Newark ASB Trip Imparts Experience, Inspiration

By Mollie Tack ‘09

Making your way into the World Trade Center Path station at 8:30 am on Monday morning is like being a lone salmon swimming upstream to spawn. One escalator at the station descends to the trains headed to Jersey while seven ascend from the platforms, carrying Newark residents from the affordable living on the other side of the river to their jobs in Lower Manhattan. Even though Lower Manhattan is in many ways still reeling from the devastation of 9/11, the economic opportunities it offers to the people of Newark are told in comparison to the prospects available at home, a once-thriving center of industry where, today, the city government is Newark’s largest employer.

Along with five other NYU Law students, I made this countertuitive commute from Manhattan to Newark every day last week to spend my spring break with the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ), as part of the Alternative Spring Break program. In its 15th year, NJISJ (LSHR)—a week of working, observing, and learning—has been working with the Newark Mayor Cory Booker’s campaign before joining the staff of the Institute.

Last spring, when the Newark Public Interest Law Center (PILC) first urged the city to consider Newark for an ASB trip, I thought we might have trouble selling Newark as an appealing spring break destination, even to the most public interest-minded law students—and then, in May, I saw Cory Booker speak at the New Jersey Law school’s commencement. As Mayor Booker related to the Class of 2007 the story of how, as a young Yale Law graduate living in a violence-plagued Newark housing project, he learned from his neighbors to see beneath the troubled surface of the world around him the daily triumphs of ordinary people and vast potential for change, tears streamed down my face. He impressed upon me the impact my classmates and I could make, not by virtue of our first-class legal training, but just by the way in which we live our lives. “Stand tall,” he said. I stood, applauded, bawled some more, and knew I would be spending my next spring break in Newark. Less than a year later, I was staring into the massive skeleton of Brick Towers, the housing project where Booker had lived, which finally closed forever in December.

The mayor was every bit as inspiring in the intimate, low-key meeting as he had been on the stage of Madison Square Garden. He asked each of us students in turn about our backgrounds, interests, and ambitions, engaging in a violence-plagued Newark housing project, he learned from his neighbors to see beneath the troubled surface of the world around him the daily triumphs of ordinary people and vast potential for change, tears streamed down my face. He impressed upon me the impact my classmates and I could make, not by virtue of our first-class legal training, but just by the way in which we live our lives. “Stand tall,” he said. I stood, applauded, bawled some more, and knew I would be spending my next spring break in Newark. Less than a year later, I was staring into the massive skeleton of Brick Towers, the housing project where Booker had lived, which finally closed forever in December.

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Gillers's Expertise on Legal Ethics More Likely to Entice than Repulse Admitted Students

To the Editor:

Although one nameless student (“Admitted Students Deserve to See Worthwhile Classes,” The Commentator, March 13, 2008) thinks that prospective students would prefer to be shot in the eye rather than sit in on a class with Professor Gillers, and that it would turn away students from attending NYU Law, I think that as an expert on legal ethics, Professor Stephen Gillers would draw admitted students to attend NYU.

BARRABA BOVA, Ph.D.

SYMPOSUM: “Breaking the Logjam” Brings Flood of Ideas

Continued from page 1

that encourage industry to develop more environmentally friendly products, and affect the decisions that will keep our planet healthy.” The symposium’s organizers hope that it will be a major step in catalyzing change and a great opportunity to see the genesis of a whole new set of environmental laws can be reformed.

Asking about the symposium’s potential to affect change, Scherbrod said, “This symposium and the ideas coming out of it can spur a new approach to environmental laws that frees people to make the decisions that will keep our planet healthy.” The symposium’s organizers hope that it will be a major step in catalyzing change and a great opportunity to see the genesis of a whole new set of environmental regulations.

NYU Students Need to Grow Up and Stop Lusting After Anonymous ATL Fame

BY ANDREW GEHRING ’09

I’ve never been a big fan of the blogosphere. When blogs first appeared on the national radar, a number of my friends jumped on the bandwagon and started posting their inconsequential and otherwise-unpublishable thoughts online. Needless to say, I neither began my own blog nor frequented friends’ blogs.

Those days have passed, and I’ve since broadened my horizons a bit and now peruse the occasional blog, but only professional ones, still avoiding personal blogs. Like many of my fellow law students at NYU, my legal blog of choice is Above the Law (ATL; abovethelaw.com), a blog dedicated predominately to discussions of pay raises and bonuses, and that is willing to touch on any topic with a legal grounding. Recently, though, it struck me that many of the postings on ATL have characteristics with the personal blogs that I still eschew: the stories are often opinionated and just not worth publishing.

I suppose that’s to be expected from any business that’s driven by the quantity of the product it produces rather than the quality. But I noticed something else with regard to the stories I find objectionable on ATL: many find the blog to be an oasis in the world at large, some are specifically about NYU. I refer to stories like “Beware of Law School Listservs” (March 3, 2008), “Because Listserv Cluster**ks Happen at Top Schools, Too” (December 15, 2007), and “Some Gloat Material for Columbia Law Folks” (November 8, 2007). These postings, in addition to being about matters that are unimportant to the legal community as a whole (an NYU student’s accidentally sending a grade-grubbing email to his entire class rather than just his professor, a Coase’s List discussion-turned-flame-war about whether it’s worthwhile to seek out easy classes, and the presence of a naked man in the law library, respectively), share two other characteristics that I wish to focus on: (1) they portray NYU in a negative light, and (2) they were brought to the attention of the blogosphere, not through public channels, but rather by the efforts of some NYU student(s).

Initially, I have a number of problems with this state of affairs. Primarily, I’m not sure what sort of hissionic malcontent feels the need to garner attention for him–or herself by exposing NYU’s besmirched underbelly (to use a metaphor) to the blogosphere. These items are of no consequence to the greater legal community, and publishing them serves only to lessen the school’s reputation, even if only minimally. And certainly if the aim of submitting them to ATL is to be a force for change, there are far more effective means of doing so (by, say, sending an email to the relevant parties, as would have been an appropriate response to the reply-all misfire or the Coase’s List exchange, or–blatant plug!–writing a letter to The Commentator) or perhaps the most effective way to do this is to exist to those who can fix them (as with the unclothed library visitor or the power outage that was the subject of the story entitled “NYU Law School: Left in the Dark” (November 30, 2007)).

But even more distressing to me, rather than the simple fact of these stories’ existence, is that our peer schools do not engage in the same behavior. And by that I don’t mean that students at Harvard don’t sometimes accidentally hit “Reply All” when they mean to simply hit “Reply.” I mean that when such mishaps occur, the legal blogs aren’t notified. Over the past academic year, four stories (by my count; there could be more that I missed) have appeared on ATL about NYU that fit the above criteria (having no actual intellectual value, portraying NYU negatively, and being reported by a student). In the same time period, no such stories have appeared about Columbia, and only one has appeared about Harvard (and that story was that Silda Spitzer was scheduled to deliver a talk there, shortly after Eliot Spitzer’s Client 9 debate, so I’m not even sure it should really count, since it doesn’t seem especially negative). I got too depressed at this point to continue looking through ATL’s archives for stories about Yale under discussion than we would be if they were appropriately notified. Over the past year, I haven’t even sure it should really count, since it doesn’t seem especially negative). I got too depressed at this point to continue looking through ATL’s archives for stories about Yale under discussion than we would be if they were appropriately notified. Over the past year, I haven’t...
NEWARK: ASB Students Put Their Skills to Use

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though Newark is the largest city in New Jersey, Newark’s public interest lawyers and community organizers emphasize how small and close-knit the community of people working tirelessly to improve the city’s quality of life feels to them.

In 2002, Booker was a Newark city councilman, staging a daring run for mayor against incumbent Sharpe James who had run the city since 1986. As we drove past a vast expanse of abandoned, crumbling buildings, one sixteenth-year-old Newarker told us that when Booker finally replaced James in 2006, “the world was going to end” with Newarker told us that when Booker was just 17.

Our work with NJISJ also touched on New Jersey handgun regulations, an integral part of Mayor Booker’s public safety platform, as well as collateral damage from aggressive law enforcement policies, such as a “juvenile waiver” rule that meant that young defendants accused of certain crimes were automatically tried as adults. Our accomplishments were modest, but affecting nonetheless. For several of the 1Ls, it was their first opportunity to put fledgling legal skills to work, positively impacting the Newark community and many of its most underserved residents through direct services and legal and social science research in support of NJISJ’s litigation and legislative reform efforts.

For me, the week was an opportunity to take a step back from school and draw encouragement from the inspiring people around me—from the Newarkers overcoming major obstacles every day just to survive, to the attorneys advocating for the city and still making time to embrace us visitors with open arms; to my fellow students, forgoing a chance to catch up on sleep and work to serve a city to which they had no ties; to our site leader Dan Meyler ’09, who spent months learning about Newark, attending conferences, and making connections in order to present us with the dream-like array of hands-on opportunities that we enjoyed during the week.

For a week, I got to remove my law school blinders and see a troubled New Jersey city as something else—a testament to America’s urban plight but also to its enduring spirit of revitalization, just five miles from Manhattan.

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to avoid the formulas we’re familiar with from Perry Mason and Matlock and their derivatives. While it still sticks to the one-case-per-episode model, the show does manage to keep an overarching plot. From one

annoying, giggling sixteen-year-old girls are on trial for soliciting murder, you’ll also get to see just how ugly Canterbury’s shirt’s collar can get. At times, it looks as though she’s wearing the losers from Project Runway’s menswear challenges. I know that’s unrelated, but it still seemed worth mentioning.)

In casting a female lead, the producers intentionally wanted to bring gender to the forefront of the show, highlighting the fact that the other legal dramas on TV all have a male point of view. Canterbury’s Law focuses less on procedure and trials and more on the personal, social, and emotional aspects of the practice. It also focuses on the more feminine side of the law by reminding viewers that, even in a forum where men are expected to wear a tie and show no skin below their Adam’s apple, it’s still acceptable for a woman to argue a murder case with her shirt half unbuttoned. But to be fair, Margulies (who is not just the star, but also a producer) is probably just trying to honor the memory of her grandmother, a legal pioneer and a 1924 graduate of Chicago Law.

Don’t get me wrong, though: if you’re a fan of the legal drama genre, there’s a good chance you’ll like this show. It’s intelligent, well acted, and tries

Un fortunately, Canterbury’s Law lacks the wit and personali ties that have made House such a success.

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Why do you agree to be editor-in-chief?

I ran for editor-in-chief because I believe the journal is a great platform to highlight the important issues of today. If I am elected, I would like to ensure that the journal is a resource for students and an engaging read for the public.

Plans and goals for next year?

Our first priority is to complete the Annual Survey of Practice and the Annual Survey of Legislation. We will also continue to publish high-quality student writing and to increase the number of student authors. We will also work to ensure that all student groups are represented in our publication and that our journal is inclusive of all voices.

Advice for 1Ls?

I would advise 1Ls to take advantage of all the resources available to them. Attend events on campus and in the community, and don’t be afraid to reach out if you have any questions.

Advise for 2Ls? Apply to JLP?

I would encourage 2Ls to apply to JLP if they are interested in publishing their work. It is a great opportunity to get your name out there and to work on a project that you can be proud of.

 recounted their experiences to get a sense of what it's like to work on a journal. They were excited to make that happen by building stronger relationships with the administration, student groups, and other journals.

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