awarded a Fulbright Grant to Spain, where she taught in a bilingual public school and worked with a Spanish refugee group, CEAR, on translations and human rights research.

Valerie is excited to pursue human rights law and looks forward to exploring how law can be incorporated into an international development framework. Valerie grew up in Austin, Texas.

Sara Cullinane

WILMERHALE SCHOLAR



For the past two and a half years, Sara has worked as a health care advocate at Make the Road New York, a membership-led

immigrant rights organization, where she coordinated a community-based public health insurance enrollment program,

worked on expanding New York language access services and spearheaded a coalition of New York City small business owners to push for health care reform as part of a national legislative campaign. Previously, she was an organizer with the Service Employees International Union, assisting janitors at major cleaning subcontractor companies to unionize and lay the groundwork for the first city-wide contracts in three Midwestern cities.

Sara is pursuing a law degree to have the opportunity to wrestle with legal problems and their social and political implications and to beef up on important advocacy skills. She plans to return to work that engages low income people as leaders in building political power and creating fair labor practices and public policies.

Sara grew up in the Boston area, attended Newton North High School and received her B.A. with first class departmental honors in History from McGill University. She lives in Brooklyn.

Shannon Cumberbatch

JACOBSON PUBLIC SERVICE SCHOLAR FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Shannon graduated *magna cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa from Spelman College in 2008, where she served a three-year tenure

on the Spelman College Board of Trustees, reined as Miss NAACP, was secretary of the Pre-Law Society, and volunteered on the Essence Cares National Mentoring Initiative Steering Committee and UPS Community Service Scholarship Program.

Her legal journey in public service began the summer following high school when she interned with a law partner at Goldberg Katzman, working on criminal defense cases for young indigent clients.

During college, she interned at the Mayor's Office in the City of Atlanta and the Fulton County Public Defender's Office. Shannon also served as a fellow at the Fulton County Office of Child Advocate Attorneys through the Arthur Liman Public Interest Fellowship from Yale Law School.

Shannon views law as an ideal medium to establish balance on the scales of justice. She is particularly passionate about child-welfare and criminal justice reform and hopes to achieve a system of equality and rehabilitation as a juvenile justice attorney, activist, and judge.

Shannon grew up in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and graduated from the Florida A&M University School of Business & Industry Prep Program at Harrisburg High.

Rachael Dizard



Rachael graduated as a University Scholar from the University of Pittsburgh in December of 2006, where she studied Politics and

Philosophy. As an undergraduate, she studied abroad in Siena, Italy, Beijing, China, and Central America, and interned with the Pittsburgh Chapter of the ACLU and at the University of Chicago Law and Business Schools.

After graduating, Rachael interned at Pittsburgh's oldest affordable housing non-profit, working specifically on a Family Savings Account Program. She then served as a 2007 Summer Fellow with Humanity in Action, studying contemporary minority rights issues in Warsaw, Poland. After investigating an international fraud case with the Government Accountability Project, a D.C.-based non-profit, Rachael returned to Central America as an American Jewish World Service World Partners Fellow. While there, she worked with El Comité Nacional de Mujeres Cooperativistas, a women's community organizing and human rights group based out of San Salvador, El Salvador. After returning, she worked on an affordable housing energy efficiency project based in Pittsburgh.

In her career, Rachael hopes to address quality of life issues for vulnerable populations through law and public policy. Rachael grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the greatest town on Earth.

Talia Gooding-Williams

FILOMEN M. D'AGOSTINO SCHOLAR



Talia graduated from Yale University in 2009 with a double major in English and Ethnicity, Race and Migration. During

her sophomore, junior and senior years, Talia was a director of the Yale chapter of Women and Youth Supporting Each Other, a mentoring organization that works with high risk eighth grade girls. As a director, she wrote curriculum, developed a new mentee recruitment plan and piloted the first ever Future Options Day to encourage girls in the program to consider college. Talia also served as the co-president of Students of Mixed Heritage and Culture at Yale.

Over the summer, Talia worked as a camp counselor for the Youth and Social Justice course at Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development and a community organizer with the Illinois Hunger Coalition in Chicago's Back of the Yards. She won the Trumbull College Education and Research Grant her junior year, allowing her to complete an unpaid Legal Internship working on racial justice issues with the ACLU of Southern California.

A Chicago native and graduate of Evanston Township High School, Talia plans to pursue racial justice and children's rights law with the hope of joining the judiciary some day.

Ashley Grant

FILOMEN M. D'AGOSTINO SCHOLAR



While pursuing her B.A., Ashley worked with special needs individuals in a group therapy clinic and as a director of a campus

organization, Best Buddies UCLA. After graduation, Ashley joined Teach for America and taught a special education program for elementary students with mental retardation in East Los Angeles. During this time she earned her M.A. in special education. After two years with the district, she moved to a charter high school for at-risk youth. There, she worked closely with families and area school districts to provide students with special education services in Compton, Long Beach and South Los

Angeles. Though employed as a teacher, Ashley spent much of her time advocating for families struggling to access appropriate special education services within L.A.'s urban schools. All too often she saw students' rights ignored, services denied, and parents left to wade through frustrating bureaucracies. As she pursues law at NYU, Ashley is excited to continue working with families and districts to improve access to excellent urban special education services.

Ashley grew up in Champaign, Illinois, and attended high school in San Diego, where her family now lives.

Adam Herling

WILLIAM AND MARY STERLING SCHOLAR



Adam grew up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he became addicted, at a very young age, to green chile in all its delicious forms. He

attended the United World College of the Atlantic in Wales for his last two years of high school, and then went on to study with a Davis Scholarship at Princeton University. While at Princeton, Adam served on the Executive Board of the Princeton Justice Project, and tutored Spanish-speaking university employees in English and immigrant rights. He also escaped New Jersey once in a while by studying abroad in Buenos Aires and working over the summers in Peru and Bolivia.

After graduating *cum laude* with an A.B. from Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs in 2007, Adam worked for a year in Kenya and Uganda with the One Acre Fund, an innovative non-profit striving to empower small-scale farmers and end chronic hunger. He returned to the USA to work for the Obama campaign in Florida and decided to celebrate President Obama's election and fulfill a childhood dream by living as a ski bum for the winter in Telluride, Colorado. If he survives law school, Adam plans to pursue a career in human rights law and institution building focused on East Africa and Latin America.

Tyler Jaeckel

STARR FOUNDATION SCHOLAR

Tyler, a 2006 Phi Beta Kappa graduate from Northwestern University, has progressively moved East throughout his life: born in



Colorado, attended school in Chicago, and finally arrived in New York City. While at Northwestern, Tyler led a student

volunteer organization working in neighborhoods throughout Chicago and chaired the Undergraduate Lecture Series on Race, Poverty and Inequality. Politically, Tyler had the great foresight to work on Barack Obama's 2004 Senate campaign and initiated one of the first Campus Camp Wellstone trainings, a grassroots political and social advocacy training for college students.

After graduating, Tyler moved to New York City to work for the Office of Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Under Deputy Mayor Daniel Doctoroff, he worked on the Mayor's Commission for Construction Opportunity, PlaNYC, and several large-scale economic development projects in Brooklyn. After the Mayor's Office, Tyler worked on the Mayor's anti-poverty programs at the Department of Small Business Services.

Tyler will continue his work in community development at NYU, whether through litigation on issues related to housing and land use or through the creation and implementation of productive public policies.

Austin King



Austin, a Wisconsin native, graduated from UW-Madison in 2003. While in school, Austin became an activist and organizer, principally

around issues of economic justice and sexual assault on campus. As a senior, he won a six-way race to serve on the Madison City Council.

Austin authored and passed a minimum wage of \$7.75 indexed to inflation, the nation's fourth municipal minimum wage. At 24, he was elected Council President by his colleagues, the youngest in city history. In his four years in office, Austin authored numerous progressive policies on affordable housing, tenants' rights, environmental protection, immigrant rights, and the nation's first effort at guaranteeing a universal labor standard of paid sick days, which narrowly failed but inspired successful campaigns across the country.

Austin left Madison after his second term in 2007 and moved to New Orleans, where he served as national director of the ACORN Financial Justice Center, the policy hub for ACORN's campaigns on predatory lending, the foreclosure crisis, payday loans, refund anticipation loans, and other practices that sap wealth from low-income communities. Austin is pursuing a concurrent MPP from the Kennedy School of Government, and plans to use his legal education for social and economic justice advocacy.

Philip Kovoov

FILOMEN M. D'AGOSTINO SCHOLAR



Philip graduated from the University of Chicago in 2007 with a degree in Philosophy. For his academic excellence and extracurricular leadership, he was inducted into the Maroon Key Society, the College's honorary society. Philip served for three years as a student director at the University Community Service Center, marshalling students in service of the surrounding community. He spent the summer of 2005 in Nepal where he co-authored a white paper on environmentally friendly, culturally appreciative, and economically sustainable approaches to community development. In 2006, he worked in Mayor Richard M. Daley's Office, researching and designing policy initiatives for the City of Chicago.

After graduating, Philip founded National Coaching Fellows, a nonprofit committed to closing the educational achievement gap through athletics. Since then, he has recruited and trained the nation's most promising undergraduate and graduate students to coach athletics in high-needs schools across Chicago.

Philip was born in Rye, New York, and raised in Warren, Ohio. After law school, he plans to work on behalf of disadvantaged children by confronting gang violence and promoting educational reform.

Frances Kreimer



Frances grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Before beginning at Columbia University, she worked for a year with Windows,

a Palestinian and Israeli community center. In college, she focused on related issues of non-citizen rights, working with Rabbis for Human Rights in Jerusalem and Mizan Law Group for Human Rights in Amman, as well as the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a B.A. in Human Rights and Middle Eastern and Asian Languages and Cultures.

After college, Frances received a fellowship to do immigrant and refugee advocacy. At Africa and Middle East Refugee Assistance in Cairo, Frances counseled and represented asylum seekers, facilitated legal clinics, and learned to like very sweet tea. At New Immigrant Community Empowerment in Jackson Heights, Frances organized an activist committee of adult ESOL students, collaborated with local immigrant rights coalitions, and learned to deal with a malfunctioning printer. Frances has drawn on various combinations of these experiences in subsequent positions, including policy research for the Migrant Rights Network in London and teaching rights-based ESOL classes at the Irish Immigration Center in Boston. She is looking forward to bringing legal skills to her future advocacy with immigrant rights organizations.

Zachary Orjuela

LINDEMANN FAMILY PUBLIC SERVICE SCHOLAR



Zack graduated in 2006 from Williams College, where he majored in Economics and Political Science, was an NCAA All-American swimmer, and the captain of the water polo team. After graduating, he moved to New Orleans to work with the Capital Appeals Project (CAP), which appeals the convictions of death-sentenced Louisiana citizens. He interviewed capital jurors, conducted media research, and supported the attorneys in filing direct appeals.

In 2008, Zack began supervising the client needs for both CAP and a trial office, the Louisiana Capital Assistance Center. He made frequent trips to the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, the Orleans Parish Prison, and other institutions to maintain strong attorney-client relation-

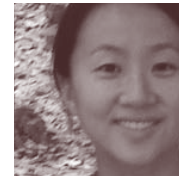
ships and to challenge problematic conditions of confinement.

Zack aspires to serve urban populations as a public defender. Through vigorous representation, he will join a growing movement committed to advocating for prisoners' rights, instilling confidence in the justice system, and promoting safer communities.

Zack was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and encourages everyone traveling that way to sample the pure bliss of Skyline Chili.

Saerom Park

SULLIVAN & CROMWELL SCHOLAR



Graduating from Williams College in 2004 with a degree in American Studies and an enduring love of New England's natural splendor, Saerom has spent much of the last five years organizing around environmental and labor issues.

She first became a grassroots organizer on the road with Green Corps, working in local communities on environmental battles across the country—with much stress and little sleep. Dropping roots in Washington, D.C., she went to work at Public Citizen, in its Global Trade Watch division, where she helped push for stronger labor and environmental protections, and more accountability, in trade agreements. In 2008, she joined the labor movement, working for Change to Win's electoral program, where she worked on get-out-the-vote efforts focused on union families. She will not soon forget the final days of the campaign which she spent knocking on doors in Charlotte, North Carolina. After the elections, she organized Wal-Mart workers for the United Food and Commercial Workers.

Saerom was born in Korea and raised in Queens. A graduate of Hunter College High School, she is thrilled to return to the city for a legal education and to take her fight for social justice to the next level.

Nikki Reisch



Nikki graduated Phi Beta Kappa, *summa cum laude* from Yale University in 1999.

She has spent the last decade working on human rights and environmental issues

in international development and global economic policy, through direct service, analysis, advocacy, and activism. Between 1999 and 2002, Nikki was a health sector volunteer with the Peace Corps in Senegal. Once back in Northern California, where she grew up, Nikki worked as a medical assistant at a clinic serving low income and uninsured patients. Then, for five years, Nikki managed the Africa program of the Bank Information Center, a Washington DC-based organization that works to democratize development decision-making, protect human rights and ensure accountability in the operations of the World Bank and other international financial institutions. Nikki moved to London in 2008 to become the Policy Advisor on forests and climate change at Rainforest Foundation UK, focusing on the implications of global climate policy for forests and forests peoples, particularly in Central Africa.

As an RTK and IILJ scholar, Nikki hopes to strengthen and diversify the tools she can bring to the struggle for justice in the global economy. She is particularly interested in international and environmental law, human rights, and corporate accountability.

Martha Roberts

ANDREW J. MELLON SCHOLAR



Martha worked for the Colorado office of Environmental Defense Fund between 2006 and 2009. Her work supported policies

to combat climate change, protect clean air and maintain healthy ecosystems. In particular, Martha evaluated the economic case for clean energy and action to address climate change in the West; assessed the environmental impacts of biofuels production in the Great Plains; and pressed for improved disclosure of corporate risks from climate change.

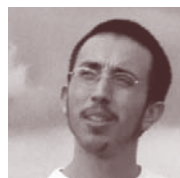
Martha received B.S. and M.S. degrees from Stanford University in Earth Systems, graduating in 2004 and 2006 respectively. Martha was a co-founder and co-coordinator of Students for a Sustainable Stanford, a campaign to improve campus resource and energy-efficiency. Martha was awarded the Whitley Citizen Scholar Award for her efforts to “bring a sharper focus on issues

of the environment and sustainability to the Stanford campus.”

In 2004-05, Martha spent a year at An Giang University in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam as a Luce Scholar. At An Giang, she helped lead the promotion and implementation of wastewater treatment using constructed wetlands.

Martha plans to focus on protecting human health and well-being from environmental pollution in her career and will study environmental law at NYU. Martha grew up in New York City.

Camilo Romero



Camilo works on human rights litigation and organizing as the International Affairs Officer for the Sindicato Nacional

de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos (SINALTRAINAL) in Colombia and International Rights Advocates in Washington D.C. In 2007, Camilo co-founded BlackBrown Projects LLC, which is committed to bridging the black-brown divide among African-American and Latino communities through mentorship and leadership curricula, including electoral education through Latinos For Obama. Camilo serves on the Board of Directors for Resource Generation and is an adviser to the California Department of Correction’s basketball outreach program through United Students Against Sweatshops. Camilo graduated from UC Berkeley in 2004. He lives in New York and has two younger sisters.

Law school is an unexpected step towards ensuring that his family’s story is not the fortunate exception. He intends to continue organizing with the tools and resources a degree from NYU Law will bring.

Shawn Sebastian

DORIS C. AND ALAN J. FREEDMAN SCHOLAR



Shawn grew up in Ames, Iowa, and went on to major in English and Religious Studies at the University of Iowa, where he received

the university’s Presidential Scholarship. From 2005 to 2007 he worked with the Best Practices Foundation in Bangalore, India, a non-profit that partners with community

organizations to research and evaluate development interventions throughout India. As part of his research, Shawn has written a manual for grassroots community organizers on how to teach illiterate, landless, rural women in India how to understand local markets and start their own businesses.

From 2008 to 2009 Shawn worked as the Associate Director of Development for Esperanza Community Housing Corporation in South Central Los Angeles. At Esperanza, Shawn took on leadership roles in community-based campaigns with low-income residents of South Los Angeles, advocating for inclusive development during public planning processes. Shawn hopes law school will prepare him to continue working for economic justice for marginalized people.

Amanda Sen

SINSHEIMER SERVICE SCHOLAR



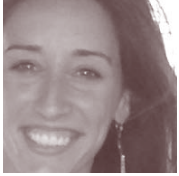
Amanda is delighted to be attending NYU Law School. For the past three years, she has been teaching at The Children’s Storefront,

an independent, tuition free school in Harlem. Her decision to leave her teaching career for law school was a difficult one, but the wonderful people involved in the Root-Tilden-Kern scholarship program made NYU an easy choice. She is looking forward to learning alongside and from people who are committed to improving the world around them.

Amanda grew up in a small town in Minnesota, attended Wellesley College and Washington University in St. Louis, graduating *magna cum laude* with a major in history. She earned a teaching certificate and a master’s degree in education from Washington University, moved to New York, and went to work in Harlem as a learning specialist.

As a learning specialist, Amanda worked with students receiving special education services from the city. Her experiences with New York’s Committee on Special Education and with the foster care system have led her to want to become a lawyer so she can represent families floundering in bureaucracy and hopefully change the system for the better.

Elizabeth Spector



Elizabeth graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Pennsylvania in 2005, where she majored in Urban Studies, earning a departmental award for Best Senior Thesis on the demolition of a public housing project in Philadelphia. She led a mentoring program at University City High School, called Girl Talk, and founded a writing program at Turner Middle School in Southwest Philadelphia.

After graduating, Elizabeth worked with Teach for America at P.S. 70, an elementary school in the South Bronx. She taught third and fourth grade for four years and served as the school's cheerleading and gymnastics coach. During summers, Elizabeth was a summer school principal at P.S. 86, also in the Bronx, as part of Teach for America's summer training institute.

Elizabeth has entered NYU Law School in hopes of continuing to serve and represent the needs of schools and students in underperforming school districts across the country. Delighted to be staying in New York, she would also like to drop in on her students' cheerleading practice every now and again.

Elizabeth grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and attended Friends Central School. ■

Spread the Word!

If you know any promising law school candidates who are committed to a career in public service law, send them our way by referring them to our page at www.law.nyu.edu/admissions/jdadmissions/scholarships/publicinterest/index.htm. The Root-Tilden-Kern Scholarship Program now provides full tuition scholarships to twenty incoming law students each year.

SCHOLARSHIP RECEPTION



Karen Freedman '80, Executive Director of Lawyers for Children spoke on Tuesday, November 16, at the Law School's annual Scholarship Reception. Twenty-five years ago, Karen founded Lawyers for Children, the first non-profit organization to

provide legal services to children in New York City's foster care system. In 2003, Karen and her sisters, Nina and Susan, established the Doris C. and Alan J. Freedman Scholarship within the Root-Tilden-Kern Scholarship Program in honor of their parents. Lindemann Family Public Service Scholar, Carmen Iguina '10, thanked the donors on behalf of all scholarship recipients for their generosity, highlighting that their gifts assist not only individual students, but also the clients they serve.



2L Sleepover!

The class of 2011 gathered at Director Deb Ellis's house in Montclair, NJ, for an overnight retreat in September. The scholars shared stories of their summer internships, sang karaoke, cooked delicious meals, and reconnected after the summer apart.

Class of 2011 Summer Jobs

This summer, the Class of 2011 worked on a variety of issues, from tax policy to refugee rights, juvenile justice to housing policy and rights. Thirteen students worked within the United States and seven worked with organizations abroad. Below, the RTK Class of 2011 share how they spent their time and how their experiences informed their public interest law careers.

Elizabeth Ashamu collaborated with KUSH International to conduct field research into South Sudan's developing forest laws and policies. She spent time in the contested region of Abyei on the border between Northern and Southern Sudan, where she learned about Dinka customary law regarding the protection of trees as well as the role of trees in border tensions. She also ventured into the Imatong mountains of Eastern Equatoria State, where she interviewed local communities about their sentiments regarding the post civil war status of forest reserves gazetted as government property under British colonialism. Her digital voice recorder collected hundreds of hours of interviews with ministers, supreme court justices, traditional chiefs, foresters, civil society representatives, business people, community members, and one rain queen. She loved having an excuse to wander into offices, explore as she pleased, and ask infinite questions!



Elizabeth Ashamu at
KUSH International in South Sudan

Betty Baez worked at the Door's Legal Services in New York City, a social services agency for young people 12 to 21. Betty spent her summer learning more about immigration law, family law, and a variety of issues that affect young people. She conducted interviews, wrote letters to



Noam Biale in Amman, Jordan

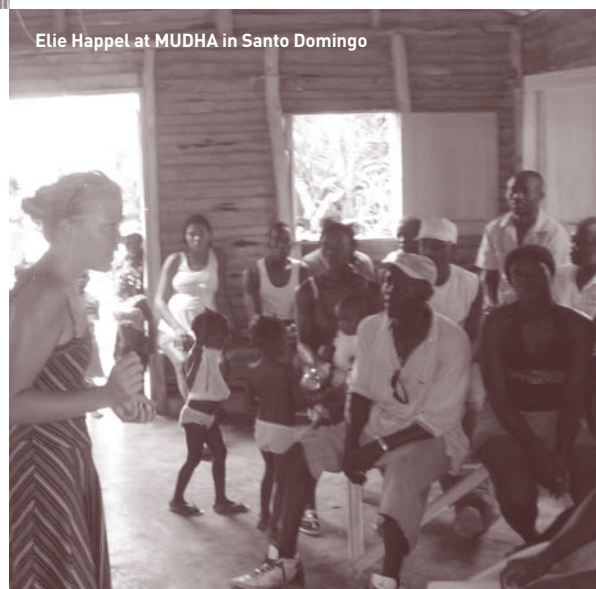
obtain services for young people, worked on immigration documents, and represented clients in family court. Betty also helped plan a dynamic "Know your Rights" curriculum for an eight week summer program. She met some amazing and inspirational young people and wants to continue providing legal services for youth in the future.

Noam Biale spent the summer in Amman, Jordan, working for the Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), a joint student organization of NYU, Yale and Berkeley Law Schools. He helped Iraqi refugees navigate the resettlement process, represented them in appeals, and matched his clients with local service NGOs to address their needs while in Jordan. He

also helped develop a curriculum for training Jordanian law students in refugee assistance work and did comparative research on the Iraqi refugee crisis in Syria. Noam learned that working on human rights issues from the perspective of client-based advocacy is more challenging, as well as more rewarding, than abstract policy, that our ethical obligations extend beyond the artificial boundaries of the modern nation-state, and that Iraqis make the best fish.

Daniel Bowes worked in the Special Litigation Section of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, which vindicates the civil rights of institutionalized persons, individuals seeking the services of abortion clinics, and those abused by police departments. Daniel conducted on-site investigations of a juvenile facility in Indiana and a nursing home in South Carolina, authored various legal memos (including one for the Deputy Chief exploring the potential effects of the Supreme Court's decision in *Ashcroft v. Iqbal* on the Section's pleadings), and did just enough cataloging and document review to keep him humble.

Danielle Escontrias worked for Mental Health Advocacy Services in Los Angeles, California. MHAS works to protect and advance the rights of people with Mental Disabilities. Danielle worked with attorneys who advocated on behalf of



Elie Happel at MUDHA in Santo Domingo

those with mental disabilities in the areas of immigration, education, and housing. Besides research and writing skills, this internship gave Danielle the much needed opportunity to interact with clients and develop important attorney /client relationship skills.

Anurag Gupta spent the summer with International Women's Rights Action Watch—Asia Pacific (IWRAP), in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and New York. He worked on IWRAP's global strategy to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and wrote research reports on legal status of women. He also participated in IWRAP's Global to Local Program, a unique two-week training program that prepares NGO participants from reporting countries to make convincing pleas to CEDAW committee members at CEDAW review sessions. He learned about



Linnea Nelson at
Make the Road in NYC

international human rights conventions' review process, avenues of advocacy, and means for demanding change.

Ellie Happel worked in Santo Domingo with MUDHA, *Movement of Dominican Women of Haitian Descent*, through the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights (RFK Center). Ellie reorganized cases of individuals wrongly denied Dominican identity documents and traveled to the bateys to teach know-your-rights workshops. She also helped coordinate the visit of Kerry Kennedy, RFK Center founder, and accompanied the RFK delegation in meetings with Dominican authorities. Ellie's week with a partner NGO in Haiti helped her

appreciate the complexity of Dominican-Haitian relations. Ellie continues to study Haitian Kreyol, and hopes to return to the island of Hispanola soon.

Eduardo Jansen worked at the World Bank Brasilia office learning about and exploring opportunities for infrastructure finance in Brazil and Latin America. At the World Bank, he participated in the development of Brazil's first urban concession, helped in the development of an irrigation public-private partnership



pilot project, and assisted in the final development phase of a sanitary waste disposal public-private partnership pilot project. Eduardo worked with and learned from dedicated professionals working in a supportive multi-cultural and polyglot environment. After a great summer experience, Eduardo plans to pursue a career working on infrastructure development.

Stephen Kang spent the summer at the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) in Berkeley, representing tenants in eviction proceedings, negotiating settlements with landlords, and counseling tenants on their housing rights. Stephen witnessed the effect of the foreclosure crisis on the most low-income people in California, since EBCLC is on the forefront of defending tenants in foreclosed properties. To his surprise, he also learned that he very much enjoys litigation.

Liz Kilstein worked for the Howard University School of Law Civil Rights Clinic in Washington, D.C. Liz worked on a case about de facto segregation in Maryland public higher education and gathered evidence for an upcoming discrimination suit. Intake with potential plaintiffs led to investigations into prosecutorial immunity and discrimination at a private high school. She also drafted an amicus brief for the

U.S. Supreme Court. Liz learned that civil rights litigation is not for sissies and that corporate partnerships can be a blessing. Along the way, she got a taste of the culture of Maryland's and DC's Historically Black Institutions, and she met some remarkable educators and advocates.

Marne Lenox split her summer between the Criminal Defense Practice and the Civil Action Project at the Bronx Defenders. Marne wrote memos on security guard licensing for ex-offenders and juvenile delinquency adjudications. She also wrote facial insufficiency motions and worked with clients to correct rap sheet errors and seal convictions. In addition, Marne sat in on pre-arraignment interviews and represented a client at an administrative hearing. She also did intake for community members, fielding questions and providing referrals. The Bronx Defenders' exceptional approach to client advocacy continues to inspire Marne, who has learned the collateral consequences of a criminal charge are often more injurious than the criminal case itself.

Ruben Loyo worked for the Legislative Affairs Office of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) in Washington, D.C. He worked on LIRS's advocacy efforts related to immigration detention reform and helped the organization create and launch a grassroots campaign in support of comprehensive immigration reform and the organization's other legislative priorities. Ruben gained many insights into the legislative process, but more importantly learned about the consequences of years of legislative inaction for some of the country's most vulnerable populations.

Julie Mao worked at the UN High Commission for Refugees in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Julie interviewed asylum seekers from Myanmar and Cameroon, determining their refugee status and translated for Mandarin speakers. Julie participated in "mobile interviews," interviewing people in a non-air conditioned church hall across from a cow pasture. Julie learned some Malaysian language, looked forward to waking up each morning to the call of prayer and eating roti canai for breakfast. She loved the non-existent seasons (all summer all the time), and the direct service work.

Linnea Nelson spent her summer at Make the Road New York, a grassroots community organization in Bushwick, Brooklyn. Among other things, she attended several member-activist meetings, which were like a balm to the soul after finishing her first year of law school. She also worked on policy initiatives aimed at improving enforcement of labor laws, mandating interpretation in state agencies and chain pharmacies for people with limited English proficiency, and providing paid sick days to all workers. She learned about how these policies affect the immigrant community in NYC.

Meagan Powers worked in the General Counsel's office of Project Renewal, Inc., providing housing and services to homeless New Yorkers with persistent mental illness and/or addiction to drugs and alcohol. She learned a great deal about the wide variety of legal issues that can arise at a non-profit organization on everything from housing court proceedings to corporate governance to motion practice in New York City Civil Court. She also had the wonderful opportunity to tour all of Project Renewal's facilities and meet with its passionate and hard working staff.

Erin Scharff worked for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, one of the nation's premier policy organizations working on fiscal policy and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income families and individuals. As the Center's tax intern, she worked on a variety of current issues with tax implications ranging from health care reform to the estate tax. She learned a tremendous amount both about tax policy and the legislative process from the Center's amazing and brilliant policy staff.

Emerson J. Sykes worked for Search for Common Ground, an international NGO, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. He worked on SFCG's programming with the Congolese army that aims to raise soldiers' awareness of human rights issues, decrease impunity for human rights abuses committed by the military and repair military-civilian relations. Emerson came away with a deeper understanding of one of the world's most vexing conflicts and he has been re-inspired to work on rule of law issues in Africa.

LT Tierney worked at the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana (JJPL) in New Orleans. She was drawn to JJPL's "campaign-based" work, in which community organizing, litigation, and policy advocacy all form components of a strategy for change. She helped JJPL prepare for settlement negotiations in a class action lawsuit over conditions of confinement at a pre-trial detention center for youth. She regularly visited JJPL's clients at the facility and made frequent trips to the legislature in Baton Rouge. Most valuably, LT learned about JJPL's organizational model, which prioritizes building power in the communities most affected by the juvenile justice system.

Kosha Tucker worked for the Southern Center for Human Rights (SCHR) in Atlanta. Kosha mostly worked with the civil litigation team, where she assisted attorneys with a juvenile bail case, interviewed prisoners about their experiences at prisons and jails in Alabama and south Georgia, and edited briefs and white papers for important cases. From her work at SCHR, Kosha gained many valuable practical skills: she drafted her first motions and learned to interact effectively with real clients.

Mark Weiner worked at the Federal Defenders of New York, Eastern District. He spent much of his time meeting directly with clients, writing motions for their cases, and working with the defenders in court. He also directly represented clients on Petty Offense Days throughout the summer. The cases and their respective motions Mark worked on were incredibly diverse—from drug courier cases to terrorism allegations. He was inspired by the fierce dedication and compassion the Defenders gave to their clients no matter the circumstances, and wants to continue the fight for clients' rights. ■

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Law Review

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Tess Bridgeman '10

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Noam Biale '11

Anurag Gupta '11

Ellie Happel '11

Liz Kilstein '11

Ruben Loyo '11

Julie Mao '11

LT Tierney '11



Orientation Class of 2012

On August 17-18, the Root-Tilden-Kern and Filomen M. D'Agostino Class of 2012 met for the first time as a group and traveled with Director Deb Ellis '82, Interim Faculty Director Kenji Yoshino, and Program Administrator Letizia La Rosa to the Princeton-Blairstown Center in Blairstown, New Jersey.

The Princeton-Blairstown Center is a year-round camp that provides adventure-based experiential education programming to at risk urban youth. Braving the hot weather, the group went on a hike and conquered a rope bridge, learned to juggle, and participated in group discussions about "The Pressure to Cover" and "Law School Without Fear." On Monday evening, Scholars sat around a campfire by the lake and placed items in the Class of 2012 time capsule, which they will open at the end of their law school years.



Deans' Cup

On April 2, in a hard-fought basketball game that came down to the wire, NYU Law students edged out Columbia Law on its home turf, scoring a narrow 56-53 victory. The Deans' Cup, the annual co-ed basketball game played between students at the two law schools, is the largest student-run law school event in the country. Proceeds from the game supports public interest law programs at both NYU and Columbia. RTK Scholar Rebecca Talbott '10, shown here with the coveted trophy, scored the game's final winning points!

Alumni Working in Foreclosure and Consumer Issues

Each year we profile several alumni working in a specific area. This year, in light of the depressed economy and the housing crisis, we have decided to highlight the important work some of our alumni are doing on foreclosure and consumer issues all across the country.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION OF
METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

Nicki Bazer '01



Nicki Bazer is a civil legal aid attorney at the Housing Law Project of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan

Chicago (LAF). Bazer does a host of legal work around housing issues on behalf of low-income families living in Chicago, including assisting attorneys working from neighborhood legal aid offices on their individual, direct services cases, negotiating policy with the Housing Authority, and working on eviction court reform.

Bazer started her practice as a general civil legal aid attorney, doing some of everything: housing, domestic violence, family law, public benefits, unemployment, and more. She decided to focus on housing issues full-time because housing work particularly appealed to her intellectually. Federal, state and local legal issues all intersect, and she remains engaged in a mix of direct client services, policy work, community work with tenant associations, and litigation. She is currently co-counseling a case involving forty-five evictions in a subsidized housing building. One particularly significant success for Bazer was helping a tenant leader at a public housing building communicate with the Housing Authority to get a promised computer lab on site. Now tenants take computer classes there and kids have a place to do their school work.

The national housing foreclosure crisis has had a big impact in Cook County, too.

Bazer noted that it's not just homeowners, who have received most of the media coverage, who are suffering. Renters, who have not done anything wrong, are also struggling as a result of foreclosures. Bazer has particularly been working with Section 8 voucher holders living in units that are foreclosed. They often face serious problems, such as having utilities turned off and being unable to get needed repairs, sometimes without notice, when their landlords default and a bank takes over. Moving to new units is a huge burden for low-income families. They have to come up with a deposit, while often unable to get back their deposit from an absent landlord in a foreclosed building. There are timing problems, too, because they have to get their new vouchers approved, assuming they can even find a place that will accept their vouchers. Bazer noted that the Section 8 program has been trying to help but that there are still a lot of barriers.

In addition to her work at LAF, Bazer also teaches an undergraduate class about public housing at Northwestern University.

NEIGHBORHOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
ADVOCACY PROJECT, NEW YORK CITY

Claudia Wilner '02



After clerking and completing a Skadden Fellowship at the Mental Health Project of the Urban Justice Center, Claudia

Wilner joined the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project (NEDAP) to launch their Consumer Law Project. The project began in 2005 with the NYC

Financial Justice Hotline, a telephone legal help service to provide information, self-help resources, brief services, and sometimes representation to individuals facing serious non-mortgage consumer problems. The hotline was immediately inundated with requests for help.

Many calls came in from individuals who were being sued by debt collectors. According to Wilner, there has been an exponential increase in the use of courts to collect debt. In New York City alone, over 300,000 law suits were filed in one year by the debt collection industry. In these cases, Wilner notes that most defendants don't appear in court, often because they do not get notice of the lawsuit. This often results in default judgments for debt collectors and unfair outcomes for consumers.

Wilner works both with individual clients and on policy reform. One major legislative success that Wilner has already achieved is working with a coalition to draft a model bill to protect seniors and individuals with disabilities whose fixed incomes were targeted by debt collectors, who froze consumers' bank accounts. The bill, known as the Exempt Income Protection Act, was enacted in January 2009, preventing the predatory freezing of assets belonging to vulnerable individuals whose benefits are exempt from garnishment. Wilner and the coalition are now working on a follow-up bill, the Consumer Credit Fairness Act. The bill, if passed, would reform the way debt collection law suits work, shortening the statute of limitations and raising the pleading and proof standards for getting default judgments.

In addition to client services and policy work, Wilner and NEDAP provide training to community groups and other lawyers to expand the capacity of the community to address serious consumer issues and legal problems faced by many families and individuals. Wilner noted that it remains incredibly difficult for low-income people to get access to fair, legitimate financial services—that they instead end up with a high-cost, sub-prime type credit option which has a destabilizing effect in a lot of communities. She additionally noted that NEDAP's clients have been in a financial crisis for a long time, years before the current recession started.

OREGON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Victor Merced '85



As director of Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), a state government agency, Victor Merced has significant clout in the areas of economic development and housing. He reports directly to the Governor and sits on the Governor's cabinet. He also can rally people to collaborate and tackle tough problems. Four months ago, Oregonians encountered significant difficulties when they sought to work with banks to reset their mortgages at favorable rates or work through the mitigation process. Merced, recognizing the need for people to work together, coordinated with a state senator and organized a town hall. About 300 people attended, including consumers, bankers, and government agency employees.

Such a significant turnout is not uncommon as the head of the state's housing finance agency tackles not just housing financing issues but also poverty issues. In fact, Victor also refers to the agency as the "anti-poverty agency." A lot of the work we do on the foreclosure and homeowner side parallels what we do for homeless-ness support and prevention and food bank distribution."

On the housing finance side, OHCS pools tax credits and bonds to assemble deals to build low-income multi-family housing. It also has a bond program to help pay for mortgages for first time single families homebuyers. "Every homeowner who we help is someone who does not become homeless or go on public assistance rolls."

Victor is currently at the forefront of addressing a potential crisis with Expiring Use Section 8 Projects, which refers to contracts that private landlords entered into 30 years ago with Oregon's Housing and Urban Development Agency to provide subsidized housing in their units. These contracts are now expiring. While some private landlords have signed new contracts, others are looking to sell their units or convert them into market-priced units. If the latter occurs in large waves, hundreds of families and individuals could be priced out of their apartments.

Victor has a big task as the head of the Oregon government's anti-poverty agenda. He's determined to see it through. "I don't like to see people losing their homes or going hungry. That's what drives me."

NATIONAL CONSUMER LAW CENTER, BOSTON

Diane Thompson '94



"Telling the stories of clients is what makes things happen," observes housing advocate Diane Thompson.

And Thompson is a seasoned storyteller. Currently serving of counsel to the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC), she spends her days telling homeowners' stories to New York Times reporters, weaving those stories into policy arguments before Congress, and helping new housing attorneys build their own clients' stories into a larger movement for change.

Prior to joining NCLC in 2007, Diane spent 13 years learning, sharing, and shaping her clients' stories as a Housing and Consumer Rights attorney in the Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation's East St. Louis office. Her early work as a Skadden Fellow focused on truth-in-lending violations and fraudulent land contracts, but a wave of subprime lending swept through the city shortly after her arrival. Within months, she was regularly receiving 50 calls each week—sometimes 50 in one day—from homeowners on the brink of foreclosure. Diane quickly took up mortgage defense cases, then began researching and crafting affirmative claims to file against lenders—long before terms like "foreclosure crisis," "adjustable-rate mortgages," and "predatory lending" became commonplace among advocates for low-income homeowners. By the end of her tenure at Land of Lincoln, Diane was filing large lawsuits against lenders, educating homeowners and advocates about a wide variety of housing-related issues, and serving as her unit's supervisory attorney. She knew her clients' stories and had argued them many times over.

Diane now views her deep understanding of clients' stories as an invaluable foundation for crafting advocacy strategies alongside her NCLC colleagues. She also credits her time at NYU with helping her develop some of the core insights that still guide her work. Diane remembers

how her simulation courses (even Lawyering!) taught her to actively listen to clients, and how learning about advocacy as part of a diverse and vibrant public interest community situated her work within a broader context of social justice. She learned how individual stories could become even more powerful when expressed through a synergy of litigation, media outlets, academic writing, community organizing, and legislative reform.

Now living and working out of her family's home in southern Illinois, Diane exudes gratitude for her former clients, for the new and intellectually demanding work of creating and implementing policies across the country, and for her close relationships with housing advocates nationwide. Diane will be sharing more about her clients' stories, and her own, when she returns to NYU on January 25th as part of PILC's Leaders in the Public Interest Series.

MOUNTAIN STATE JUSTICE, WEST VIRGINIA

Jennifer Wagner '07

After spending three years advocating for low-income housing in New York City, West Virginia native Jennifer Wagner came to NYU Law to explore something new. She



embraced the opportunity to work intensively in criminal justice and immigration, but when she considered the poverty issues that most often plagued her clients, housing concerns consistently rose to the forefront. The need for foreclosure services was especially relevant among the rural West Virginian communities that she hoped to serve after law school. So when it came time for Jennifer to design a project for a Skadden Fellowship, housing was again her focus. She is now beginning the second year of her fellowship with Mountain State Justice, a public interest law office in Charleston, West Virginia.

Her new clients' experiences of predatory lending are far different than the urban-centered stories commonly associated with the "mortgage crisis." West Virginia has one of the highest home ownership rates (and lowest home value rates) in the nation, with many people living in homes passed down for generations or purchased from departing coal companies. When mortgage brokers and phone scam operations call on West Virginians, they

aren't making the typical pushes for new homeownership or refinancing options. Instead, the culprits commit appraisal fraud, or aggressively push first-time mortgages and consolidation of unsecured debt that could be discharged in bankruptcy into home-secured debt. Mountain State Justice has been combating this predatory lending for the past five to ten years.

One aspect of Jennifer's work that she shares with her urban counterparts is the community's overwhelming need for legal representation. As the state's only free legal services provider working on these issues, Mountain State Justice takes almost every case that comes in the door. Most of Jennifer's work involves litigating affirmative common law actions against lenders. Her caseload balances individual cases and class actions, demonstrating how impact litigation and direct services inform each other to make broad, lasting change. Jennifer spends significant time strategizing about how each case will affect the law and set legal standards that can be applied to other states. She notes that her years in the Immigrant Rights Clinic and NYU's simulation courses prepared her for litigation and introduced her to the steeper learning curve of working with opposing counsel. Jennifer also spent a year clerking for the Fourth Circuit's Judge M. Blane Michael (RTK class of '68), a time she credits with improving her writing skills, preparing her to think about facts as both a zealous advocate and as a judge, and helping her establish connections in the Charleston community.

While working to preserve people's homes is undeniably demanding, Jennifer finds encouragement in strong relationships with her clients, sharing her experiences with Skadden fellows working in similar issues, and the support and mentorship of Judge Michael. ■

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GIVE TO NYU!



Face Off!

On September 30, Director Deb Ellis and Interim Faculty Director Kenji Yoshino faced off for *Equality: A Debate Inspired by the Dr. Li-Ann Thio Appointment*



Leaders in Public Interest Series 09–10

September 14

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT ABRAMS

PUBLIC SERVICE LECTURE

Pursuing Public Service

Andrew Cuomo
New York State Attorney General

September 21

Confronting Injustice

Professor Bryan Stevenson
New York School of Law; Executive Director,
Equal Justice Initiative, Montgomery, Alabama

October 5

Radical Lawyering

Rachel Meeropol '02
Center for Constitutional Rights, New York, NY

October 12

Loving the Work—and Each Other

Judge Nancy Gertner
U.S. District Court, District of Massachusetts
John Reinstein
ACLU of Massachusetts, Boston, MA

October 26

Expect the Unexpected: The Musings of a Department of Justice Lawyer

Gail Johnson
Torts Branch, Civil Division, U.S. Department
of Justice, Washington, D.C.

November 2

Grassroots Justice in Sierra Leone; Global Justice Reform with the World Bank

Vivek Maru
Timap for Justice, Freetown, Sierra Leone

November 9

Unions, Politics & Public Policy

Jennifer Cunningham RTK '91
KnickerbockerSKD, New York, NY

November 16

Children in the Legal System

Lauren Shapiro '86
Brooklyn Family Defense Project, Brooklyn, NY
Kevin Ryan (LL.M. '00)
Covenant House, New York, NY
Professor Marty Guggenheim
NYU School of Law, New York, NY
Judith Waksberg '82
The Legal Aid Society,
Juvenile Rights Practice, New York, NY

January 11

PUBLIC INTEREST FORUM

Post-Racial America Aspiration or Actuality: Minority Voting Rights Today

Debo Adegbile '94
NAACP Legal Defense Fund, New York, NY

January 25

Suing Swamp Dawg and Other Stories of Saving Homes

Diane Thompson RTK '94
National Consumer's Law Center,
Boston, MA

February 1

I Can't Make this Stuff Up: Indigent Defense Reform and Political Power in Louisiana

Derwyn Bunton RTK '98
Orleans Public Defenders Office,
New Orleans, LA

February 22

Lawyering in Support of Community Organizing

Oona Chatterjee '98
Make the Road, Brooklyn, NY
Michael Rothenberg '91
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest,
New York, NY
Amy Sugimori '99
La Fuente, New York, NY

March 8

The Challenges of Strengthening the Rule of Law in Post-conflict Contexts

Kaoru Okuizumi '95
U.N. Peacekeeping Department,
New York, NY

March 22

Scholarship in the Public Interest

Professor Rachel Barkow
Professor Randy Hertz
NYU School of Law, New York, NY
Julie Ehrlich '08
former ACLU Fellow, New York, NY

Public Interest Reception
Friday, April 16, 6–8 p.m. at the Law School

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