



# Sparer Connect

## Fall 2011



## Sparer Events

11/16

12:30-  
2:00pm

**November Sparer Lunch**  
**Alien Tort Claims Act and**  
**Corporate Responsibility**  
*Subotnick Center, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor*

Thurs.  
3/15

4-6pm

**Save the Date: Spring**  
**Sparer Forum**  
**"Representing the Poor**  
**Today: Poverty Law in**  
**Recession Times,"**  
*Reception to follow.*

**October Sparer Lunch Spotlight: The New**  
**Debtor Prisons: How Small Fines and Fees Add**  
**up to Incarceration of the Poor**

At the October 26<sup>th</sup> program, we had an opportunity to hear how states across the country are increasingly placing an array of "user fees" on individuals with criminal convictions—including public defender fees, prosecution fees, jail fees, parole supervision fees, drug testing fees and debt collection fees—as a means to balance recession-withered state and local budgets. In spite of the 1983 Supreme Court ruling, *Bearden v. Georgia*, prohibiting "punishing a person for his poverty" this trend has led to the reconstituting of the debtor prison.

Our panelists were Rebekah Diller, Deputy Director of the Justice Program, Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, and Mitali Nagrecha, Senior Director of Policy at the Fortune Society, co-authors of the Brennan Center Report, *Criminal Justice Debt: A Barrier to Reentry*, which explored the emergence and ramifications of this trend in 15 states, including New York. Professor Stacy Caplow served as moderator.

## Summer 2011 Sparer Fellow Placements

- Michael V. Berman '12, *Progressive States Network* (NY, NY)
- Cody James Carlson '13, *Compassion Over Killing* (Torrance, CA)
- Rosa Cohen Cruz '12, *Center for Constitutional Rights* (NY, NY)
- Dorothy DiPascali '12, *Hong Kong Refugee Advice Centre* (Hong Kong)
- Tristan Foley '13, *Legal Aid Society Criminal Defense Division* (Brooklyn, NY)
- Brigitte Hamadey '12, *Special Tribunal for Lebanon, The Hague* (UNIAP, Bangkok, Thailand)
- Steve T. Hasty '13, *South Brooklyn Legal Services* (Brooklyn, NY)
- Adam Horowitz '13, *African Services Committee* (NY, NY)
- Gillian Kosinski '13, *AIDS Center of Queens County*
- Beile Lindner '13, *ACLU of Michigan* (Detroit, MI)
- Erika Lorshbough '12, *Lambda Legal National Office Legal Department*
- Tomoeh Murakami-Tse '13, *New York Legal Assistance Group-LegalHealth Unit* (NY, NY)
- Antonia Pereira '12, *Human Rights First* (NY, NY)
- Jessica Rickards '13, *New York Legal Assistance Group, Family Law Unit*, (NY, NY)
- Ari Rosmarin '13, *Release: Drugs, The Law & Human Rights* (London)
- #Alison Schill '12, *Children's Law Center* (NY, NY)
- Rachel Seelig '12, *Vermont Legal Aid* (Burlington, VT.)
- David A. Shapiro '12, *Center for Children's Law and Policy* (D.C.)
- Kelly M. Shaw '12, *Legal Aid Society Parole Revocation Defense Unit* (NY, NY)
- Nura Skadden '13, *Habeas Corpus Resource Center* (San Francisco)
- William Spitz '12, *Amnesty International* (NY, NY)
- Olga Vlasova '13, *Sanctuary for Families Immigration Intervention Project* (NY, NY)
- Linda Yu '13, *Louisiana 40<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Public Defender Office* (LaPlace, LA)

# Sparer Support from Professor Urs



This fall, Professor Tara Urs joined the Brooklyn Law School faculty as a legal writing professor. She recently shared her perspective on the importance of having a strong public interest community to support students throughout their time in law school and into their post-graduate careers.

Before transferring to New York University (NYU) School of Law in her second year, Professor Urs attended a law school where there was little support for public interest students. The work she was doing did not appeal to her and she was on the brink of leaving law school altogether. Her 1L summer experience in Cambodia and

subsequent transfer to NYU, where public interest was a focus, “fundamentally changed her law school experience.”

During her time at NYU, Professor Urs participated in the Arthur Garfield Hays Civil Liberties Program, a mentorship program that offers fellowships to 3L students entering public interest careers.

Like the Sparer Fellowship, the Hays Fellowship not only provided an opportunity for Professor Urs to participate in public interest work, but also introduced her to a rich network of other public interest-minded students, faculty, and alumni.

The personal connections she made within the program have continued to be a vital resource for her throughout her career, and her work through the Program was essential in securing her position as a Resident Fellow for the Open Society Justice Initiative in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where she conducted field research during

her work in Cambodia and a clerkship for Judge Deborah Batts of the Southern District of New York, she represented parents accused of abuse and neglect through the Brooklyn Family Defense Project, before arriving at Brooklyn Law School.

When asked what advice she has for Sparer Fellows, Professor Urs replied, “Begin now to think about what you can put into place to make your work for the public interest sustainable.” She stresses it is important to find a balance between having a quality of life that you desire and doing meaningful work. She hopes that Sparer Fellows recognize that as public interest-minded students, they have a built-in community to support them both in school and as alumni, and she looks forward to meeting and working with Sparer Fellows throughout the year.



*Left: Professor Urs listening in on community facilitated discussions in Cambodia.*

*Below: Professor Urs with her research partner in front of an 8<sup>th</sup> century pre-Angkorian temple surrounded by craters from American bombing of Cambodia.*



## Public Interest Events at Brooklyn Law School

**Public Interest Cover Letter Workshop**  
11/8, 1-2pm

**Year-End Pro Bono Celebration**  
11/10 5-7pm

**Public Interest Online Job Search Workshop** 11/16, 1-2pm

**Betsy's Square Table – Children's Rights**  
(featuring Tanisha McKnight, Esq.) 11/21, 1-2pm

For more information about these and other events, visit the BLS Public Interest webpage:  
<https://blsconnect.brooklaw.edu/academics/PublicService/Pages/default.aspx>

For more about the experiences of Professor Urs, see the article that appeared about her in the October 13, 2011 *In Your Interest* newsletter on the BLS Public Interest website (site link below).

In the wake of the Troy Davis execution and national discussion related to criminal appeal and death penalty reform, Nura and Kelly speak about their Sparer experiences exploring these issues last summer.



### Meet Nura Skadden, BLS '13

Nura interned at the Habeas Corpus Resource Center (HCRC) in San Francisco, CA.

**Nura's Work:** As a legal intern, Nura worked with two case teams to support "ineffective assistance of counsel" appeal claims filed on behalf of clients on death row. To support the team, she researched state and federal habeas corpus law to develop defense theories for clients. "There was a steep learning curve," she says, "this was a whole new field of law for me, but HCRC trained us to make sure we had a working understanding of each team's process."

**Nura's Reflections:** Nura says her 1L classes helped a lot while she was at HCRC. "Legal writing was really useful in drafting everything over the summer. Criminal Law was also a useful backdrop for identifying weaknesses made by prosecutors against the Center's clients, and by defense attorneys for the Center's clients in the past." After working at HCRC as a Sparer, Nura says she is still really interested in

criminal defense, but not so interested in criminal appeals. "I saw how hard it is to take things back (on appeal)," she says, "it made me realize how the front lines of justice are at the trial level." This semester, Nura is interning with the Brooklyn DA office's Crimes Against Children Bureau. "A number of our clients at HCRC had been abused as children. I'm interested in exploring preventative measures at the DA's office to learn more about helping kids to avoid falling into a wormhole without defenses."

### Meet Kelly Shaw, BLS '12

Kelly interned at the Manhattan Legal Aid Society's Parole Revocation Defense Unit

**Kelly's Work:** As a legal intern, Kelly helped attorneys at PRDU represent clients who had been released on parole and then charged with violating the conditions of their parole release. She researched cases and drafted administrative appeals, memos, writs of habeas corpus, and an Article 78 petition. "I also was able to go to the Riker's Island Judicial Center, once a week." She says, "I observed hearings, client interviews and other judicial proceedings. By the end of the summer, I was able to independently handle two cases – interviewing clients on my own and speaking on the record as their advocate."

**Kelly's Reflections:** "I spent the majority of the week in the office, so I realized that I really enjoyed the days that I got to go to Rikers and have client contact. I hope to have client interaction in my future work, which I still hope is criminal defense." Looking ahead, Kelly has been inspired by her Sparer summer to explore how public policy related to parole can be enhanced. "I don't know if any Sparer who work with these issues specifically," she says, "but if there is anyone in legislation or criminal law policy who works with these issues, I'd love to connect with them!"



## Welcome Marva!

This fall, we happily welcomed **Marva Skeene** as our new Sparer Fellowship Administrative Assistant. To contact Marva, email her at [marva.skeene@brooklaw.edu](mailto:marva.skeene@brooklaw.edu) or call her at the Sparer Fellowship Office: 718.780.0351. If you're in the neighborhood, stop by! Marva's office is in room 800A in the main BLS building.

This Fall, we welcomed seven incoming 1L's to the Sparer community as entering Sparer Fellows. Four of the seven arrived to BLS with extensive experience working with children and developed interests in education rights, child protective rights and juvenile justice.

In his third year of working on juvenile justice issues at BLS, **Dave Shapiro**, Sparer '12, is thrilled to share his work and experiences with our newest fellows.



When Dave Shapiro, '12, was selected for a Summer 2011 Sparer Fellowship, he had already demonstrated an impressive commitment to juvenile justice work over his two years at BLS. Since entering law school in 2009, Dave has served as a student representative on the NYC Bar Association's Committee on Juvenile Justice and interned at the Legal Aid Juvenile Rights Division, Youth Represent and the NY Center for Juvenile Justice. He volunteers weekly with recently incarcerated youth at the Children's Aid Society's WorkLINC program, received the Bergstrom Child Welfare Fellowship and Equal Justice America Fellowship to do juvenile justice work, and wrote a note on Juvenile Justice in international law that will soon be published in the Pace International Law Review.

As the current co-chair of the Suspension Representation Project at BLS, Dave is thrilled to work with new Sparers interested in Juvenile Justice. "Being a part of the Sparer community has allowed for all new connections and community. I've really enjoyed exploring new projects and learning from the new Sparers this year."

As a 2011 Sparer, Dave interned at the Center for Children's Law and Policy. There, he analyzed data to compile and draft policies for juvenile detention centers in the DC-Maryland-Virginia area. "I learned how crucial it is to keep and catalogue accurate data when developing policy. Often data is very diluted by the time it gets to policy makers. Taking a look at data from juvenile detention centers across the country helped me to see how much there is to uncover before strong policy can be developed." After his Sparer summer, Dave says he has become increasingly interested in the inter-workings of juvenile detention centers and what it means for a young person to be sent to different types of facilities at a young age.

Recently, Dave, four of the incoming Sparers and other BLS students interested in juvenile facility issues began meeting to craft a "Know Your Rights" training for juveniles at the Ella McQueen juvenile intake center. We look forward to following their work together.

## Welcome Fall 2011 Incoming Sparer Fellows

**Christina Bernardo, '14**  
**Sarah DeVita, '14**  
**Rebecca Gannon, '14**  
**Gideon Martin, '14**  
**Erin Ogburn, '14**  
**Ava Page, '14**  
**Dacia Read, '14**

## Sparer Leadership Group

**Sarah DeVita '14, Dorothy DiPascali '12, Gillian Kosinski '13, Jason Labate '12, Jane Li '12, Lee Miller '12, Erin Ogburn '14, Dacia Read '14, Hannah Roth '12, Kelly Shaw '12, Nura Skaden '13, Tomoe Murakami-Tse '13, Linda Yu '13**

**Sparer Alumni, are you interested in sharing your experiences post-graduation with current Sparers?**

**Comments? Questions? Email:**

**Erin Ogburn (erin.ogburn@brooklaw.edu)**

**Dacia Read (dacia.read@brooklaw.edu)**