



Brooklyn
Law School

CLINICS

WHERE LAW COMES TO LIFE

Volume 4, Issue 3: April 2019

Safe Harbor Professor Carmen Maria Rey and Clinic Students Co-Author Important Report



The Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative (I-ARC) released a new report, *Behind Bars in the Empire State: An Assessment of the Immigration Detention of New Yorkers*, that provides a comprehensive look at immigration detention across New York State. The report pays special attention to the use

of civil immigration detention in the enforcement of immigration laws, highlighting the high demand for legal assistance and resources under the current political climate. Jessica Olive '20, far right, at a panel in Albany.

"Brooklyn Law School's Safe Harbor Project is honored to have contributed to *Behind Bars in The Empire State*. We hope that this report illuminates the tremendous damage that immigration detention of immigrant New Yorkers has caused them, their families, and our communities," said Carmen Maria Rey '06, Assistant Professor of Clinical Law at Brooklyn Law School.

Criminal Defense and Advocacy Clinic Professor Co-Authors National Report

Professor Kate Mogulescu co-authored a report released by the Polaris Project and the American Bar Association's Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence. The report, *Grading Criminal Record Relief Laws for Survivors of Human Trafficking*, evaluates each state's legal framework, if any, for allowing human trafficking survivors to clear their record of convictions and arrests that occurred as a result of having been trafficked. CDAC student Kevin Dunshee '19 and ABA Survivor Reentry Project Fellow Katrina Myers '17 contributed extensive research assistance to the report. In the resulting analysis, the majority of states receive failing grades but the report goes deeper, exploring essential elements of good laws and best practices. The hope is that the report serves as a blueprint for policymakers and advocates as to how best to draft, amend, or implement state law and that this will lead to more accessible relief for survivors across the country regardless of where their arrest or conviction occurred.

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Helping Elders through Law & Policy (HELP) Clinic Student Presents at a Brooklyn Senior Center

On March 28, Dominick Giannotto, '19, gave a presentation to a lively crowd of over 60 seniors at the Glenwood Senior Center in Brooklyn about how to avoid financial



*Dominick Giannotto and
Adj. Prof. Deirdre Lok*

scams. Dominick teamed up with attorneys from the Brooklyn Volunteer Lawyers and the Weinberg Center for Elder Justice to educate attendees about some of the various ways people take advantage of seniors, warning signs for the audience to pay attention to and best practices to help them keep their finances secure. Dominick's presentation was very well received, the audience was engaged throughout and he stuck around to answer questions at the end.

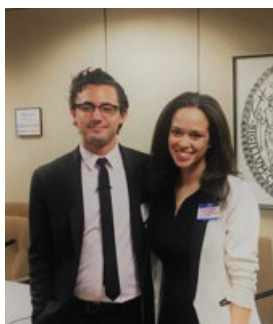
Meet the Newly Appointed Chair of the Rent Guidelines Board

David Reiss, Director of the Community Development Clinic, has been appointed Chair of the NYC Rent Guidelines Board. The Board is mandated to establish rent adjustments for the approximately one million dwelling units subject to the Rent Stabilization Law in New York City. The Board holds an annual series of public meetings and hearings to consider research from staff, and testimony from owners, tenants, advocacy groups and industry experts. This is a great honor for our colleague who will have to steer the ever-volatile NYC housing ship.



Criminal Defense & Advocacy Students Busy All Over NYC

CDAC continues its policy advocacy related to the issues presented in its casework.



In February, CDAC student Hector Melendez-Franco '20 attended a roundtable discussion at the New York City Council on improving services for people involved in the sex trade. The roundtable was facilitated by BLS Alum Alana Sivin '14, Legislative Counsel to the Council.



Reza Bonachea '19 and Brittany Pagnotta '19 conferring misdemeanor cases with defense team from the Exploitation Intervention Project of the Legal Aid Society in Brooklyn Criminal Court.



Michael Sheftman '19, Reza Bonachea '19, Ramsha Ansari '20, and Sarah Adams '20, after completing the first of two workshops on criminal records for women detained at the Rose M. Singer Center, the women's jail at Rikers Island. The workshop explained the basics of criminal records, sealing, and other forms of relief. The team reviewed individual criminal histories and will now work to correct errors uncovered on the records of the women who participated.

Real Estate Tax Exemption and Rehabilitation for a Lower East Side Building

Corporate and Real Estate Clinic students, supervised by Professor Debbie Bechtel, began working with a Lower East Side building in 2013 when the not-for-profit corporation owner was facing serious financial difficulties. The problems stemmed from high real estate taxes and relatively low income from a large commercial space. The first step the students took was to re-structure the board of directors to eliminate the commercial tenant representatives and thereby empower the residential tenants. Students also re-negotiated the commercial lease and helped the corporation apply for a real estate tax exemption. Ultimately, the six residents hope to own shares for their apartments in a traditional housing co-op structure, so students have advised them about that process.

In 2016 the City Councilperson for the district committed funds for extensive rehabilitation, an effort which took off in the spring 2019 semester with a commitment by the City to close a \$1,000,000 loan before June. Spring semester students John Caruso '19 and Muhannad Al Nisheiwat '20, have reviewed the title report, amended the certificate of incorporation and participated in weekly calls with the City agency to expedite the loan process. The City finally approved the real estate tax exemption in March of 2019 and John and

Muhannad will be pursuing a rebate for taxes paid since 2016. They will be meeting with the corporation's board of directors in April to seek approval for the loan.

Saying Farewell to Disability and Civil Rights Clinic Founder

After launching and sustaining the Disability and Civil Rights Clinic, one of the country's first programs dedicated to helping adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities, Natalie Chin will be joining the faculty at CUNY Law School. The clinic, funded generously five years ago by the Taft Foundation, not only represents clients on a wide range of types of matters, it also sponsors an annual breakfast at which stakeholders engage in timely conversations about emerging issues affecting this population.



Asylum Granted to Three Clients

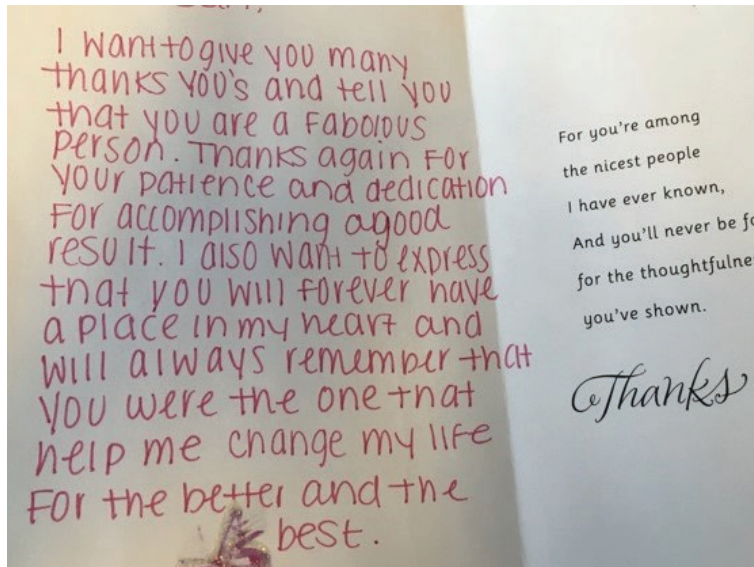
A Tibetan client of the Safe Harbor Project was granted asylum in March. After spending many years at a monastery in India, the clinic's client, a Buddhist monk, had returned to Tibet where he was imprisoned by Chinese authorities for his community teaching about Buddhism and Tibetan traditions. Lauren Blake '19, Emilia Foto '20, and Will Granados '20 assembled convincing evidence about the longstanding suppression of Tibetan Buddhism and the fragility of life for Tibetans-in-exile in India.

Students from the LGBT Advocacy Clinic and the Safe Harbor Clinic assisted "Maria," a transgender woman from Mexico who was horrifically abused, beaten, and raped by her own family members because of her gender identity. Maria fled to the United States in 2002. Following her arrival in the U.S., she struggled to come to terms with her gender identity and faced further violence from abusive intimate partners. She also suffered from depression and post-traumatic stress arising from the trauma she had endured in Mexico. Asylum applications typically must be filed within one year of arriving in the U.S., but clinic students were able to show that this client faced extraordinary circumstances that justified her delay in

applying for asylum. Austin Alvarado '20, Yasemin Akturk '20, Annie Melton '19, and Shanice Kirakossian LLM '18 worked on the case in the LGBT Advocacy Clinic. Following an interview on the claim before the New Jersey asylum office, Maria's asylum application was granted in January

2019. She is now working as a cook and helping other Latina transgender women through her community activism.

Safe Harbor students, Travis Elliott-Knaggs '20, Ken Law '20, and Carrie Sandstrom '20, represented a mother and daughter in connection with their asylum applications. Their claim was based on a severe beating suffered by both of them after the daughter had converted from Islam to Christianity in Egypt where such conversions



Maria's note of thanks.

are considered a violation of Sharia law punishable by death. This team of students worked particularly hard because they had to prepare two individual application packets and work with both clients separately. The case also presented challenging issues arising out of joint representation—a complicated lesson in professional responsibility. Mary Gergis, LLM '19, worked hard as an interpreter for the case throughout the semester and at the interviews.

Minna Kotkin in Modena, Italy

On March 18–19, Prof. Minna Kotkin presented *Uberizing Discrimination*, her paper on employment discrimination in the platform economy at the 17th International Conference In Commemoration of Prof. Marco Biagi at the Marco Biagi Foundation of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy. The theme of the conference was *The Collective Dimension(S) Of Employment Relations: Organisational And Regulatory Challenges In A World Of Work In Transformation*.

Prof. Biagi, a well-known labor law scholar, was assassinated by members of the Italian Communist Party outside his home in Bologna in 2002, due to his role as an economic advisor to Roberto Maroni, a minister in Silvio Berlusconi's government.

