



JUSTICE. ACTION. NEWS.

Justice Action Center's Annual Newsletter | 2010–2011

IN THIS ISSUE....

JAC EVENTS 1

Unsung Heroes of the Civil Rights Era 1

Building the Rule of Law in a Democratic South Africa 1

Who Was Pauli Murray? 2

Adoption Law Conference Focuses on Effect of International Law on Domestic Policies on Adoption 2

April Justice Speaks Lunch: *Who Owns Your Body?* 2

Neighborhood Preservation Coalition Conference Examines Impact of Economic Crisis 3

PIC Auction Successful 3

JAC PROJECTS 3

Social Justice Goes Global! 3

Charter High School for Law and Social Justice 4

Redefining Truancy in Rhode Island 4

JAC Students Confront the Subprime Mortgage Crisis 5

JAC STUDENTS VOLUNTEER 6

Legal Assistance to Low Income Individuals on New York's Upper East Side 6

Advice to Families in Need 6

Guidance to Middle Schoolers in the Bronx 7

Representation of Immigrant Juveniles 7

JAC PROFILE 7

Alumni Profile: Asha Smith '07 7

JAC Events

JAC sponsors several events each year bringing experts to speak on a wide range of topics.

Unsung Heroes of the Civil Rights Era: Judge Ernst Rosenberger '58 and Judge George Bundy Smith

By *Eric C. Henry '10*



Left to right: Associate Dean Stephen J. Ellmann, Tommy Vasser '11, Hon. Ernst Rosenberger '58, Hon. George Bundy Smith.

On March 14, 2011, the Justice Action Center, the Dean's Office, and the Black Law Students Association honored two "Freedom Riders," Judge Ernst Rosenberger '58 and Judge George Bundy Smith. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Freedom Rides, where individuals transcended racial and economic boundaries to protest discrimination and racial segregation. The Freedom Rides, arranged by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), drew national attention to the social and legal implications of racial inequality.

Hon. George Bundy Smith, then a student at Yale Law School, was among the many Freedom Riders arrested in 1961. After graduating in 1962, Judge Smith worked as an attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Hon. Ernst Rosenberger '58 worked on public accommodation and voting rights cases throughout the south in the 1960s. At the same time, he volunteered his services in the defense of Freedom Riders arrested in 1961 in Jackson, Mississippi, earning him the title of "Honorary Freedom Rider."

The speakers brought to life an era that is forgotten by many in this generation. The Law School's Events Center was filled to capacity with students and other attendees listening with rapt attention as the speakers described the troubled era. The Freedom Rides demonstrators, who came from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, traveled via bus to various points in the South with the purpose of challenging local laws and customs that enforced segregation. Riders submitted to arrest, imprisonment, and prosecution to draw attention to the deleterious effects that segregation had on individuals and society.

At the culmination of an informative and illuminating lecture, Charita Walcott '11 and Tommy Vasser '11, President and Vice President of the Black Law Students Association respectively, presented the honorees with plaques expressing the current generation's appreciation for the selfless and at times risk-filled work of these unsung heroes.

Building the Rule of Law in a Democratic South Africa: Featuring Justice Dikgang Moseneke, Deputy Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of South Africa

By *Eric C. Henry '10*

The Justice Action Center, the Center for International Law, the South Africa Reading Group, the Dean's Office, and the Black Law Students Association were pleased to invite an inspiring legal figure to meet with the New York Law School community. On April 26, 2011, the collective organizations hosted Justice Dikgang Moseneke, Deputy Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of South Africa.

Justice Moseneke shared a bit of his life story with the audience, showing how an individual can come from an adverse background and still attain monumental achievements. At the age of 15, Moseneke was arrested, detained, and convicted of participating in anti-apartheid activity. He was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, all of which he served on Robben Island. While Moseneke was jailed, he obtained a B.A. in English and Political Science, a B Juris degree, and an LL.B.—all from the University of South Africa. Among his many accomplishments as a legal scholar and jurist, Moseneke served as an attorney and partner at the South African law firm Maluleke, Seriti and Moseneke; an advocate at the Pretoria Bar; a drafter of South Africa's first post-apartheid constitution; a member of the Independent Electoral Commission, which guided South Africa's first post-apartheid elections; and a judge of the High Court in Pretoria prior to his appointment to the Constitutional Court.

Justice Moseneke shared his experiences and his thoughts and insights about crafting truly transformative progress in South African law. In addition, he urged that in every country, not just South Africa, past events must shape future outcomes. There are limits to judicial activism, and grassroots activism is necessary to effectuate national change.

Who Was Pauli Murray?

By Eric C. Henry '10

On April 12, 2011, author Sarah Azaransky, Ph.D. came to NYLS to discuss the contributions of a pioneer in the civil rights and feminist movement, Pauli Murray. The event was sponsored by the Justice Action Center, the Racial Justice Project, and four New York Law School student groups: the American Constitution Society, the Black Law Students Association, Students for Reproductive Justice, and the New York Law School Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Pauli Murray was a poet, lawyer, activist, and priest, as well as a significant figure in the civil rights and women's movements. Dr. Azaransky argued that Murray's work provides contemporary scholars and democratic activists with resources for a contemporary common freedom struggle that aspires to be anti-racist, rather than post-racial.

Murray was denied admission to the University of North Carolina law school because of her race but later received her J.D. as valedictorian from Howard Law School in 1944. Because of her sex, she was denied admission to Harvard for an advanced degree, but was welcomed at the University of California, Berkeley, where she received an LL.M. in 1945.

Dr. Azaransky explored Murray's foundational contributions to critical race feminism, including identifying the category of "Jane Crow" and her efforts to have "sex" added to Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. She also described how, among her many accomplishments, Murray was a professor of American Studies at Brandeis University, a professor in Ghana, and

the author of the book *States' Laws on Race and Color*, which profiled various states' discriminatory laws against minorities. She also contributed heavily to the litigation in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Murray also helped found the *Women's Rights Law Reporter*, the first legal periodical to focus solely on women's rights. She was also the first female African-American Episcopal priest.

Adoption Law Conference Focuses on Effect of International Law on Domestic Policies on Adoption

By Amira Ammar '3L and Katie Smelas '3L

On March 4, 2011, the Justice Action Center, the Diane Abbey Law Center for Children and Families, and the Center for Adoption Policy co-sponsored the Eighth Annual Adoption Law and Policy Conference at New York Law School. This year's topic, "The Federal Government and Adoption: How International Law and Domestic Policies are Transforming Adoption," has become increasingly relevant in recent years. Diane B. Kunz, Executive Director of the Center for Adoption Policy, noted that "Adoption, which was traditionally a matter of state law, has now become a matter of national and international law. The conference allowed policy makers, practitioners, and members of the adoption community the opportunity to interact and exchange views in an academic setting."

The conference included several keynote speakers, such as Ambassador Susan S. Jacobs, U.S. Department of State's Special Advisor for Children's Issues, and Craig Juntunen, Founder of the Both Ends Burning Campaign, an organization aimed at creating a new system of international adoption where children in need can efficiently be placed in permanent homes.

The Annual Conference has become an institution among adoption advocates. Speaking on behalf of the Center for Adoption Policy, Dr. Kunz stated, "We are delighted that this annual conference has been, and continues to be, an important day on the calendar for all those individuals and organizations that believe transparent and ethical adoption should remain a method of family creation."

April Justice Speaks Lunch: Who Owns Your Body?

By Aimee Arrambide '12



Rebecca Quinn '11 at the "Who Owns Your Body?" Justice Speaks lunch. Chris Hansen, Staff Attorney, ACLU.

On April 13, 2011, JAC held its third Justice Speaks lunch of the spring 2011 semester, titled "Who Owns Your Body?" The speaker was Chris Hansen, Senior National Staff Counsel

at the American Civil Liberties Union, and the event was moderated by Professor James Grimmelman. Hansen spoke about the correlation between gene patents and civil rights emphasized by a federal court's recent invalidation of a private corporation's claimed patents over two genes.

Hansen's presentation began with an in-depth look at the ACLU's litigation process. He explained the numerous steps involved: researching viable legal issues, determining the proper defendant, establishing a legal theory, locating plaintiffs, selecting venue, and eventually filing suit. Hansen engaged the audience with this behind-the-scenes look at the litigation strategy of one of the nation's foremost civil liberties organizations, but the audience was interested in more than process. Substance, too, provided ample fodder for discussion. Many in the audience were shocked to discover that 20 percent of an individual's genes are patented; in some cases an individual hoping to learn about his genetic make-up must pay a premium to the corporation that holds the patent on a gene. Hansen took the audience through the constitutional arguments, including both First Amendment and Article One arguments, as well as arguments brought under patent law.

Neighborhood Preservation Coalition Conference Examines Impact of Economic Crisis

By Elliot Dolby-Shields 3L

The Neighborhood Preservation Coalition Conference, held at New York Law School on October 28–29, 2010, explored how low-income communities have been disproportionately affected by the current financial crisis, and looked at potential solutions to the problems these communities face.

The conference featured several guests speaking on a variety of subjects affecting low-income communities, such as “Predatory Equity – The Next Challenge to Affordable Housing” and “Revitalizing Commercial Corridors.”

Two of the most captivating programs were “Sustainability: Creating a For-Profit Subsidiary,” and “Winning Strategies

for a Successful Nonprofit/For-Profit Partnership.” These programs demonstrated that nonprofits have numerous creative opportunities at their disposal, but that many of these solutions are very complex. Successful implementation of these strategies often require the nonprofit to internalize for-profit administrative structures and goals. For example, Neil Stevenson, Senior Staff Attorney for Lawyers Alliance for New York, gave an overview of the complex tax filing process for “social enterprises,” which are organizations, or ventures within an organization, that advance a social mission through market-based strategies.

PIC Auction Successful

By Alexis Riley 3L

For the first time, the Justice Action Center teamed up with the Office of Student Life to host New York Law School's annual Public Interest Auction. Proceeds from the auction help fund summer fellowships to support student work in otherwise unpaid positions with organizations and agencies that serve the public interest and promote justice. Students in the past have completed placements at legal services organizations, city government agencies, district attorney offices, public defender offices, state government bureaus, judicial chambers, and the federal government.

This year's auction was held on March 24, 2011, in conjunction with the Multicultural Fair. Thanks to the efforts of JAC's Graduate Fellow, Eric Henry '10, Carbonell Fellow Alexis Riley 3L, and JAC affiliate Amira Ammar 3L, several great items were donated that allowed the live auction to be brought back for the first time in several years. Auctioneers Professor Lindsay Curcio and Art DiVittis, along with guest auctioneers Professors Edward A. Purcell Jr. and Doni Gewirtzman, warmed up the crowd. The live auction included items such as a night at the firehouse; a night of karaoke with Professors Gewirtzman, Roiphe, and Rostain; and High Tea with Sally Harding and Oral Hope.

JAC Projects

JAC faculty and students are engaged in several real-world projects—both in the U.S. and abroad—that address pressing issues in social justice law.

Social Justice Goes Global!

By Aimee Arrambide 3L

Professor Michael L. Perlin is clearly a man with a mission. A longtime advocate for individuals with mental disabilities, he has taken his advocacy overseas with efforts to create a Disability Rights Tribunal for Asia and the Pacific (DR-TAP). Professor Perlin decided in 2009 that he could leverage his advocacy—

and his teaching and mentoring—by turning the DR-TAP project into one of New York Law School's project-based learning classes. The purpose of the project is to establish an international court to address claims alleging the infringement of mental disability rights in the Asia-Pacific region.

This year, two graduating JAC students, Rachel Hisler '11 and Julie Stein '11, joined four other students in Professor Perlin's

project-based learning course. Their yearlong assignment was to create a blueprint for DR-TAP. A different set of students began the work last year, and this year's group focused on the precise procedures governing the proposed international court. Hisler and Stein spearheaded several research efforts, looking at how other international courts address questions dealing with legal remedies, provision of counsel, nongovernmental organization funding, and selection and appointment of judges. They then applied these lessons to the development and implementation of the Asia-Pacific tribunal. Professor Perlin is quick to recognize his students' efforts, noting, "Julie and Rachel have made major contributions to the project, both by their written work and their participation in class discussions." By the end of the spring semester, the students produced a first draft of enabling statutes and the reasoning behind those statutes, for eventual use in establishing the tribunal.

The participating students were ready adherents to Professor Perlin's mission. Hisler's professional goal is to work in mental disability law, and the project provided her with the background and hands-on knowledge needed to address this social justice issue. Not only has she learned what goes into creating a tribunal, Hisler says, but she has also learned the research skills needed for such a diverse and expansive topic. Stein's professional goal is to work in the public service realm. She notes that this class has taught her that the interconnected nature of today's global society means that in order to address problems in the United States, it is necessary to address those same issues around the world. In addition to solidifying her international research abilities, Stein has learned to incorporate her work into the needs of a larger group of legal researchers—a skill that will definitely serve her as she continues in her social justice career.

Charter High School for Law and Social Justice

Excerpted from an article by Andrea Juncos in NYLS Magazine (Summer 2011)



Left to right: Eric Henry '10, Kristen Perry 3L, Morgan Marshall-Clark 2L, and Professor Richard Marsico.

Several JAC students spent this past year working on an application to open a charter high school in New York City focused on law and social justice. If approved, the school will provide local students with a pipeline to law school—as well

as one more option in a public school system that serves over one million children.

The idea for the project came two years ago in what Professor Richard D. Marsico calls a "rare moment of clarity" inspired by his Education Law and Policy class. Eric Henry '10, this year's JAC Graduate Fellow, was present for Professor Marsico's eureka moment, and was instantly sold on the idea. Henry believes strongly in the need for a school that encourages young people to go to law school, especially at this particular moment in New York City's educational history.

The project just completed the second year of a multi-year process that, if all goes according to plan, will involve opening the high school with its first class of ninth graders in fall 2013. The first year of the project was spent on background research, with a group of Professor Marsico's students conducting a feasibility study to outline all aspects of opening a charter school. This year, students in his Education Law and Practice course had three areas of focus: developing the application to the New York State Education Department, due in January 2012; finding an education consultant to help with the application process; and raising seed money.

Professor Marsico envisions that the Law School will play a major role in the charter school's success as a key partner. He would like his Education Law and Practice course to continue serving as pro bono counsel for the school, allowing the high school to defray that cost and the law students to gain hands-on experience in the process. Professor Marsico wants to involve New York Law school faculty as well—both as teachers and as advisors.

All of the students involved brought a great deal of passion to the project, and the process has been a true exercise in collaboration. Professor Marsico is inspired by his students' commitment to the project and because "[t]heir willingness to give back is really so impressive." That willingness will serve the team well as they continue to navigate the long, complex process of opening a charter high school in New York City.

Redefining Truancy in Rhode Island: A Report of the Racial Justice Project

By Kathryn Gottschalk 3L

In September 1999, Family Court Judge Jeremiah S. Jeremiah established Rhode Island's first truancy court. Ten years later, however, lawyers from both the local and national ACLU, along with Professor Deborah N. Archer and several students from the Justice Action Center's Racial Justice Project, set out to redefine "truancy" in Rhode Island.

In 2009, the ACLU and the Racial Justice Project filed a class action lawsuit against six Rhode Island school districts and truancy court judges on behalf of families whose rights were allegedly violated by the truancy court. The goal of the

litigation was to end alleged ongoing civil liberties violations for children caught within the Rhode Island Truancy System. The plaintiffs' complaint alleged that the truancy courts targeted special education children and failed to serve process adequately, failed to obtain a "knowing and voluntary" waiver for procedural due process rights, lacked translators for ESL students, and failed to record proceedings.

Four of the school districts—Coventry, Cumberland, North Providence, and Woonsocket—have settled. All four of these districts have agreed to no longer refer students to the truancy court and to accept changes to their policies which will help ensure future students better protection of their civil rights.

Additionally, in an important procedural ruling, Superior Court Judge William Carnes denied a motion by the remaining defendants to dismiss the case, finding there was a sufficient basis to begin limited discovery. The defendants then appealed Judge Carnes's ruling, and the parties are now waiting for a hearing before the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

In the meantime, the Rhode Island Supreme Court has also referred the case to mediation. In February 2011, the ACLU team, Professor Archer, and Justice Action Center students Kathryn Gottschalk 3L, Samantha Pownall '11 and Caitlin Prior '11 traveled to Providence for a court-mandated mediation with the remaining defendants. The sessions are ongoing, and they returned to Providence for another mediation session in May 2011.

JAC Students Confront the Subprime Mortgage Crisis

By Aimee Arrambide 3L

The subprime mortgage crisis and the relationship between borrowers, lenders, mortgage originators, and their clients have caused much strife in the past few years. Beginning in October 2010, banks started to suspend foreclosures across the country due to mismanagement, missing documentation, and general implementation errors. These erroneous practices may be new to the public, but for some time they have been the focus of a Brooklyn Supreme Court Civil Term Judge and a legal services agency in New Jersey.

Elliot Dolby-Shields 3L and Kristen Keppler 3L spent their JAC social justice placements learning more about the foreclosure issues facing the American people. Elliot worked at the Anti-Predatory Lending Project (APLP) at Legal Services of New Jersey in Edison, New Jersey from June 2010 until August 2010.

Elliot learned a great deal about the subprime mortgage crisis through writing memoranda and briefs about the complex issues in various cases. He also spoke with potential clients about their foreclosure cases in order to determine whether they fit within APLP's parameters for clients. Through his work, he saw many deceptive loan terms, such as no-income,

no-asset verification loans, or adjustable-rate mortgage loans. He learned firsthand how a small social justice organization could make a difference, but he also came into direct contact with some of the impediments to such work. He noted that a main obstacle he came across was "judges who took the strict view that a borrower in default deserved to be ejected in a foreclosure action, because they had not fulfilled their contractual obligation to repay the debt."

However, as is evident from Kristen Keppler's social justice placement in Justice Arthur M. Schack's court, not all judges are alike. Kristen worked at the Brooklyn Supreme Court Civil Term with Justice Schack from September until December 2010. This particular court handles all civil matters where the dollar amount exceeds \$25,000, including personal injury, mental hygiene, and foreclosure cases. Justice Schack is known for carefully scrutinizing foreclosure cases. He takes the time to review the thousands of pages of paperwork in the countless foreclosure cases he encounters and makes sure that everything has been done legally before he allows a foreclosure to proceed. Due to his diligence and that of other judges across the country, foreclosure proceedings are now scrutinized more closely, which has led to the suspension of many foreclosure proceedings.

Students also completed social justice placements in the following organizations in 2010-11:

- Barst Mukumal & Kleiner LLP—Lynn Cho
- Bronx County Supreme Court, Honorable Alexander Hunter, Jr.—Dinneen Mazzone
- Brooklyn District Attorney's Office—Dana Purcaro
- Brooklyn Supreme Court—Mark Wheeler
- Brooklyn Supreme Court, Honorable Arthur M. Schack—Kristen Keppler
- City Bar Justice Center—Marly Marcellus
- Communication Workers of America (CWA)—John Grunert
- Connect, Inc.—Tiffany Caban
- Criminal Justice Workshop & Seminar—Marie Priolo
- Domestic Violence Field Placement—Jamie Sinclair
- Eastern District of New York, Judge Sterling Johnson Jr.—Christopher Binns
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission—Amanda Davis, Zalika Pierre
- Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen and Lowey, LLP—Angel Dieguez
- HIV Law Project—Aimee Arrambide
- James I. Williams, Esq.—Nat Guerriera
- Kings County District Attorney Civil Rights and Police Integrity Bureau—Thomas Luckini
- Kings County District Attorney's Office—Michael Vitale
- Law Offices of Diana Adams—Andy Izenon, Winnie Lai
- MFY Legal Services—Elizabeth Ferguson

- New Jersey Legal Services Anti-Predatory Lending Project—Elliot Dolby-Shields
- New York City District Attorney’s Office—Angel Vazquez
- New York City Housing Court—Melissa Flores
- New York City Public Advocate Bill de Blasio—Sarah Ferguson
- New York County Supreme Court, Civil Branch, Justice Louis B. York—Emi Shinozaki
- New York Department of State—Rachel Cohen
- New York Law School Criminal Defense Clinic: Legal Aid Society—Rachel Newman
- New York Law School Elder Law Clinic—Janet Schulze
- New York Law School Faculty Research Assistant—John Marchione (Professor Levine), Joseph Schneiderman (Professor Strossen)
- New York State Department of Human Rights—Katlin Saville, Matthew Hellmann
- New York State United Teachers—Eric Marshall
- Office of Special Narcotics Prosecutors—Tammy O’Hara
- Southern District of New York, Magistrate Judge James Francis—Michele Minarcik
- The Family Center—Harleigh Tensen
- Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project—Anna Ostrom
- Yerman & Associates—Paul Irlando

JAC Students Volunteer

This year, JAC students provided legal services to help middle school students, immigrant youth, families, and low income New Yorkers.

Legal Assistance to Low Income Individuals on New York’s Upper East Side

By Erin P. Andrews 2L

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House (LHNH) is a community organization that offers legal advice and counsel to low-income individuals and families living or working in a large residential community center on the Upper East Side of New York City. I spent my first semester of law school as a legal intern volunteering my time to assist the attorneys and advocates with client intake interviews.

As a legal intern, my main responsibility included returning phone calls from potential clients and conducting intake interviews. My duty was to gain enough of an understanding of the client’s problem so that I could present a typed outline of the legal issue to the attorneys. In short, it was my responsibility to translate a client’s complex issues into an organized, succinct memo that could more easily be addressed by the attorneys. Most of the legal issues involved housing evictions, health care, and advanced directives.

The internship at LHNH was immensely helpful for 1Ls navigating their course in Legal Practice (Research and Writing). The internship provided numerous opportunities to practice information gathering and information presentation.

To a large extent, the internship was also very fulfilling; not only was it hands-on experience and participation in the initial phase of various legal cases, but it served a greater purpose of involvement in community affairs. Perhaps

most importantly, our work provided a modicum of hope for so many individuals in a bad economy. LHNH and its attorneys effectively provide legal services while reinforcing their clients’ dignity and preserving a sense of hope in the legal system. I feel very privileged to have interned for the program.

Advice to Families in Need

By Eberle Bassani 2L

Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT) is a grassroots organization that was started 15 years ago to assist people going through the family legal system in New York City. LIFT staff and law school interns are now at every family court in the New York City boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.

Law students undergo a training session that introduces them to some of the major family law issues, and law school interns are assigned to one of the four family courthouses. These interns then provide information to individuals unfamiliar with the family court system. This service ensures a minimal level of empowerment to individuals who might otherwise be completely unfamiliar with how family court proceedings function.

At the Queens Family Courthouse, where I was, LIFT is in an easily accessible location on the first floor. The courthouse employees often refer people to LIFT for information about their specific issues. If a person wants legal advice or to speak with an attorney, we refer him or her to other LIFT services

that provide a more in-depth and individualized information session, or to other organizations that provide free or low-cost legal advice or representation.

LIFT is a great way for law students to learn about family law and, during a period when we are buried under law books, to remember why we are here in the first place.

Guidance to Middle Schoolers in the Bronx

By *Katie Smelas 3L*



Left to right: Street Law Directors Alesha Brown, 3L, Jill Gottfred '11, and Katherine Smelas 3L.

In its fourth year at New York Law School, Street Law continued its partnership with Middle School 22 (MS 22), which serves a low-income community in the South Bronx. Students in the program visited MS 22 during the school day to work with one seventh grade class and one eighth grade class of approximately 30 students each. Street Law also teamed up with the Children's Aid Society—Hope Leadership Academy (CAS) in Harlem for the first time. CAS, a nonprofit organization with various locations throughout New York City and Westchester County, works to provide a supportive and positive environment for the education of children

living in poverty. The Street Law program at CAS targeted high school students; participating students worked with the program in the afternoons after their normal classes ended, and approximately 15 students completed the entire program.

The Street Law program lasted 10 weeks and culminated with students presenting oral arguments in a moot court. Street Law began with an introductory lesson to introduce the Constitution and the three branches of government. The next four lessons focused on Fourth Amendment searches and seizures. The final five lessons focused on preparations for moot court. Students received short fact patterns and used four cases studied during the Fourth Amendment lessons to support their oral arguments. Each moot court had a panel of judges who observed the oral arguments and asked questions. This year, the moot court for CAS was held at the law firm of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP, with the firm's attorneys acting as judges. The moot court for MS 22 was held at New York Law School, with professors as judges.

Representation of Immigrant Juveniles

By *Emily Pierce '11*

The Safe Passage Immigration Project, a project of JAC, works with volunteer attorneys and New York Law School students to provide representation of unaccompanied minors in the immigration process. Under the direction of Co-directors Professors Lenni B. Benson and Lindsay A. Curcio, Safe Passage provides trainings, resources, and mentoring to volunteer attorneys regarding Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) status as well as other possible immigration alternatives for children.

Safe Passage completed several successful cases this past year, including securing permanent residence for a teen from El Salvador and an individual from Haiti, and derivative U.S. citizenship for a young woman.

JAC Profile

JAC alumni are taking action all over the world. Hear from Asha Smith '07 about her career as a criminal defense attorney.



Alumni Profile: Asha Smith '07

By *Eric C. Henry '10*

The Justice Action Center was pleased to catch up with JAC alumna Asha Smith, Class of 2007. Asha is currently on sabbatical from the Legal Aid Society, where she has served as a criminal defense attorney for the past four years. We interviewed her to get her take on life after law school, the job search, and advice to current law students on finding a rewarding career path.

Where are you from?

Originally, I am from Detroit, Michigan. But I consider New York City to be my home.

What was your JAC concentration(s)?

Social Justice Advocacy and Immigration.

What activities were you involved in while in JAC?

I participated in activities such as Safe Passage, the InMotion Uncontested Divorce Project, and *De Novo*, the NYLS student newspaper. I have also been a co-chair in the Evening Law Students Association Moot Court Competition, an intern in

the New York County Lawyers' Association's Minority Judicial Internship, the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, and the Department of Juvenile Justice. I was also a competitor in the American Bar Association Negotiation Competition, the Hispanic National Bar Association Moot Court Competition, and the Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition.

What special coursework did you undertake?

I was able to fit the JAC Colloquium, Trial Advocacy, Mediation Clinic, Visual Persuasion, Criminal Justice Seminar/Workshop with Prof. Rosenberger [Placement: Manhattan District Attorney's Office], Immigration Law, and Refugee and Asylum Law.

How did you find your job at the Legal Aid Society?

I applied through the NEBSA Job Fair and (I think) the New York University Public Interest Fair.

Why did you choose the work that you do now?

I'm a sucker for social justice. I don't like seeing inequality anywhere. I believe in the Constitution as a living, adaptable document, and I like litigation—being in the courtroom, arguing a point, defending a person.

What skills/characteristics does it take to be successful in your line of work?

Determination, ingenuity, fortitude, the ability to think on one's feet, adaptability, and stubbornness.

What about your work keeps you interested/dedicated?

Having the freedom to try new methods of approaching a legal issue. Holding the government accountable for its actions. Helping others navigate the treacherous waters of the American legal system.

Any advice for current JAC students?

Don't put limits on yourself. Others will try to do that to you once you leave law school. Take classes that interest you, even if you think you won't practice that particular type of law. It forms a legal structure, a well to draw upon. You never know what you will come across as a practitioner.

Staff

Richard D. Marsico, Director • Eric C. Henry, Graduate Fellow • Alissa Kane, Administrator

Faculty

Susan J. Abraham • Deborah N. Archer • Lenni B. Benson • Robert Blecker • Elise C. Boddie • Jean Marie Brescia • Frank A. Bress • Lindsay A. Curcio • Stephen J. Ellmann • Kris Franklin • Anne Goldstein • Lawrence M. Grosberg • Seth D. Harris • Mariana Hogan • Molly Land • Arthur S. Leonard • Carlin Meyer • Frank W. Munger • Udi Ofer • Michael L. Perlin • Edward A. Purcell Jr. • David Schoenbrod • Nadine Strossen

NEW YORK LAW SCHOOL

Justice Action Center

185 West Broadway
New York, NY 10013-2921

