



Corporate and Real Estate Clinic Students Help Thwart Foreclosure for a 24-Unit Manhattan Low-Income Cooperative

Brooklyn Law School third-year students, Briana Stapleton and Brenda Slochowsky, under the supervision of Professor Debbie Bechtel, represented a 24-unit low-income co-op in a \$653,000 loan closing on Wednesday November 21. The students and co-op board, with crucial assistance from Councilman Mark Levine and the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, achieved the removal of the building from the tax foreclosure list before an October 31 deadline. The students also negotiated huge reductions in several judgments against the co-op, allowing most of the loan proceeds from the Lower East Side People's Federal Credit Union to be directed to real estate tax arrears and water charges. The students drafted an opinion letter, reviewed corporate documents, prepared affidavits and were in constant contact with the co-op officers, the title company and the lender attorney to bring the project to fruition. The co-op plans to proceed with much-needed pointing and other rehabilitation work in their next phase of building improvement.

In another project, Caitlin Baranowski ('19) and Chris Cummons ('19) explained dozens of legal documents to Al Kone, the President of a Manhattan low-income cooperative, (pictured below), in a loan closing on December 4, 2018 which took place after a semester of work on the project in the Corporate and Real Estate Clinic. The loan for this co-op was particularly crucial and time-sensitive because the building was on the City's tax foreclosure list until the students and their Councilperson negotiated its removal. Supervised by the clinic's director, Professor Debbie Bechtel, the students drafted an opinion letter, negotiated agreements, prepared affidavits, obtained satisfactions of judgments and otherwise expedited the closing.



Brenda Slochowsky, '19 and Briana Stapleton, '19 with clients.



Chris Cummons, '19 (L), Al Kone, (C) the President of a Manhattan low-income cooperative, and Caitlin Baranowski, '19 (R)

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Recent Scholarship of Clinical Faculty

Natalie Chin, *Group Homes as Sex Police and the Role of the Olmstead Mandate*, 42 NYU Review of Law & Social Change 379 (2018).

Jodi Balsam (with Margaret Reuter), *Externship Assessment Project; an Empirical Study of Supervisor Evaluations of Extern Work Report*, 25 Clinical Law Review 1 (2018)

Mediations: LGBT Advocacy and Employment Law Clinics Achieve Impressive Settlements

Students Andrew Andrzejewski '19, Kayla Smith '20 and Jennifer Taormina '20 represented a transgender woman whose housing program subjected her to discrimination and mistreatment on the basis of her gender identity. Staff called Ms. G. by male pronouns and refused to use her correct name. Another tenant verbally abused and threatened to kill her. This harassment went on for more than a year without action from management.

Ms. G. filed a complaint with the New York City Commission on Human Rights regarding the gender identity discrimination she had suffered, and Andrzejewski, Smith and Taormina represented her in the Commission's mediation process. Together, they achieved a confidential settlement to resolve the claim and ensure Ms. G will be able to live safely without fear of anti-transgender harassment.

This past semester, the Employment Law Clinic represented claimants in four mediations before the NYC Commission on Human Rights. The respondents included a major retailer, a hospital and a museum.

Three claims related to disability discrimination and one to gender identity discrimination. In total, the Clinic recovered over \$100,000 for its clients.

All of the clinic students—Krista Gay, William Kenefake, Rachel DiBenedetto, Taylor Bleistein, Joshua Filzer, Troy Stackpole and Richard Ripley—had the opportunity to represent clients at the mediations.

BLIP Clinic Leads Activities with the NYC Innovation/Startup Community

The BLIP Clinic also continued to explore new models for globally distributed Blockchain-based ventures, which do not fit neatly into existing corporate structures. The primary client was Seafood Commons, hoping to develop a global Memorandum of Understanding, Best Practices, and global cooperative for the environmentally sound, sustainable, and otherwise ethical production and distribution of fish and seafood.

In concert with the MIT Media Lab, the BLIP Clinic and the BLS Chapter of Legal Hackers ran the Open Media Hack - New York Node designed to empower independent musicians, videographers, and other artists to control the production and distribution of their product and content and to disintermediate the media empires from the production and distribution process.

The BLIP Clinic helped organize and run multiple other community events on issues at the intersection of law and innovation, including panels on Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, and related Legal Technology Issues for Startups at various locations around NYC, including the Flatiron School, FMW Media Productions Studio and the 4th Annual Legal Hackers Global Summit.



Mark Potkewitz '17 and BLIP Legal Technology Fellow. Alexi Furs '21

Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic at Riker's Island Ceremony



(Back) CDAC students Kevin Dunshee '19, Aleksandra Ciric '19 and Sara Cate Ruff '20 (Front) Spencer Smith '19.

The Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic (CDAC) works closely with JusticeHome, the alternative-to-incarceration program at the Women's Prison Association (WPA). CDAC represents several program participants who are survivors of human trafficking in efforts to clear their criminal records. Pictured here - CDAC students Kevin Dunshee '19, Spencer Smith '19, Aleksandra Ciric '19 and Sara Cate Ruff '20 attended a graduation ceremony celebrating clients they are working with who completed WPA's twelve-week Women's Leadership & Media Project.

A PipS Fellow's Satisfying Semester

Javionte Johnson '19, spent the fall as a Public Interest/ Public Service Fellow at the Special Litigation Bureau of The Legal Aid Society. He reports, "My favorite experience as a PipS Fellow for Legal Aid's Decarceration Project was when the 1st Department granted a motion for interim relief that I drafted and then was argued before the court by a LAS attorney with me as second seat. Our client was arrested for a felony and held on a \$100,000 cash bail or \$150,000 secured bond, despite not having a prior conviction history or the finances to afford such high bail. Most importantly, our client did not know she was almost 3 months pregnant until she was arrested.

By the time the motion was argued at the 1st Department,

our client was 9 months pregnant with an expected due date the following week. It was imperative for our client to be released into the supervision of The Women's Project, an alternative program for pretrial detention, so she could receive the proper prenatal care she was not receiving at

Riker's and so that her child would not be born on Riker's. The 1st Department granted the motion and reduced the bail to an affordable amount, so our client was released into

the services of The Women's Project, where she receives court reminders and transportation, therapy, and most importantly the proper medical assistance. She is now the mother of a healthy baby boy." Javionte will be a New York State Pro Bono Scholar in the spring 2019 semester.

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Clinic Collaboration: Criminal Defense & Advocacy + Safe Harbor Project

A client of the Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic, an undocumented transgender young woman, was arrested for loitering for prostitution in Queens in July. The Clinic picked up her case in August, and filed a motion to dismiss, which was ultimately granted. The case was dismissed and sealed in November. After learning more about her undocumented status, we referred her to the Safe Harbor Clinic. Carmen has been working with her to determine potential avenues of relief. The case has been written up in [Jezebel](#) and [Documented NY](#).

The story also talks about the Clinic's reform efforts around enforcement of the loitering for prostitution law, and the law itself. More than that though, our clinics are able to address more than one of the client's needs in-house. Our client feels incredibly supported by the student who has been working with her and by the clinics generally. It is a great example of our clinics working together and filling a gap in services for marginalized clients.



Jessica in Queens. An undocumented trans woman, Jessica, was arrested on prostitution charges in July. The charges were dismissed but she fears that the arrest could impede her path to immigration status.

Image: Scott Heins for Jezebel