



EDNY Student Prosecutors Argue Sentencing Appeal



Two 3L students in the Federal Prosecutor's Clinic in the Eastern District of New York, Bijoux Shayer-Altamirano '19 (left) and Victoria Jaus '19 (right), successfully presented oral argument on behalf of the United States government before the Honorable Judge Edward Korman. In preparation for their arguments, the students drafted a persuasive appellate brief. The appeal was from the

2018 simple assault conviction of an investment banker who had rubbed and grabbed a woman's thigh on an airplane. Following a bench trial, prosecuted by three Brooklyn Law School students from the prior year, this year's students drafted a sentencing recommendation memorandum for Magistrate Judge Steven Tiscione. The students were supervised by Assistant U.S. Attorney William Campos throughout the sentencing, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Doug Pravda throughout the appeal.

Community Development Students Offer Words of Wisdom to Homeowners Association



Nicole Ventura, Allison Brustman and Jessica Franzetti [pictured from left to right] made a presentation to the Brownsville, East New York, New Lots Nehemiah Homeowner's Association, Inc. on Saturday, April 27 about by-laws, and particularly focused on the by-laws of the Association. After their presentation, the Association wrote:

[T]hank you for the fabulous presentation ... on the Nehemiah by-laws. We now have a thorough understanding of the purpose of by-laws, what is wrong with ours, and how to fix them. The way you organized the content made the presentation easy to follow. You put careful thought into every detail of the preparation including the technical equipment and meeting room. A sufficient

amount of time was allotted for each segment of the presentation and the participation and interaction was especially helpful. The training provided us with the knowledge and skills that we need to strengthen our by-laws and we look forward to working with you as we make the appropriate amendments. Thank you again for the job well done.

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LGBT Clinic Students Cover All Bases

The LGBT Advocacy Clinic represented an African man, “Adedapo” who fled to the U.S. after facing horrific persecution because he is a gay man. A group of men gang-raped Adedapo, and videotaped the rape so that they could use the recording to blackmail him. Following the awful assault, the attackers came to Adedapo’s home and workplace to threaten him. He was forced to pay them his life-savings to avoid further violence or being outed as gay and reported to the police for having sex with men. When Adedapo tried to get help by telling a police officer about the rape, the officer advised him not to file a report because the police would only use the rape as evidence of his homosexuality and arrest him for being gay. Fearing for his life, Adedapo had no choice but to flee the country and seek refuge in the United States. Gianna Boccanfuso ’20, Sophia Farrugia ’20, and Henry Jones ’20, prepared an asylum application on Adedapo’s behalf, collected supporting affidavits and other evidence of his ordeal and the mistreatment of gay men in his country of origin, and represented him in an asylum interview. Adedapo was granted asylum and looks forward to healing from his ordeal and rebuilding his life in the U.S.

Clinic students Binyamin Bixon ’20 and Emilia Foto ’20 prepared Know Your Rights materials discussing the benefits of Second Parent Adoption for LGBTQ parents and explaining the adoption process. Emilia distributed the pamphlet at the 2019 Family Building Expo at the LGBT Community Center in Manhattan on May 4, 2019, where she talked with prospective parents about how to protect their rights through second parent adoption.



Emilia Foto tabling at the 2019 Family Building Expo.

LGBT Advocacy Clinic client “Valeria” was subjected to anti-gay harassment from the first day of her administrative job at a hospital in New York City. Her co-workers took one look at her short hair and masculine gender presentation and refused to even shake her hand when she first met them. From then on, she was subjected to constant verbal abuse,

being called an “idiot” and “dumbass” and told “nothing about you is normal.” Her co-workers also derisively asked her invasive questions about her personal life, demanding to know what kind of sex she has with her wife and how her son was conceived. Valeria came to dread going to work and experienced severe anxiety including diarrhea and vomiting because of the mistreatment. When she tried to get help from supervisors, she was told to “put your big girl panties on” and “just ignore them.” Eventually, Valeria had no choice but to quit her job to escape the harassment. But when she applied for unemployment insurance, the Department of Labor denied her claim saying that Valeria was not eligible because she left her job voluntarily. Clinic students Michele Jackson ’20 and Beth Potter ’20 represented Valeria in an administrative unemployment insurance hearing to contest the denial. After hearing Valeria’s testimony, the administrative law judge found that she had left her job because of anti-gay harassment and was eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Michele and Beth are now helping Valeria prepare to file a complaint with the New York City Commission on Human Rights concerning the employment discrimination she faced.



Alex Petkanas ’20 at the legislative office building in Albany.

Yakira Lawley ’19 and Alex Petkanas ’20 prepared a report in support of the Gender Recognition Act, an important bill pending in the New York State legislature that would make it easier for trans and gender non-conforming (TGNC) people to change their names to match their gender identities and also allow for a third “x” gender marker on New York State identification. Their report explained why the legislation is desperately needed, including because people who identify as gender non-binary cannot access a New York State ID or birth certificate that reflects their gender identity, and the current name change process imposes unnecessary barriers that prevent many TGNC people from changing their legal names. After completing the report, Alex Petkanas attended LGBTQI Advocacy Day New York in Albany on April 9, 2019. They distributed the report to New York State legislators and discussed the importance of passing the Gender Recognition Act.

Tax Arrears and Repair Problems Resolved with a \$265,000 Loan Closed by Corporate and Real Estate Clinic Students in May

Two officers from a Bronx low-income co-op came to the Corporate and Real Estate Clinic in January seeking assistance with closing a loan to resolve an assortment of problems, including a boiler so defective it was using three times as much oil each month as it had the previous year. There appeared to be three mortgages already on the building, but the students' investigation revealed that two had been paid in full but not removed from the record and one only covered a telecom easement on the roof. The students, Alina Islam-Hashmi '19 and Benjamin Cohen '19, worked on obtaining satisfactions for the two mortgages as well as conducting due diligence, drafting resolutions, certifications and an opinion letter and responding to an array of questions from lender's counsel. They reviewed loan documents, disbursements and a post-closing agreement before conducting the closing on April 18, 2019 under the supervision of Professor Debra Bechtel.



*Pictured with clients: Professor Debbie Bechtel
Seated: Benjamin Cohen, Alina Islam-Hashmi.*

Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic Wraps Up the Semester

The Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic (CDAC), led by Professor Kate Mogulescu, wrapped up its semester with successful representation of individuals charged with misdemeanor prostitution offenses in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens criminal courts. Clinic students helped clients navigate diversion courts, counseled clients as to potential outcomes and options, and coordinated referrals to community-based organizations.

In its post-conviction work, CDAC represented four new survivors of human trafficking in efforts to clear criminal charges from their record, including two survivors who had been arrested for and convicted of offenses more than 100 times.

This semester's clinic team conducted four workshops at the Rose M. Singer Center at Rikers Island. The workshops focused on criminal records, sealing and certificates of relief.



Ramsha Ansari, '20 (l) and Rebecca Tesfay, '19 (r), outside of Midtown Community Court where Ansari successfully argued for dismissal of her client's case on speedy trial grounds.

Impressive Work by Judicial Extern

Martin Rowe '19, a student interning with a judge in the SDNY, was enrolled in Bankruptcy Judge Elizabeth Stong's Judicial Externship seminar. He was assigned to write about the "quality of the lawyering" he observed. Judge Strong was so impressed, she arranged to have the essay published in the [ABA Business and Corporate Litigation Committee Newsletter – Spring 2019](#).

BLS at AALS

BLS Clinicians were well represented at the annual AALS Clinical Teachers Workshop held in San Francisco in early May. Jonathan Askin, Jodi Balsam and Stacy Caplow (as well as Director of Legal Writing, Heidi Brown) organized and presented at several concurrent sessions. Natalie Chin and Susan Hazeldean presented their works-in-progress while Carmen Maria Rey was a small group leader.



Farewell to BLS Clinician

Natalie Chin, founding Director of the Disability and Civil Rights Clinic is moving to CUNY law school to teach in their Elderlaw Clinic. For the past five years the Clinic has championed the rights of the intellectually and developmentally disabled in courts and proceedings.

Her report describes the Clinic’s recent activities demonstrates what a successful and meaningful program she developed.

Working with Deborah Berkman, on leave from NYLAG, during the fall semester, Bailey Cohen '19, and Yixin Che '19, challenged the New York City Department of Education’s (“DOE”) failure to provide a free and appropriate public education to their client, a 19-year old man with an intellectual disability, as required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Since 2011, the DOE had created Individualized Education Plans every year for our client to address his learning needs, however, it did not take any steps to ensure their effectiveness. For example, the DOE did not recommend any reading assessments or supports despite finding that the student’s reading skills were significantly below the expectancy for his grade level. Additionally, the DOE failed to recommend an appropriate school placement for the client based on their findings. None of the schools recommended by the DOE were able to sustain the client’s educational needs. Cohen and Che, working together with the New York Legal Assistance Group, successfully sued the DOE to secure appropriate special education services, including remedial literacy instruction, remedial math instruction, and vocational training—to ensure that the client develops the skills necessary to live and work independently into his adult life. Thanks to the work of the Clinic, the client received a fully favorable decision from the DOE and has already begun his remedial literacy, math and vocational training.

As appointed Guardian ad litem (GAL) in a 17-A guardianship case, Bruce Gomez '18, David Furman '18, and Zhenzhong Zhang '18, conducted an extensive investigation for the Surrogate Court to determine whether guardianship was appropriate for a

20 year old man with an intellectual disability. After completing over a dozen interviews and filing an 18-page report with the Court, the students determined that guardianship was not appropriate because the young man was capable of making many decisions on his own, as well as with support from his extensive support network. In its decision, the Court referred extensively to and cited the students’ GAL report. The Court agreed with the students’ conclusion and determined that the young man possessed the capacity to make decision affecting his life and should retain his “legal right to make personal decisions about his own affairs.”

Susan Zwibel '19 and Zachary Buniak '18 completed an extensive 20-page report as the appointed Guardian ad litem in a 17-a guardianship case involving a 19-year-old young woman with an intellectual and development disability. During the course of their investigation, the students determined that the young woman desired greater independence. She expressed to the students that she “likes making her own decisions” and “doesn’t want anyone making them for” her. Upon the conclusion of their report, the students found that guardianship was not appropriate. In its decision, the Court agreed with the students, referring extensively to their report, and dismissed the guardianship petition. The Court determined that “[if] given the opportunity to have more responsibilities” the young woman “could acquire more independent living skills.” The Court further noted that “like any young person” she “has long-term goals and dreams” and should “retain the legal right to make” decisions.

BLIP Clinic Events

The BLIP Clinic hosted several legal tech events this past semester, including multiple Legal Hackers discussions, workshops, and hackathon. Perhaps most notable among these events was co-hosting the flagship node of the Second Annual Global Legal Hackers Computational Law + Blockchain Festival, in which law students, lawyers, and technologists considered how to deploy computational law principles, and Blockchain technology to improve the law and legal process and access to justice.

BLIP students also participated in the 6th Annual CUBE Legal Tech Innovators Competition, pitching several legal tech ventures. The Competition invited competitors from across NYC law schools to Brooklyn Law School. Perhaps most interesting, the Competition included the first ever “AI judge”, joining the panel of nine human judges. For this first year, the judgment (and potential biases) of the human judges trumped the “judgment” and potential biases of the AI judge.



6th Annual CUBE Legal Tech Innovators Competition



Computational Law + Blockchain Festival – Town Hall on Legal Tech and Tech Law at the Bushwick Generator