

THE COMMENTATOR

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NYU Grad Selected for Clerkship with Supreme Court Justice Thomas

By BEN KLEINMAN '08

Most of us know they exist. Many of us suspect they wield god-like power. Those who follow their lives sometimes call them the “elect.” They are clerks for the Justices of the United States Supreme Court.

And this year, Leila K. Thompson '05 is one of them.

Ms. Thompson was reluctant to respond to our interview questions because of an understandable concern about stepping on toes, preserving decorum, etc. So reluctant, in fact, that she ultimately decided not to participate. *The Commentator* respects that. But *The Commie* felt that it should let folks know that we do have a body at the Court, and we decided to do a little bit of research.

A little bit.

First off, the basics. Thompson just began clerking for Justice Clarence Thomas. Relatively quiet on the bench, many readers may be more familiar with the Justice from his recently released book *My Grandfather's Son* or from his stint as head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Thompson started at NYU Law in 2002, entering as an AnBryce Scholar. She had a remarkably impressive set of experiences here: she summerved for two firms, was a Robert McKay Scholar, was on Law Review... and the list goes on. Before clerking for Justice Thomas, she clerked first for Judge Royce C. Lamberth on the D.C. District Court and then for Judge David B. Sentelle on the D.C. Court of Appeals.

One of Thompson's recommenders was Professor Clay Gillette. Modestly claiming that he doesn't get asked to write that many Supreme Court clerkship recommendations because he has little in the way of personal relationships with the Jus-



Leila K. Thompson '05 recently began clerking for Justice Clarence Thomas.

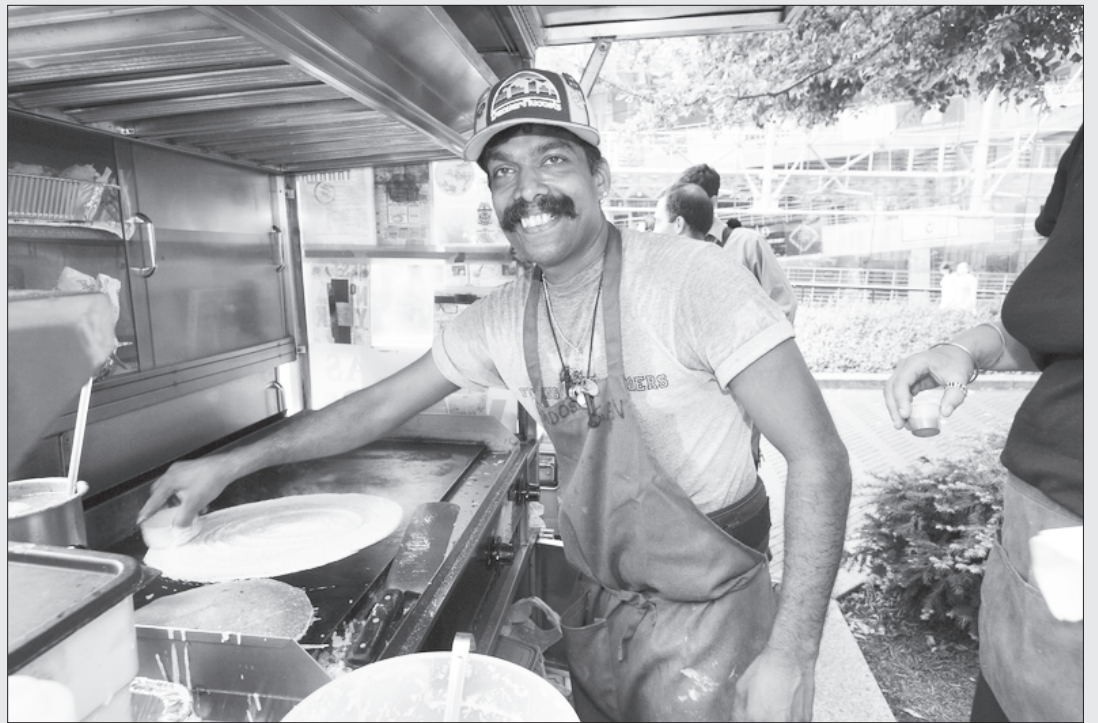
tices and his subject areas are not in the Court's gaze, he betrays little pride in the idea that he now has a former student clerking and thus must have built up some credibility.

Gillette does, however, show a lot of pride in Thompson. She was one of his students in Torts her first year, did research for him her second summer, and then wrote a directed research paper under his supervision. “After her graduation, I asked her to co-author an article with me on a subject related to her directed research paper,” said Gillette. “She is the only student I have ever asked to serve as a co-author.”

Why was Gillette so taken with now-clerk Thompson? “Leila was one of the most interesting, engaging students I have had the privilege to teach. She is inquisitive and respectfully combative in all the ways that make a law professor thrilled to be in the classroom. She prepared meticulously, agonized over issues and analyses that she felt she had not mastered, and frequently contributed incisive comments in class that were instrumental in moving the proverbial ball.”

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Dosa Cart Guy Wins Vendy Cup Award



Preston Merchant

NYU Law's very own “Dosa Man” won New York City's third annual Vendy Cup Award for best street food. The “Dosa Man” is Sri Lanka native Thiru Kumar, age 39. For the past six years, Kumar's Dosa cart has been serving vegan Indian delights at Washington Square South and Sullivan Street, right across the street from the Law School's main buildings. Until his first big win this year, Kumar had been dubbed the “Susan Lucci of the Vendys” because he had been a finalist three times.

Dean Revesz Addresses Burning Issues at Law School Town Hall

Burning issues included the new lactation lounge, the “low cost” Golding sandwich, and how Fall Ball has been ruined.



By LAURIE STARK '10

The first Town Hall meeting of the year was held on the afternoon of Halloween in Vanderbilt Hall. These meetings are a chance for the entire law school community to meet with Dean Revesz as well as other administrators to voice their concerns, ask questions, and be the first to hear about late-breaking news that affects the law school.

Dean Revesz opened the meeting with the exciting news that Pascale Walker, a familiar face to many NYU Law students, has been selected as the new Assistant Dean for Stu-

dent Affairs. Walker attended law school at the University of Michigan but, Revesz joked, “We won't hold that against her.”

Revesz followed up this announcement with news of a new electronic registration system for the law school, which will include wait list functionality as well as other improvements over the current program. The new system will hopefully be in place by Spring of next year and Revesz hopes that the SBA will open a dialogue with students to determine which new features and functionality are most important.

The next topic of the afternoon was course evaluations. Revesz expressed how important these evaluations are to students and the administration's ongoing brainstorm on ways to encourage completion of course evaluations. Response rate has dramatically decreased and, as a result, evaluations tend to only be submitted by students who have strong feelings about the course, rendering the evaluations significantly less helpful. Revesz pointed out that these evaluations don't just help other students choose courses, they are also an opportunity for students to have

an impact on faculty hiring.

The administration is encouraging faculty to set aside ten minutes for students to fill out the evaluations during class. This has boosted response rates somewhat but there is still a temptation for students to use that time to check email and surf the web. Revesz suggested that students need to create a culture in which there is value placed on sharing this feedback.

Revesz next addressed the issue of this year's Convocation Day. The ceremony is normally held in Madison Square Garden (MSG) the day after the University's graduation. Unfortunately, MSG was unavailable on that date this year. The administration met with the SBA to discuss alternatives and determined that students would likely prefer to hold the Convocation ceremony together in MSG on a different day than to split into smaller ceremonies in different locations. As a result, the Convocation ceremony will be held the following Wednesday in the Garden.

Since most law students don't attend the University-wide graduation ceremony, the inter-

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Are Christmas trees nature's silent killer? page 2

Fun with Boxes – can you solve our puzzle? page 3

Fall Ball! OMG Parties! page 4

REVESZ: Spring Fling Drink Policy Still Uncertain

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vention of a week between ceremonies won't affect many students. However, the school is aware that a Wednesday ceremony may be difficult for families traveling from out of town. The administration is regretful of the inconvenience and is working to ensure that this issue will not arise next year.

Revesz also addressed a pricing mistake on the "low cost" sandwich in Golding Lounge and assured students that this error has been corrected. Additionally, Revesz announced that a refrigerator and lactation lounge have been added to the second floor of Vanderbilt in response to student requests.

Opening the floor for questions, Revesz addressed the concern that Constitutional Law for 1Ls should be a five-credit course, as it is for upper-level students, but is only worth four. NYU wants to offer the course to 1Ls, but all other 1L electives are four credits, so it doesn't seem fair for Constitutional Law to be five credits. Revesz said that although the credit allocation will not change for Spring 2008, the issue is under review.

Another student expressed concern over the lack of space for organizations to book for meetings and events, as well as the \$105 fee that applies to some rooms. Revesz said he feels that there is enough space already, but noted that it's common for groups to book rooms that they don't actually need or use and this creates a shortage for groups that really need it.

"We have twice as much space as we had five years ago," he added.

Trish McNicholas, the Assistant Dean of Alumni Relations and Special Events, indicated that there are 150-200 events per week at the law school at this time of year, and the \$105 fee only applies to "premium space" – not classrooms or the Sexton Student Forum. She suggested that groups should book as early as possible.

The next question related to safe bike space on campus. A student pointed out that there is no security camera by the bike rack in front of Vanderbilt and students are forced to leave their bikes in the exposed outer area rather than the inner courtyard. Lillian Zalta, Assistant Dean for Operations and Administrative Services, stated that the school cannot block egress from the courtyard but that the school will revisit the issue.

Students also pointed out that a printer in the library under Furman wasn't networked and that the library has been unofficially closing twenty minutes early. Administrators agreed to follow up on both issues.

Finally, a student asked why Fall Ball no longer offers an open bar. Revesz said that it was in response to the violence and destruction of property at last year's event but there can be a discussion about different possibilities for Spring Fling.

"We don't want to be paternalistic," said Revesz. "That's the last thing we want to do."

The Christmas Tree Menace Debunked: Lawyers More Likely to Commit Suicide than Be Injured in Evergreen Tree Fire

By IAN SAMUEL '08

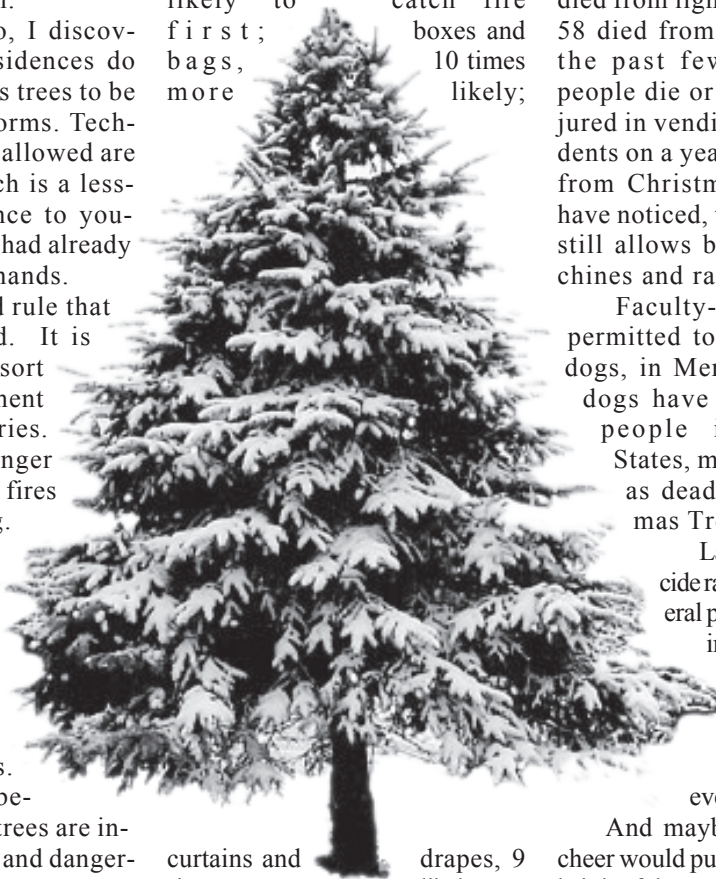
'Tis the season. Some time ago, I discovered that NYU residences do not allow Christmas trees to be brought into the dorms. Technically, what is not allowed are "evergreens," which is a less-than-subtle reference to you-know-what. Alas, I had already gotten sap on my hands.

This is a stupid rule that should be changed. It is based on the same sort of poor risk assessment as shark attack stories. The substantive danger from Christmas tree fires is basically nothing.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, Christmas trees cannot by themselves start fires. This much should be obvious. And the common belief that Christmas trees are inherently flammable and dangerous is untrue.

In 1998, for example, over 32 million Christmas trees were used in the United States. Of these, 0.00093% were ignited in home fires. This might seem like a lot, except that in fires involving

Christmas trees, newspapers and magazines were 13 times more likely to catch fire first; boxes and bags, 10 times more likely;



curtains and drapes, 9 times more likely.

In other words, Christmas trees don't start fires, and they aren't any more flammable than the items we're already allowed to have in our apartments. Last year six people

died in fires involving Christmas trees; several hundred died from lightning strikes, and 58 died from shark attacks in the past few years. More people die or are seriously injured in vending machine accidents on a yearly basis than die from Christmas tree fires. I have noticed, though, that NYU still allows both vending machines and rainstorms.

Faculty-in-residence are permitted to have pets, even dogs, in Mercer; since 1979, dogs have killed over 300 people in the United States, making them twice as deadly as the Christmas Tree Menace.

Lawyers have a suicide rate 3-4 times the general population. By training us to be lawyers, NYU endangers our lives far more than a forest of Christmas trees ever could.

And maybe a little holiday cheer would push us back from the brink of drug abuse, also far more prevalent among lawyers than (for example) Christmas tree lumberjacks, who have managed to survive despite the constant risk of total incineration in a Christmas tree fire.

CLERK: Professor Gillette Gives Advice on Clerkship Recommendation Letters

Continued from page 1

Any of you looking to get a letter of recommendation that is similarly effusive and effective to the one Gillette wrote for Leila may want to heed the professor's advice: "I think clerkship letters are useful only when the professor can say something useful and interesting about the student that the judge cannot discern from the tran-

script and the student's C.V. Request a letter from someone who has personal knowledge of you and your classroom performance, even if that professor did not give you your best grade. A letter from a professor who actually knows the judge to whom you are applying may be useful, but professors are likely to be more candid in letters to judges with whom they have a personal relationship."

*This week's
The Commentator
Fun with Boxes!
Solution (no cheating):*

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THE COMMENTATOR

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New York, NY 10012
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Movie Review: *Bella* Life Doesn't Have to Be Perfect to Be Beautiful

BY STEPHEN ILG '10

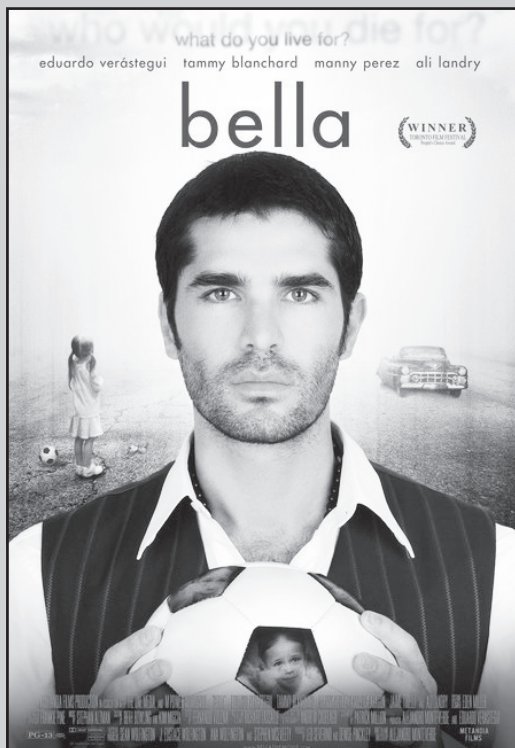
A chef haunted by his past and a waitress hardened by hers fortuitously enter each other's lives. *Bella* is a moving story that shows that life doesn't have to be perfect to be beautiful.

With an excellent soundtrack, the movie tells as much of the story with the music as with the dialogue. Although Eduardo Verástegui's (both the main character and a producer) character José does not have many lines, he gives a very strong performance as a man tormented by his own guilt yet sympathetic to those around him.

In stark contrast to Verástegui's performance, Tammy Blanchard, as Nina, plays a woman hardened by her lack of parental love and by life in general. Blanchard's performance throughout the movie im-

proved, but it got off to a painfully slow start.

Nina, with awkward delivery at best, describes New York as a



eral, but – by the time you do – the hour and forty minutes of the movie has almost run.

On the other hand, the supporting cast was excellent: José's stereotypical yet loveable Latino parents and his two brothers – one as happy and loving as the other is cold and business-focused – are a pleasure to watch.

If you're bothered by strong Christian undertones, you may want to skip this one, though the focus is not as much on Christian morals as it is on familial love. If you see this movie, the less of the story you know in advance the better. While the plot was unsurprising, it did keep itself from a mushy, all-together predictable ending.

Bella will have you captivated, if not by the story, then by the loveable performances of José's tight-knit Puerto Rican-Mexican family.

Bella was:
(2) **Worth the Admission.**

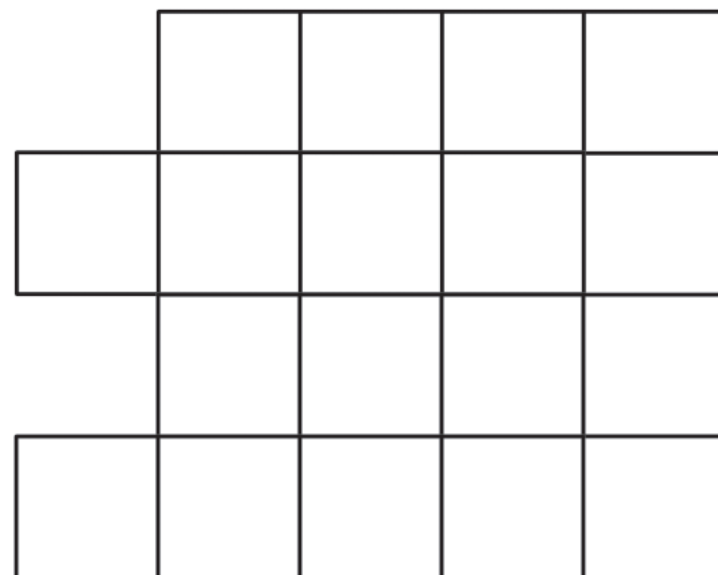
Ratings Guide:

- (1) A must-see. (2) Worth the admission. (3) Netflix it.
- (4) Wait for TV, if at all. (5) I wanted to walk out.

Fun with Boxes!

BY MADELINE ZAMOYSKI '08

Place the following characters in the boxes according to the rules below: ! # = < > / \ ^ + % ~ @ \$ * & ?



Rules:

- ^, #, + in same row
- \, &, @ in same row
- ?, \$, = in same row
- ^, \$, * in same column
- !, &, # in same column
- =, ~, @ in same column
- & touches left wall of <
- < touches bottom wall of \$
- % touches bottom wall of #
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- \$ touches right wall of %
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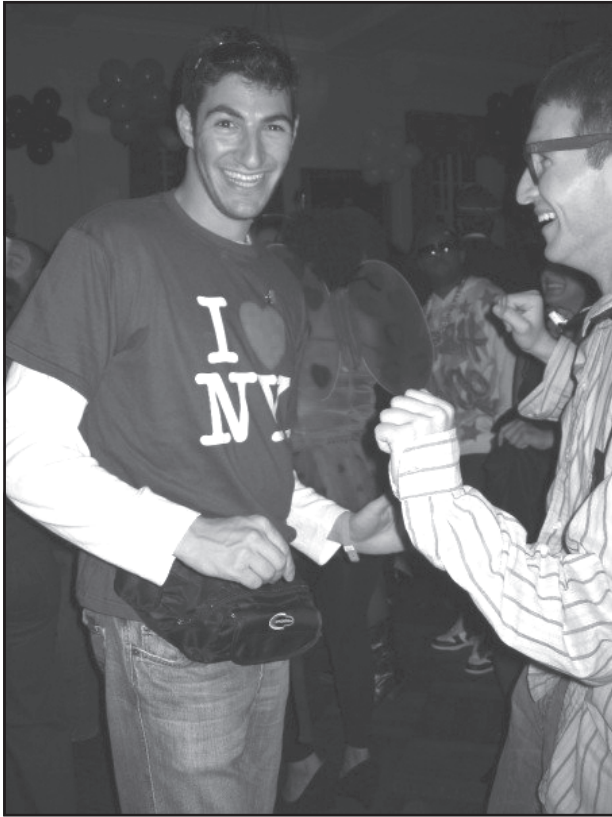
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