

Brooklyn Law Notes

THE MAGAZINE OF BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL | FALL 2023

Taking the Lead

Our 10th dean, David D. Meyer, on access to legal education, his top priorities as dean, experiential learning, school rankings, and more

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Alumni in cannabis law, fintech, and artificial intelligence

Rethinking Justice
A new program gives criminal law classes a jolt of reality



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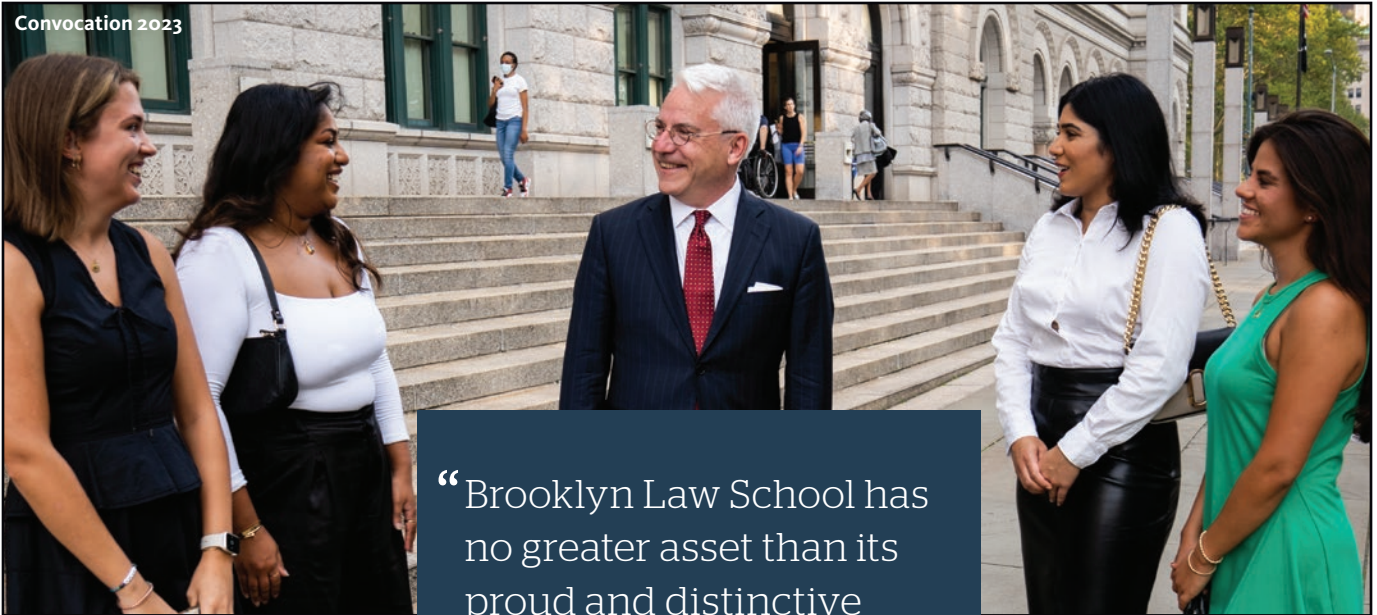
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Dean's Message

Convocation 2023



“Brooklyn Law School has no greater asset than its proud and distinctive mission of access.”

THERE ARE MANY ASSETS that set Brooklyn Law School apart and that make me excited for its future. There is our dynamic faculty, as ambitious and impactful as any in the country. There is our leadership in clinics and practical legal training, for which we recently ranked 12TH in the country. And, of course, there is the Law School's location, in the heart of the world's most important, vibrant, and creative city.

But Brooklyn Law School has no greater asset than its proud and distinctive mission of access. Nearly 125 years ago, when the broader society was rife with racism, xenophobia, sexism, and religious persecution, this institution was founded as a haven where talented students from all backgrounds, origins, and faiths could excel and prepare themselves for leadership that would transform their families and their communities. At a time when most law schools were highly exclusionary, the Law School's first classes were composed mostly of recent immigrants, including Muslims from Syria; Jews from Eastern Europe; Catholics from Cuba, Ireland, and Southern Europe; and African Americans and women.

Throughout our history and through diverse pathways, our alumni have often overcome great hardships to find their way to Brooklyn Law, sometimes studying at night while working to provide for their families, and have gone on to careers of enormous impact, transforming the fortunes of their families and the clients and communities they serve, at the highest levels of law practice, public service, and business.

We remain that same diverse and vibrant community today, and are defined by the same values of ambition, excellence, opportunity, and service to others. At my

installation as Dean, I was honored to be introduced by one of our current students,

Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn '24, who has juggled night classes as a law student while also serving as majority whip of the New York State Assembly. A first-generation American and the first Haitian-American elected to public office in New York City, she drew on her own experience of hardship and loss to enter public life and champion new laws to protect women and to help people with experiences like her own confront injustice and create better lives for their families.

And, though Bichotte Hermelyn is extraordinary, she is hardly alone. I've met many other students with their own inspiring stories and ambitions: a veteran excelling in his studies while raising small children; a student displaced by civil war who grew up mostly in refugee camps and is now dedicating herself to a career advancing human rights in conflict zones; and many more.

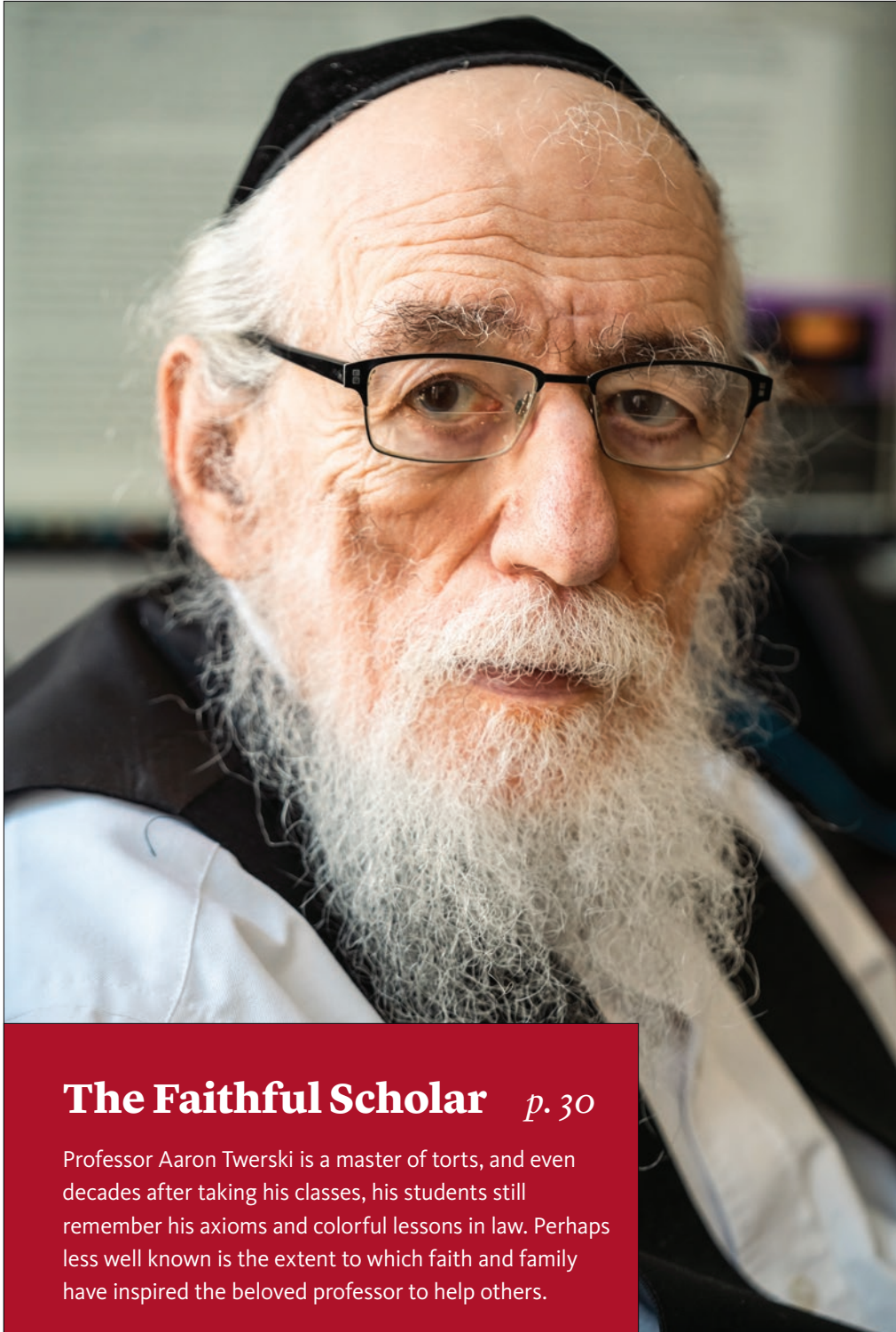
At a time when our world seems increasingly fragile and buffeted by conflict and division, Brooklyn Law School's mission of welcoming exceptionally talented students from diverse backgrounds and life experiences and preparing them for transformational leadership has never been more vital.

Our alumni, faculty, staff, and students are all essential partners in that compelling mission. I look forward to working with you in this important and exciting journey ahead!

David D. Meyer
President, Joseph Crea Dean, and Professor of Law

Contents

Features



The Faithful Scholar *p. 30*

Professor Aaron Twerski is a master of torts, and even decades after taking his classes, his students still remember his axioms and colorful lessons in law. Perhaps less well known is the extent to which faith and family have inspired the beloved professor to help others.



Taking the Lead

Newly installed President and Joseph Crea Dean David D. Meyer sits down for a Q&A, giving a clear-eyed take on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. *p. 18*



Rethinking Justice

A new Center for Criminal Justice program is giving criminal law classes a jolt of reality by fusing the voices of formerly incarcerated people with the curriculum. *p. 24*

Departments

1 **Dean's Message**

4 **Discovery**

Get to know members of the incoming J.D. class, and hear from three new associate deans and our library director. Plus: Clinic updates and other campus happenings.

10 **Forerunners**

Find out why alumni Joseph Bondy '94, Anna Ashurov '12, and Jessica Lipson '05, are in the vanguard of new fields of law—cannabis, fintech, and artificial intelligence, respectively.

35 **The Consensus Builder**

At a symposium in his honor, scholars and experts praised Professor Neil Cohen for his expertise in the harmonization of commercial law, and his ability to find common ground.

36 **Faculty Highlights**

Meet our newest professors and dive into the details of the faculty's latest scholarship and media mentions.

40 **Alumni Events**

Our new alumni dinner format was a hit, allowing junior attorneys to join the party, where three esteemed alumni were honored. Plus: Business Boot Camp celebrates its 10th year of bringing alumni speakers into the classroom.

42 **Alumni Impact**

A scholarship in memory of Hon. Ralph Sansone '79 gets a major boost, the alumni community unites to fund a new bar prep program, and more.

46 **Class Notes**

50 **In Memoriam**

52 **In Closing**

Ruth Bader Ginsburg Professor of Law Susan Herman shares insights from her new book, *Advanced Introduction to US Civil Liberties*, including why civil libertarians have reason to be hopeful.

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DISCOVERY

Welcome to a Promising Incoming Class



"I want to be someone people can rely on, a leader, and a decision-maker. There is a clear correlation between those things I learned in the Army and what I'll learn in law school."

—Willis Huynh '26



"I am hopeful that law school will provide me with the skill sets to do more direct impact work."

—Eve Zelickson '26



"I eventually found entertainment law as the connection between the logical thinking I was using as an analyst and the passion I have for music."

—William Von Toussaint '26

BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL welcomed nearly 400 students at Convocation, and each one of those gathering for the Aug. 21 event in the ceremonial courtroom inside the U.S. District Courthouse for the Eastern District of New York had a unique story of how and why they had arrived there.

Some had previously worked in the legal field, like **Shivani Parshad '26**, who spent three years as a paralegal for the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York. A native of Baltimore, she earned degrees in political science and international relations from Boston University before arriving in New York City. Parshad expressed excitement about starting her law school journey, especially after hearing positive remarks from numerous alumni.

"Several attorneys I worked with attended Brooklyn Law School, and they all spoke highly of their experience," Parshad said. "Learning from these alums solidified my decision. They emphasized the opportunities for public interest work here, which made it seem like the perfect fit for me."

Another entering student was **Willis Huynh '26**, a native New Yorker who discovered a strong connection between his military service and the legal field while attending the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. During his time at West Point, Huynh played Division I golf, honed his leadership skills, and developed a desire to represent those in need.

"I found a strong through-line between what I want to do as an attorney and the work I did while serving," said Huynh. "I want to be someone people can rely on, a leader, and a decision-maker. There is a clear correlation between those things I learned in the Army and what I'll learn in law school."

Another new student, **William Von Toussaint '26**, grew up on Long Island, and returned to the region after earning degrees in mathematics and economics from the University of California, San Diego. Law was not initially on his radar, but music was. Von Toussaint plays multiple instruments, and has been composing songs and producing music for years. Now, he's eager to begin law school and hopes to combine his skills as an analytical thinker and a creative individual to advocate for artists.

"I eventually found entertainment law as the

connection between the logical thinking I was using as an analyst and the passion I have for music," said Von Toussaint. "I'm excited to get to Brooklyn Law School and learn about the music industry from a legal perspective."

Joanna Algera '26, a competitive figure skater as a child in the Midwest, continued competing nationally and internationally while attending Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, before deciding to pursue law.

"At Convocation, I was thinking about figure skating, something I was once a beginner at and now I'm proficient in, and how it will be similar to law school. All those clichéd life lessons you learn through sports really are true, and I'm using them now," said Algera. "I learned to focus on my work, put my nose to the grindstone, accept failures and success—I really see that parallel between sports and beginning law school."

When the pandemic disrupted her figure skating pursuits, Algera redirected her attention toward the legal realm, founding a thriving Women in Law club at Miami University for aspiring attorneys.

Eve Zelickson '26, a newly appointed Edward V. Sparer Public Interest Law Fellow from Minneapolis, graduated from Brown University in 2019 with a degree in science, technology, and society. Before starting law school, she worked as a researcher at Data & Society studying issues at the intersection of technology, labor, health, and privacy.

"I was very invested in the research I was conducting at Data & Society," said Zelickson. "But depending on the type of project, research can feel like it is happening in a vacuum. I am hopeful that law school will provide me with the skill sets to do more direct impact work."

—Julia Rafferty

CLASS STATISTICS

- 364 students in the three-year and 23 in the four-year J.D. program
- Students hail from 36 U.S. states and six foreign countries
- Students speak 42 non-English languages and dialects, including Creole, Kazakh, and Twi
- 66 students are first-generation Americans
- Seven students are LL.M.s, including students from Pakistan, France, and the Russian Federation

Class of 2023 Celebrates Commencement Day at BAM

MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 2023 may have started their Brooklyn Law School journey on Zoom, but they finished it in real life—and gloriously—with a Commencement Day 2023 celebration that reflected pride in their hard-won accomplishments and a determination to bring about change in the world.

After gathering on May 16 at the elegant Peter Jay Sharp Building at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, 379 Brooklyn Law School students received their J.D. degrees and 11 were presented their LL.M. degrees on a stage bedecked with vibrant flowers, as friends, family, peers, and the entire school community cheered them on. Chairman of the Board of Trustees **Frank Aquila '83** presented an honorary Juris Doctor Honoris Causa degree to New York Attorney General **Hon. Letitia “Tish” James**, who gave a fiery commencement address, urging graduates to use their legal skills to fight for freedom, progress, and unity. Other featured speakers included Valedictorian **Hayley A. Bork '23** and **Matthew Lign Fulton '23**, who was elected student speaker.



“When I think about our class, I think about a group of people who ask the important questions, who wonder why things are the way they are... We are a group of people who faced all the obstacles imaginable to get to this moment.”

—HAYLEY A. BORK '23
(ABOVE)



“We find our nation at war with itself. We are more divided now than we’ve been since the Civil War, and so we need all of you to turn this country around. We will need your energy, your passion, and your sense of purpose. We need bold leaders with iron constitutions and impeccable training and the drive to get us back on the right track and to bring us together.”

—HON. LETITIA “TISH” JAMES
(ABOVE)

New Associate Dean Roles Keep Students in Focus

THREE NEW ASSOCIATE DEAN POSITIONS announced this summer bring new faces to roles that are designed to support students and their educational experience in numerous ways.

One new appointment marks an exciting transition for Associate Dean **Karen Porter**, who has been the inaugural Arthur Pinto & Stephen Bohlen Associate Dean of Inclusion & Diversity since January 2020. Porter is now the Associate Dean for Academic and Student Success, a new role that focuses on supporting students and leading schoolwide efforts to guide students through their law school experience. Although academic success is not a new focus for Brooklyn Law School, this is the first time an associate dean has been dedicated to the effort.

“We want to have the success of our students at the center of everything we do,” Porter said. “It’s not just academic success in the sense of what and how students are doing in the classroom, but really a more holistic approach to student success that includes broader aspects of what it means to succeed in law school and in the profession. Over the course of their studies, students often change their goals and adjust their expectations about what it means to carve out a space for themselves in the legal profession. And that can be really challenging, particularly for first-generation students who might not have a clear idea of what a career path looks like.”

Even before Porter officially started her new role, she helped enlist **Linda Feldman ’83**, Associate Professor of Legal Writing Emerita, who is serving as the Director of Bar Preparation and Adjunct Professor of Law. Feldman, a pioneering force in academic success programming at Brooklyn Law School, launched a new bar prep offering this summer that included popular faculty-led workshops on topics such as constitutional law with Professor **Alice Ristroph** and contracts with Professor **Michael Gerber**. Other pivotal members of the team are Assistant Professors of Academic Success **Cherie N. Brown** and **Flora Midwood**, who also serves as the Assistant Director of the Academic Success Program, and Assistant Professor of Legal Writing **Meg Holzer**.

Stepping in to fill Porter’s role of Associate Dean of Inclusion & Diversity is Professor **Joy Kanwar**, who teaches legal writing courses at Brooklyn Law School. Her recent scholarship explores questions about inclusion and exclusion in immigration and citizenship law through historical and narrative lenses.

Kanwar said she is excited to follow in the footsteps of Porter, who did a “phenomenal” job and

enlisted the community to take ownership in the school’s diversity and inclusion efforts.

“I’m just generally motivated by community building and by making the student experience as positive as it can be for everybody,” Kanwar said. “The norm of the law school experience, or what we assume law school is going to be, is not very inclusive of all communities. So, my overall goal is to make the school more welcoming—even incrementally—and build a sense of belonging among our community.”

One of her initial goals is to lead efforts to restore the sense of community and “the grace we gave each other” before the pandemic, Kanwar said.

“My experience has always been that the students care a lot about our community, and I want us to be able to do well by our students and by our staff and by our faculty,” she added. As part of those efforts, Kanwar is working with Ruth Bader Ginsburg Professor of Law **Susan Herman** to bring greater awareness to Native American and indigenous law within the school’s curriculum this year.

Also taking on a new role is Professor **Susan Hazeldean**, who was named the Associate Dean of Experiential Education, a leadership position long held by Professor **Stacy Caplow**, who launched the school’s first in-house clinic in 1976 and expanded it over nearly five decades.

Hazeldean, founding director of the LGBTQ Advocacy Clinic, credits Caplow for building Brooklyn Law School’s clinical education program into one that is nationally renowned and said she is “honored” and “humbled” to step into the role.

“Our students are passionate and dedicated; they want a chance to build their practical skills while they’re still in law school, which is what experiential education is all about,” Hazeldean said. “Our in-house clinical program is second to none, and I feel so lucky to work with such a diverse and amazing range of talented scholars and teachers every day. We also have wonderful adjunct professors who contribute to our program in numerous ways, both in our skills courses, and also in teaching externships and hybrid clinics.”

One immediate plan she has is to expand the clinics program with a new offering. Professor **Aissatou Barry**, who was newly hired as Assistant Professor, will be starting a Housing Justice Clinic, focused on eviction prevention, in the spring 2024 semester.

“It’s going to be an incredible opportunity for our students,” Hazeldean said. “Professor Barry is doing cutting-edge work protecting the basic rights of New Yorkers to safe, secure housing.”



Associate Dean for Academic and Student Success
Karen Porter



Arthur Pinto & Stephen Bohlen Associate Dean of Inclusion & Diversity
Joy Kanwar



Associate Dean of Experiential Education
Susan Hazeldean

Brittany Persson '07 on AI's Impact on Research, Her First Year as Library Director

FOR BRITTANY PERSSON '07, walking into the Brooklyn Law School Library as its new director, 15 years after she had graduated, was a heady experience.

"As a student, I was one of the first people in the library in the morning, and one of the last out in the evening," Persson said. She recalls her favorite study haunts—a nook in the lower level of the library, and the second table on the left in the Professor Joseph Crea Reading Room—and remembers leaving the quiet spaces to converse with other students near the elevators, something students continue to do today.

Since she assumed her official role as library director and assistant professor of law on July 1, 2022, some things have changed. These include legal research instruction taught by law librarians, which not only focuses on legal research but also integrates emerging technologies and their impact on how legal research is conducted. Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of those newer technologies.

"We've always incorporated information literacy into our research instruction. AI and algorithms have been a part of all the databases that we have been teaching on, which means that as AI has evolved, we have adapted our information literacy instruction to reflect those changes," Persson said.

Recent versions of AI include generative and conversational AI, which can be used to produce diverse types of content, including text, imagery, audio, computer code, and simulations. In class, Persson

recommends students use it as a tool, for example, if they need help phrasing something that they are writing, but cautions them not to rely on it.

"Students must make sure that they verify the information and that they don't use what the tool gives them as their final draft," Persson said. "They definitely need to tweak what they gather and make it their own."

Also, they must remember that information from free AI tools such as Bing, ChatGPT, or Bard do not have up-to-date information, with some only being trained on data through September 2021, for example.

Persson earned her master's in library science from St. John's University and joined Brooklyn Law School from Seton Hall School of Law where she was an associate professor and head of public service. She is grateful to have inherited an outstanding team at the Law School.

"When you talk to students or faculty, they rave about the services and the collection of the Law School library. My goal is to provide the team with the support necessary to continue to provide amazing services and to make sure that we are all staying up to date with the changes that are happening and trends," Persson said.

One trend, over the last year, is the addition of standing desks throughout the library, including some small portable ones in the computer lab and freestanding desks in other sections.

One thing that's stayed the same? Persson feels right at home in the library.



Library Director
Brittany Persson '07

Dean's Research Scholars and New Directors Appointed

PROFESSOR WILFRED CODRINGTON III and Professor **Alexis Hoag-Fordjour** were appointed as Dean's Research Scholars, a special form of faculty recognition that carries a three-year term.

Codrington, a constitutional law scholar with a focus on constitutional reform, election law, and voting rights, co-authored *The People's Constitution: 200 Years, 27 Amendments, and the Promise of a More Perfect Union*.

Hoag-Fordjour teaches and writes in the areas of criminal law and procedure, evidence, and abolition, and co-directs the Center for Criminal Justice. Her scholarship interrogates the policies, doctrines, and practices within the criminal legal system that erode constitutional rights and perpetuate racial subordination.

Brooklyn Law School alumna **Diane Penneys Edelman '83** has been named permanent director of the international program after serving as a visiting director in spring 2023. In addition to coordinating all aspects of international programs for LL.M. and J.D. students, Edelman is an adjunct professor of law.

Professor **Prianka Nair**, an assistant professor of clinical law who was co-director of the Disability and Civil Rights Clinic, is now full director of the clinic.

Professors of Legal Writing **Heidi Gilchrist** and **Maria Termini** are now co-directors of legal research and writing. Gilchrist's scholarship focuses on national security law issues, and Termini's focus is on legal education pedagogy.

Criminal Defense and Advocacy Clinic Advocates for Incarcerated Survivors



L-R: Professor **Elizabeth Isaacs**, co-counsel **Kate Skolnick** from the Center for Appellate Litigation, CDAC's client right after his release, and **Katie Anderson '23**.



Rahmel Lee Robinson '24 outside Albany County Court after winning resentencing for an incarcerated survivor of domestic violence under the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act.

SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE who are currently incarcerated in New York State prisons continued to find their way to freedom, thanks to the work of the Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic (CDAC) and its interdisciplinary collective, the Survivors Justice Project.

Led this past academic year by Professor **Kate Mogulescu** and Visiting Assistant Professor **Elizabeth Isaacs**, the clinic had 16 student participants, including eight new students and eight who returned for the advanced clinic. The clinic's focus has been investigating, drafting, and litigating resentencing motions under the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA), a groundbreaking New York law passed in 2019 that allows for post-conviction sentencing reductions. Other clinic projects include clemency petitions, parole advocacy, and reinvestigation of claims of actual innocence. Over the 2022–23 academic year, CDAC students visited numerous people in prison, also building relationships with survivors serving extreme sentences.

Students have also interviewed witnesses,

prepared clients for meetings with prosecutors, negotiated with district attorneys' offices, worked with expert witnesses, drafted and filed motions and advocacy letters, and appeared in court. CDAC has achieved 11 resentencing victories in a span of three years across 10 New York counties.

Most recently, on Aug. 4, **Rahmel Lee Robinson '24** won resentencing in Albany County Court for an incarcerated survivor with help from Mogulescu and recent graduates **Gregory Chang '23** and **Taylor Ramirez '23**. Resentencing subtracted nearly a decade from her earliest possible release and eliminated a potential life sentence.

Earlier in the year, CDAC welcomed home another survivor who had been incarcerated for 11 years after successfully gaining a significant sentence reduction on a manslaughter conviction in the Bronx. The client was the first person in New York State resentenced under the DVSJA whose case involved intimate partner violence between gay male partners. The resentencing reclaimed over nine additional years of incarceration. Multiple student teams worked on this case under the supervision of Mogulescu and Isaacs, and those instrumental in its outcome included **Katie Anderson '23**, **Paige Massaker '23**, **Elizabeth Feinberg '22**, and **Rebekah Otis '22**.

BLIP Goes to SCOTUS in Artificial Intelligence Case

CAN AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM receive a U.S. patent and be considered the legal creator of an invention? That question was at the heart of *Thaler v. Vidal*, a case that the Supreme Court was asked to review involving copyright protection for AI-created works.

This spring, Professor **Jonathan Askin** and his students in the Brooklyn Law Incubator and Policy (BLIP) clinic and a group of Chicago-based patent lawyers filed an amicus brief supporting computer scientist Stephen Thaler, the founder of Imagination Engines, an advanced artificial neural network technology firm. Thaler argued that his Device for the Autonomous Bootstrapping of Unified Sentience (DABUS) system created unique prototypes for a beverage holder and emergency light beacon entirely on its own and should be granted a patent.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and a federal

judge in Virginia rejected his patent applications on the grounds that DABUS is not a person. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit upheld those decisions last year, asserting that U.S. patent law unambiguously requires inventors to be human beings.

In the brief, Askin and the clinic students argued that the U.S. Supreme Court should take up a review of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's refusal to issue patents to inventions developed by AI programs. "We argue that the U.S. needs a clear policy on how to use AI as a vehicle for invention and innovation," Askin said. "Without such clarity, the U.S. will take a back seat to countries with clear rules on AI's use in inventorship."

The brief claimed that the federal circuit court's decision "may have a chilling effect on innovation and scientific discovery." Unfortunately, the Court denied certiorari in the case in April.

New School Year Begins with Flurry of Activities

AS SUMMER TRANSITIONED TO FALL, the Brooklyn Law School community came together for a new school year that quickly afforded rich opportunities to meet, reunite, and celebrate. The new chapter kicked off with a mix of formal events, such as Commencement 2023, and less formal soirees, including a series of Meet the Dean events for new Brooklyn Law School Joseph Crea Dean David D. Meyer, on-campus fairs for student groups, orientation mixers, and ice cream socials.



Brooklyn Law School's annual Service Day, a signature event hosted by the Public Service Law Center, saw a historic turnout this year, with 120 incoming 1Ls and returning student leaders volunteering across nine distinct community organizations, getting to know one another along the way. Here, students at One Love Community Fridge, in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, prepare eggs for distribution to community refrigerators.



An on-campus event led off a series of Meet the Dean events held throughout the region, including in Manhattan, Connecticut, and Long Island, to welcome David D. Meyer as new dean.



The Muslim Law Students Association was among the dozens of groups participating in the Student Organization and Pro Bono Fair.



L-R: **Hon. Ramon Reyes, Jr. '92**, U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Eastern District of New York and a member of the Brooklyn Law School Board of Trustees, administered an oath of professionalism to the incoming class at Convocation 2023, joining newly appointed Dean David D. Meyer for the formal ceremony.



Brooklyn Law School student organizations hosted a hugely successful Affinity Group Introductory Mixer for a group of 150 arriving first-year students, exchange students, and LL.M. students, capping off orientation.

Forerunn

Just a few years ago, legal recreational cannabis, fintech (financial technology), and artificial intelligence (AI), were fringe topics.

Now, nearly half of U.S. states, including New York, have legalized recreational cannabis, and it is a signature scent on the streets of New York City. Most people have at least heard of blockchain; other fintech platforms, such as mobile payment or investment apps, are common. Seemingly everyone is using platforms like ChatGPT for fun, or to streamline their work.

What unites these three disparate industries is that they are each just hitting what some call “the Overton window,” a model for how societal ideas evolve over time.

“The Overton window is a concept that says until there is critical mass, nothing happens on an issue, but all of a sudden the popular zeitgeist has a dramatic shift, and practices and policies that seemed untenable become completely viable,” said Professor Jonathan Askin, the founder and director of the Brooklyn Law Incubator & Policy (BLIP)

ers

Clinic and the innovation catalyst for the Center for Urban Business Entrepreneurship (CUBE). According to Askin, “like gay marriage circa 2012, cannabis legalization is now hitting the Overton window and its inevitability.”

Each industry has legal issues that need to be addressed. With cannabis, legalization in numerous states has prompted a reexamination of federal laws that currently classify cannabis as a tightly regulated Schedule 1 controlled substance, on par with

heroin. In fintech, there’s a growing need for lawyers to intercede between technologists who “run roughshod” over the rules, and conservative policymakers who want to crack down on financial technology, Askin said. Finally, for AI, the questions relate to privacy, copyright and invention, cybersecurity, authenticity, global competitiveness, and a slew of ethics issues.

Meet the Brooklyn Law School alumni who leapt into these cutting-edge areas well ahead of the pack.

Cultivating a Cannabis Law Practice

Joseph Bondy '94

Joseph Bondy '94 has gained international recognition not only for his criminal litigation work on behalf of high-profile clients—most recently, former Rudy Giuliani associate Lev Parnas—but also for what Politico called his “chess-playing” legal tactics and the *New York Times* described as his “oratorical intensity.”

What drives him, though, is a desire to help others. Bondy often tells students in Cardozo School of Law’s annual Intensive Trial Advocacy Program, for which he is a faculty member, that it is crucial to find commonality with clients, as he did with Parnas, who was initially scoffed at but became a media hero for his role in the Donald Trump impeachment case.

“You’re dealing with people who are in pain or hurt and who are frequently on the fringe and have been put down and pushed and kept down,” Bondy said. “Being able to understand them and develop a trust relationship with your clients is the most important key to your success.”

Also dubbed one of the nation’s preeminent cannabis attorneys, he has helped innovate the practice of cannabis law while monitoring its evolution from criminal defense to a more complex mix of civil issues and business strategy. Bondy points to a 2015 case as a watershed moment: His client was convicted on marijuana trafficking charges in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York but received a 15-month sentence instead of a minimum of 10 years.

“We lost the trial but won the sentence, and that proved to be the straw that broke the camel’s back,” Bondy said. “It was no longer worth it for the Southern District to commonly pursue these marijuana-only criminal matters.”

Other recent legal victories echo the same theme: A federal court granted a narcotics conspiracy client early termination of supervised release so that the man, a registered medical cannabis patient, could use medical cannabis—one of the first federal instances of such relief. Most recently, a federal judge allowed another of Bondy’s clients to consume medical marijuana while still on supervised release.

Bondy foresees a future in which cannabis will be “legal like lettuce,” meaning accessible and socially normalized as a product that “would be held to the same regulatory standards as anything else we ingest, but that anyone can grow or sell without requiring security guards or bureaucratic red tape.

“If you are trying to obstruct the flow of cannabis, you will always lose,” Bondy continued. “When you try to enact protectionist barriers to the entry into the cannabis licensing scheme—whether high costs of entry, or criteria such as having a criminal background or requirements for where you reside—ultimately, you’ll lose. Cannabis should be something that’s available to everybody so that we are not placing people into an illicit market, relegated to the shadows.”

Bondy has been a legal cannabis advocate since early

adulthood and became a lifetime member of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) after passing the bar; he now sits on its board of directors.

A Manhattan native, Bondy attended the Bronx High School of Science and earned a psychology degree from Columbia University. When his mother asked him what he planned to do next, he responded sarcastically that he would be a mob lawyer; without missing a beat, she told him to apply to Brooklyn Law School. He was accepted and found his fate sealed on multiple fronts. “I met my wife [Meeka Bondy '94] on the first day of class—she was the first person I locked eyes on,” Bondy recalled. “I have an enormous place in my heart for Brooklyn Law School.”

An internship at the Federal Defenders of New York in the Eastern District prompted him to consider applying for a similar role at the Justice Department, but Bondy was put off by the application’s drug-use question—which covered cannabis.

“From that moment onward, I began to think more about who is excluded from what, because of their cannabis use,” Bondy said. “When I started to study the minutiae of the then-mandatory federal sentencing guidelines, including the mandatory minimums applying to various federal convictions, I became really interested, and cannabis was the most relatable vector. Everything else flowed from there.”

A believer in learning criminal defense litigation from masters, he found one in the late Robert Fogelnest, a former president of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. Bondy had witnessed Fogelnest in action in court, and when they were both at a National Criminal Defense College event, Bondy seized the moment and asked to work with him.

Fogelnest’s response was curt: “Who are you? I don’t need associates; I do my own lawyering.” Bondy, at 28, was ultimately offered an office to rent in his mentor’s suite, understanding that he needed to bring his own clients and would likely have little overflow work in an office where the other lawyers were decades older. Bondy learned that Fogelnest’s gruffness masked kindness: he would “break you down, but then build you up,” Bondy recalled.

“At the end of this experience,” Fogelnest told him, “perhaps things will flip around, and you’ll be renting me an office and bringing me into cases for as little as you can pay.” They worked together until 2008, when Fogelnest retired. Bondy keeps a photo of his mentor, sporting long tousled hair, behind where his clients sit. He hopes to see a more inclusive reality for cannabis consumers in the wake of increasing legalization nationwide.

“I didn’t fight for legalization so that everyone could open a dispensary,” Bondy said. “My hope was that the next generation could be anything they want to be without suffering the criminal consequences and stigma of cannabis prohibition. And that is a big part of why, today, I immensely enjoy the smell of cannabis, redolent in the streets of New York, everywhere you go.” ■

—Teresa Novellino

“When you try to enact protectionist barriers to the entry into the cannabis licensing scheme...ultimately, you’ll lose.”



Fintech Flightpath

Anna Ashurov '12

In some ways, **Anna Ashurov '12** was a nontraditional law student. When she enrolled in Brooklyn Law School's evening program, she already had a successful career in finance with no plans to leave it behind after obtaining her J.D. She was also a new mother, with a 1-year-old daughter who was only her first: A second child was born during winter break of her third year.

But in many ways, Ashurov was the quintessential Brooklyn Law School student. Ambitious, intellectually curious, and hardworking, she jumped right into the Law School community. She was the 1L evening delegate to the Student Bar Association, an associate editor on the *Brooklyn Journal of International Law*, and a self-described "sponge," taking in all the experiences and knowledge she could.

Today, she continues to defy labels, shape her own path, and enthusiastically take on new challenges.

Currently, Ashurov is the global head of commercial operations and client contracting for Aladdin, the investment management fintech (financial technology) platform of BlackRock. The role combines her interests in technology and client relations, as she spends her days interacting with the asset managers, financial institutions, and others who use Aladdin as well as helping to develop and maintain the technology to operate the platform. She also negotiates and structures contracts and commercial arrangements.

In addition, Ashurov leads the nonprofit Diversity in Blockchain, which she founded in 2016 with four other women to address the disparities they saw in who had access to crypto and blockchain technologies. The organization seeks to promote diversity in both the individuals who make up the industry and users of blockchain and other financial technologies. While offering traditional networking events for technology professionals, Diversity in Blockchain also provides educational programs, such as a recent workshop that taught people how to set up digital wallets.

Ashurov notes that as blockchain and related technologies have entered the mainstream, more diverse individuals have gotten involved in various business roles and as consumers. Even so, she hopes to continue creating even broader opportunities in fintech.

Ashurov came to the U.S. from Russia as a refugee when she was a teenager, with her parents and two younger sisters. When she was only 15, she enrolled at Baruch College and eventually earned a bachelor's degree in business administration.

During the 2008 financial crisis, she was working in the restructuring group at Barclays Investment Bank and became enamored with working on complex deals during a high-stakes period.

"I was fascinated by the work that restructuring attorneys were doing at the time. I saw myself being successful and

gaining an additional skill set and being able to negotiate and structure deals with the best outcomes for both clients and the firm," Ashurov recalled. "I decided at the time that I would love to get that muscle by going to law school."

Paradoxically, although Ashurov took plenty of corporate and bankruptcy classes at Brooklyn Law, her favorite classes were the ones that had nothing to do with her job, such as criminal law, civil procedure, and torts, topics that entailed the use of logical reasoning and critical thinking.

After law school, Ashurov took a position at Goldman Sachs, where she continued to work on structuring transactions. In 2019, she transitioned to commercial strategy with Anheuser-Busch InBev. She enjoyed learning about operations and being on the consumer side of the business, but she missed the financial industry. Her role today with BlackRock combines her understanding of tech transactions and operations and her interest in the consumer experience.

Although Ashurov has never held the job title of counsel, her ability to understand both the business and the legal sides helps her partner with the legal team and clients. "My law degree is highly valuable, because I can have a conversation with clients about rights and remedies, roles and obligations and responsibilities, and the technology and cybersecurity risk and the information security provisions and data sharing and intellectual property rights," she noted. "I can have a very informed conversation with our clients on all of these essential aspects of any technology contract."


Ashurov has been active in the Brooklyn Law School alumni community. She served on the Recent Graduate Board of Trustees and Women's Leadership Circle. She encourages current students to be active in the Law School, and to take advantage of what the school offers.

"You're paying for your education; you're out there to be a sponge. Take in as much as you can, because it helps to shape your career or helps to shape who you are. You should be absorbing all of it," Ashurov said.


She is also eager to tell students and young alumni about her own somewhat unconventional direction.

"My perspective is different, and can be helpful, especially to those alumni who are not necessarily sure of what they want to do," she said. "There are lots of different ways that you can apply your law degree. Staying on the business side is not necessarily one that comes to mind, and technically, never practicing law also does not come to mind for someone who decides to go to law school, but I think that it's helpful to bring that type of perspective to students and alumni in their career exploration stage." ■

—Suzi Morales



“There are lots of different ways that you can apply your law degree. Staying on the business side is not necessarily one that comes to mind, but I think that it’s helpful to bring that type of perspective.”



“As individuals and as companies, we’re going to be able to do lots of things that we couldn’t do before. These systems are truly powerful and also improving at a rapid pace.”

Not-So-Artificial Intelligence

Jessica Lipson '05

Long before she became an expert on artificial intelligence (AI), **Jessica Lipson '05** was an expert on emotional intelligence.

As a partner and co-chair of the Technology, Data & IP Department at Morrison Cohen in New York, Lipson advises an ever-increasing number of clients on the legal implications of AI. She has also written prolifically on the topic, including as a quarterly contributor for Reuters. Despite her cutting-edge practice focused on technology transactions, her career has been shaped by the old-fashioned relationship building that will always have a place in the practice of law.

Armed with an undergraduate degree in chemical

engineering and a minor in environmental engineering, Lipson worked for several years as an engineer at Merck, and went to law school with an eye toward practicing environmental law. Brooklyn Law School offered her not only the flexibility to continue working during her legal studies, but also a pragmatic approach to training lawyers and a variety of clinics. She started as an evening student before transferring to the day program.

At Brooklyn Law School, Lipson cut her teeth advising artists on copyright and other legal issues under Professor of Law Emerita **Beryl Jones-Woodin**. It was here that Lipson began learning to manage client relationships, a skill that remains

time into sitting in on meetings and learning the vocabulary of tech transactions. Eventually, she transitioned away from the environmental group and into the tech transaction department. She's been doing tech work ever since.

Under the umbrella of technology, Lipson has a diverse practice. Clients come from finance, professional services, software development, consumer-facing platforms, and more. "It's never boring. There's always a new problem to solve, or the same problem to solve in a different industry or in a different scenario," she said. "So your thinking cap is always on."

Right now, of course, many clients are considering the potential uses of and legal challenges relating to AI. Although some have been using AI tools for quite some time, others are encountering the technology for the first time with the emergence of generative AI. Lipson also is currently the head of Morrison Cohen's AI task force, which helps the firm shape its own policies and procedures on using AI tools.

Lipson has focused particularly on generative AI in her writing on the topic. In just a few months during the summer of 2023, she published articles on AI's use for in-house counsel, employment issues involving autonomous tools, privacy issues related to AI, and more.

"As individuals and as companies, we're going to be able to do lots of things that we couldn't do before," said Lipson. "These systems are truly powerful and also improving at a rapid pace."

At the same time, Lipson warns of the potential harms of increasingly sophisticated AI, from more effective phishing schemes to the use of AI to develop dangerous pathogens. Although many existing laws, such as criminal and intellectual property laws, can be applied to AI, she would like to see a proactive but measured approach taken toward developing the legal and regulatory framework.

Lipson compares the current AI landscape to the early days of social media, when governments took a wait-and-see approach and ultimately ended up warning parents about social media's negative impact on children's mental health. "Let's get ahead of this now," she said. "This has potential to impact a lot more people in a lot more serious ways, so I think that being a little proactive would probably be wise. But it is a complex issue. We're hoping in the industry that reasonable legislation is enacted."

Her practice may focus on computer networks, but Lipson continues to focus on building human networks. Since the pandemic, she has split her time between remote and in-person work. She is deliberate about connecting with her practice group, both through frequent Zoom interactions and through decidedly more old-school connections. "The whole firm basically comments on how the IP department is always going out having fun together," Lipson said. "We go bowling together. We do all kinds of fun things. We're the envy of the firm."

Despite a busy schedule, Lipson continues to prioritize mentoring younger attorneys. "Those mentoring relationships were so important to me as I was coming up, and I had the right people to help me, to coach me, to guide me, to give me that savvy advice," she said. "So I want to be able to pay that forward and provide that same support to my team." ■ —Suzi Morales

central to her work today. "[Jones-Woodin] really let us do what we needed to do and stood back and provided the supervision we needed without micromanaging us," Lipson said.

Early in Lipson's practice, her work focused on environmental law counseling for mergers and other transactions. But in early 2008, the financial crisis brought those transactions to a halt.

As Lipson's work slowed down, she noticed something: The tech transactional partner with an office near hers was always busy. While collecting papers at the printer they shared, Lipson peppered him with questions about his work. Before long, she began assisting the partner. She invested nonbillable



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King the Lead

New President and Joseph Crea Dean David D. Meyer discusses his plans and priorities, the challenges and opportunities ahead, and the crucial role that the entire community—faculty, students, and alumni—plays in maintaining Brooklyn Law School as a beacon of excellence.

BY TERESA NOVELLINO
PORTRAIT BY TODD FRANCE

Front row, L–R: Stanley A. August Professor William Araiza, Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn '24, Dean David D. Meyer, and Board of Trustees Chair Frank Aquila '83 are seated in the front row at Dean Meyer's formal installation ceremony. In the second row, far left, is Meyer's wife, Jeffrey D. Forchelli Professor Amy Gajda.

President and Joseph Crea Dean David D. Meyer welcomed the new Brooklyn Law School class at Convocation this summer and described feeling, as a brand-new dean, like an honorary member of their class.

Yet Meyer, the 10th Brooklyn Law School dean since the institution's founding in 1901, is far from a novice, having led Tulane Law School for 13 years, a tenure that made him the seventh-longest-serving law school dean in the United States. Since his July 1 appointment, Meyer has plunged into a whirlwind of meetings and gatherings with faculty, students, and alumni. He donned gardening gloves and grabbed a shovel to work side by side with students at Service Day in Prospect Park, joined a group of alumni at the famed Brooklyn steakhouse Peter Luger, and attended a political gala with **Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn '24**, a student who is also majority whip of the New York State Assembly and the chair of the Brooklyn Democratic Party.

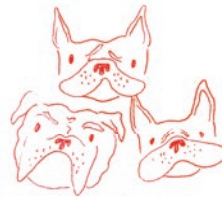
Some of the things that drew him to Brooklyn Law School, where he previously taught as a visiting professor, were its inclusive mission, which aligns with his passion for promoting access to legal education, and its progressive ethos, which he summed up in his Convocation speech:

“By embracing talent and ambition that had been turned away elsewhere, Brooklyn Law School has been a beacon of excellence and an engine of social mobility and transformation for generations of our graduates and their families, but also for the clients and the communities they have gone to serve, oftentimes communities that were not well represented by access to the justice system,” Meyer told students. “So I welcome you to the adventure ahead.”

He talked about his own adventure in an interview with *Brooklyn Law Notes*.

You and your wife, Jeffrey D. Forchelli Professor Amy Gajda, both taught here as visiting professors in 2008. What brought you back to Brooklyn Law School?

Our time here at Brooklyn Law School left a powerful impression on us, both professionally and personally. We were so impressed at the distinctive strengths of the faculty and the students. For example, I taught both the regular Family Law course and a seminar on issues relating to parents and children and state authority, and I was amazed that the seminar class included students who were longtime veteran child-welfare caseworkers, people working in the juvenile justice system, and others who had law enforcement experience. It just made classroom discussions so much richer, to draw on the student experience and expertise represented. That sort of exceptional quality is something that you do not find at most other law schools. The faculty is so strong as both scholars and teachers, and it was very exciting to be a part of this community. Finally, of course, Brooklyn itself was and is so vibrant and creative—and that made being here professionally as a teacher and scholar even richer and more exciting.



Meyer and Gajda own two French bulldogs named Marcel and Mimi, and an English bulldog named Birdie. Walking the trio around Brooklyn is a “two-person operation,” he said.

What inspired you to become a lawyer?

My family moved to Tallahassee, Fla., from the college town of Grinnell, Iowa, when I was in first grade, just as Tallahassee was really getting serious about desegregating the schools. I attended a new school designed to be a magnet school. This was very much a time when my mom was politically active and involved with civil rights and social justice issues, and for me as a child it was an awakening to the profound issues of inequality and injustice. That was really the origin of my interest in the role that lawyers have in addressing those problems and where I first started getting the idea of wanting to be a lawyer.



After you received your J.D. from the University of Michigan, you clerked for Judge Harry T. Edwards on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and for Justice Byron R. White on the U.S. Supreme Court. What did you gain from that Washington experience?

One early discovery or impression I had was that it made me really appreciate the profound impact that individual lawyers can have, the difference in outcomes. Once I was a law clerk on the inside of a court and seeing how decisions were made, I saw the impact that high-quality lawyers could have on the outcome of a case. And, likewise, the impact of less-qualified lawyers. I was naive in coming in to be a law clerk and thinking that all lawyers came from law school and were trained, and I quickly discovered by reading the briefs and seeing the arguments of real lawyers for the first time that there is a wide range of lawyers. It made me also realize the importance that legal education can have in preparing lawyers to really be excellent advocates for their clients. It made me see, with my own eyes, the profound impact that courts and the justice system have on the lives of people and in business. And in every realm where courts have a significant role, whether that was when I was clerking at the Supreme Court and being involved for the first time in capital cases through stays of execution, or in cases involving families and businesses where people or parties saw their livelihoods or futures resting on the outcome of a legal decision.

Did that lead to your scholarly focus on family and constitutional law?

I was interested in the overlap between family law and constitutional law. There's a surprising and growing overlap between the two fields, and the Supreme Court has understood the Constitution to recognize a number of rights of individuals relating to family. The most obvious example to come before the court is rights of marriage, but also [rights] relating to parenthood, child-rearing authority, education, and other issues that touch families. Those issues were deeply interesting to me, from a perspective of families and policy relating to families, but also as a matter of constitutional theory, because many of these issues go to the deepest questions of constitutional interpretation and theory, such as the right to privacy, which is obviously much debated on the court.

The other Brooklyn enthusiasts in the family are their two sons, Michael, 29, and Matthew, 27, who attended school in Brooklyn when their parents were visiting professors, and returned as adults, "as soon as they had free will," Meyer said.



What do you see ahead for Brooklyn Law School, and what are your top priorities as dean?

I am very excited about Brooklyn Law School, both where we are as an institution right now and the opportunities that are ahead of us. The school has a rare combination of assets that set it apart from other law schools. We're also at a particular moment in our history when there is a real opportunity for change and advancement.

The priorities that I would see are, number one, to strengthen support for the faculty, because this extraordinary faculty is our leading asset as an institution and doing an amazing job, but they need additional support to unleash the school's full impact on the world. Number two, and relating to that, is to leverage the strength of our clinical and experiential learning programs to enhance hands-on educational opportunities and the impact on the larger community. The clinics are, of course, an incredible asset for Brooklyn Law School, and they have never been more vital in legal education, for the training of students and for the important role that law schools play as community partners.

A third urgent short- and long-term priority is to revitalize the student experience and to support stronger student outcomes, in terms of both bar passage and job placement. We have already made progress, but it's time to bring back the historically strong and vibrant sense of community that has defined Brooklyn Law School. Another priority is expanding our partnership with alumni in all of our ambitions. The future of legal education increasingly requires not only the classical model of law school education, where scholars are teaching students in the classroom, but also a model in which students gain knowledge outside the classroom. Much of that comes from the partnership with alumni through mentoring, teaching, hiring, and philanthropy. Innovative programs like the Business Boot Camp are a perfect model for the kinds of partnerships that powerfully enhance student learning and career opportunities.

How can Brooklyn Law School bolster its current efforts to raise the bar exam passage rate?

Raising the bar passage rate requires working on multiple fronts, from admissions, to the curriculum, to academic support programs, to mentoring and experiential opportunities for students, to summer employment opportunities. All of these things end up feeding into student success on the bar. Brooklyn has already been taking admirable steps to increase support on each of those fronts. And we need to double down on all of it.

What was an innovation at Tulane that you thought was especially effective during your deanship?

Along the same lines as Brooklyn's Business Boot Camp, one of the things that we did there back in 2011 was what Tulane called a Lawyering Skills Boot Camp that had several practice tracks: a criminal practice track, a civil litigation practice track, and a transactional track. It was a weeklong intensive simulation of law practice taught by alumni, principally, who came back from all over the country to New Orleans to teach, and it was meant to simulate for students that sort of high-pressure, intensive environment of being a young lawyer working on a vital matter. It included meeting the client, working through a transaction to closing at the end of the week, or arguing in front of a judge with the criminal or civil tracks. It was similar to Brooklyn's model. It was this partnership with people who really were at the top of their game, and who could teach students in ways that traditional legal scholars can't.

Last year, Brooklyn Law School joined peer schools by declining to participate in the U.S. News & World Report rankings because of its formula that penalizes schools for need-based aid, among other reasons. The rankings were published, nonetheless. What is your position on these rankings?

We must take the rankings seriously, because they bite us and they have consequences, so we can't ignore them. At the same time, I think they have done

terrible harm to legal education and to the interests of students and the profession. I'm committed to not participating in the rankings, and I agree with what [Professor] Michael Cahill did this past year [as dean]. We also need to convey the message to alumni and students and others who are anxious about the drop in the rankings this year that we get it. The things that will ultimately move Brooklyn Law School up in the rankings are things that we do care about, for the right reasons, not because of *U.S. News*, but because they relate to the welfare of our students. We want our students to pass the bar, we want them to land good jobs, and we want a faculty who are having exceptional impact through their scholarship and reputation. So those are all things we want, and we'll continue to pursue those goals full throttle.

You issued a statement of disagreement after a recent Supreme Court ruling struck down affirmative action in higher education. What impact will the ruling have on the school?

It is a very important moment, not only for law schools, but also for the future of the country. As I wrote in the statement, the Supreme Court has always recognized that law schools play a special role in preparing future generations of leaders,

From the Big Easy to the Big Apple: After many years in New Orleans, Meyer and Gajda are back to riding the subway and hustling to cross the street within the few seconds of grace period after the light changes.



not just in law practice but in government and business, higher education, and public service. Ensuring that law schools are open to the full range of talent in this country and beyond is essential to maximizing the quality of future leadership in this country. So, in recognizing the limits that the Supreme Court's decision imposes, we cannot miss a step in our continuing commitment to access and for the full range of different leadership.

That, of course, goes to one of the reasons I'm most excited about being in Brooklyn, which is this proud and distinctive tradition that Brooklyn Law School has, going back to its founding, as an institution committed to open access for people with all backgrounds and ambitions. I'm just incredibly honored to be meeting our alumni and hearing the stories of families who have been touched and transformed





by Brooklyn Law School, through the generations. So being true to that tradition is absolutely essential, not just for Brooklyn Law School, but for the benefit of society. We can certainly comply with the court's decision fully while continuing to value access for students from all backgrounds.

What differentiates Brooklyn Law School from its peers in New York and elsewhere?

Brooklyn Law School has this unique combination of qualities as an institution, combining access and openness with high ambition in a way that produces an exceptional quality of lawyers. In the heart of the world's most vibrant, creative city there are certainly other law schools, such as Columbia and NYU, that are ambitious and excellent, but they do not have the same history and central commitment to access that Brooklyn has. There are other law schools within New York that have broad traditions of access but don't have quite the same qualities of ambition and the excellence that Brooklyn has. That puts us in a unique spot, being a place that welcomes highly driven, hardworking people from wildly diverse backgrounds, who aspire to leadership at the highest levels of law practice as well as government and business and social justice.



Meyer has been meeting alumni and community members not just at the Law School, but at “Meet the Dean” events held this fall in Manhattan, Connecticut, and Long Island.

Can you talk a little bit more about how we should position ourselves on a national level versus a regional level?

We are an independent law school and not part of a broader university, and that does set us apart nationally. I think that is an asset to us, because we're an institution that is focused exclusively on preparing lawyers for diverse pathways of leadership in society. And we have the privilege of just focusing on our own defining mission of excellence in the legal profession.

What opportunities to specialize in different areas of the law benefit our students?

A wonderful thing about law school, generally, is that you don't have to know exactly what you want to do when you come in, and you can discover your path as a student. What is different about Brooklyn is that you are engaging in that kind of discovery in an environment where the pools of opportunity to pursue your interests are deeper than anywhere else on the planet. Think about not only the strength of our own faculty here at the Law School, and the resources available to our students, but also the depth of opportunities in New York for students to gain experience and exposure to a dizzying array of career paths, from sports law, to criminal justice, to real estate development, to family law and policy, and more. And that really is unmatched by any other location.

Brooklyn Law School is known for offering students close access to faculty. Is that common, in your experience?

It is not common. One of the wonderful things about Brooklyn Law School is that it has faculty who are super ambitious in their research as scholars, and also passionate about the importance of teaching and mentorship and being accessible to students. This dual commitment to excellence in scholarship and teaching is one of the great assets for Brooklyn Law School. That is different from some other law schools, whose mission is more elite or narrow or channeled in some way. Where I see Brooklyn Law School continuing to go in the future is toward an approach to legal education that seeks to expand the universe of students who benefit from the education but also the partners involved in providing that education. Again, there is an important role for alumni and other leaders in the world of law practice, business, government, and social enterprise. Drawing those people into direct partnership with our faculty and preparing students to make a difference in their careers from the very beginning reflects that kind of access and openness and not being blinkered in the way we understand legal education in more traditional, hidebound ways. ■



The typical Criminal Law class requires students to scale a mountain of case studies. They learn about *mens rea* (criminal intent) versus *actus reus* (criminal action) and parse the different degrees of homicide. Rarely does the curriculum include the voices of people charged with crimes or who have been incarcerated. The Center for Criminal Justice's Rethinking Justice program is upending that by turning to justice-impacted people as experts in Criminal Law and Procedure.

RETHINKING JUSTICE: NOT A TEXTBOOK CASE

BY TERESA NOVELLINO
ILLUSTRATION BY DAN BEJAR

asked her for forgiveness because I felt like that was just too much because of the harm that I caused and how it devastated her life. I told her that I was sorry, and that I knew sorry wasn't enough, but my life was such a frigging mess at that time, that I didn't really understand how to have compassion for another human being."

After the letters, Smith said she did not meet in person with the daughter, explaining that there was no melodramatic "kumbaya." But the daughter's merciful response meant everything.

"She said, 'I don't want to see her die in prison. I think that she can do some good out in the world,'" said Smith, who left prison at age 56. "Part of what keeps me doing what I'm doing is knowing that somebody that I caused harm to took a chance and believed in me and supported me in that way. And she and I don't talk or anything like that. But I carry that with me. I carry that with me."

Kaitlyn Pavia '23, a Rethinking Justice fellow who helped bring Smith's story to the class, said it was "hard to put into words" everything she learned from Smith. Prior to law school, Pavia worked at a legal services nonprofit mostly with parents facing allegations of abuse and neglect and concurrent criminal charges. During school, as an Edward V. Sparer fellow and member of the National Lawyers Guild, she organized several critical discussions on the family regulation system that included previously incarcerated parents.

"When this opportunity came up for Rethinking Justice, it was a no-brainer that I wanted to apply and get involved," Pavia said. "A big thing that is missing from the legal curriculum is the expertise of people who are impacted, and who know the realities of the justice system."

The impact of incarceration on the trajectories of family members' lives is especially overlooked, Pavia said. Smith shared in a first-year Criminal Law class the story of how prison officials took her daughter away shortly after the birth, telling Smith she would never see the child. Seated next to Smith at the front of the classroom, alongside the other fellows, **Sydney Parks '23** and **Abby Fink '23**, Pavia was surprised to see students crying.

"Prison officials told Roz [Smith], 'You're not going to be part of her life,'



and she completely went against that and found any possible way that she could be involved," Pavia said. Smith helped to expand parenting programs at Bedford Hills prison, earned a GED and bachelor's degree, and was featured in the 2003 film *What I Want My Words to Do to You*, which documents the Bedford Hills writing workshop led by playwright and author Eve Ensler. That workshop inspired Smith to get state prison approval to launch a similar program after her own release.

Parks, who specialized in corporate law and started at Greenberg Traurig as an associate this fall, joined Rethinking Justice to stay connected to her passion for pro bono work involving the carceral system and civil rights. Smith's reaction to abolition reflects the nuanced experience of imprisonment, she said.

"You would think someone who served all that time in prison might want to end the carceral system completely. But Roz brings a fresh perspective, because that's not the case," said Parks.

Indeed, Smith credits a community of other women serving sentences at Bedford Hills for helping her find a new path and wonders what might have happened if she had found help earlier in life. Today, she has devoted her life's work to advocating for those still incarcerated.

"A lot of abolitionists feel that they don't want to fix up the prisons or help anybody in prison because if they do, they're perpetuating mass incarceration," Smith told the class. "But what I feel, after doing 39 years, is that I needed somebody to be there for me and fight for me."

ABOLITION AND THE REALITIES OF A LIFE SENTENCE

Writing has long brought peace to activist Roslyn Smith, who this fall is leading prison writing workshops with incarcerated women, in the hopes that her "sisters inside" will find the same solace she did in putting their stories into words.

As a partner in Brooklyn Law School's Rethinking Justice program, Smith works with student fellows to integrate stories like hers into the criminal law curriculum. In the spring of 2023, Professor Alexis Hoag-Fordjour's Abolition class heard Smith describe how she spent 39 years in prison—longer than many of the students in the class had been alive. Her story was sorrowful, yet especially salient for a class focused on abolition, the movement to shrink carceral systems. A Brooklyn native, Smith grew up with a drug-addicted mother and ran away from home at 13. She spent part of her adolescence unhoused or in state-mandated placements for young people. At 17, Smith and a co-defendant robbed and killed an elderly couple.

Convicted of a double homicide, Smith was sentenced to 50 years to life in prison at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women, meaning that her first opportunity for parole would occur when she was 67. However, in 2018, after her attorney, Ron Kubly, and Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez facilitated an exchange of letters with the victim's daughter, Smith obtained early release.

"Their daughter asked me, 'Who are you? Why did you do this? Why were you involved in this?'" Smith told the class. "I wrote a six-page letter about my childhood on down, telling her the things that I went through, my experiences. I never really



Roslyn Smith (second from left) speaks about her prison experience in an Abolition class taught by Professor Alexis Hoag-Fordjour (foreground, right). Center for Criminal Justice fellows Sydney Parks '23 (left) and Abby Fink '23 (right) help guide the discussion.



“[THE PERSON I HARMED] SAID, ‘I DON’T WANT TO SEE HER DIE IN PRISON. I THINK THAT SHE CAN DO SOME GOOD OUT IN THE WORLD.’ PART OF WHAT KEEPS ME DOING WHAT I’M DOING IS KNOWING THAT SOMEBODY THAT I CAUSED HARM TO TOOK A CHANCE AND BELIEVED IN ME AND SUPPORTED ME IN THAT WAY. I CARRY THAT WITH ME.”

—Roslyn Smith, Rethinking Justice partner

RETHINKING JUSTICE AND THE POWER OF STORIES

Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship Jocelyn Simonson is the co-director of the Center for Criminal Justice and the author of a new book, *Radical Acts of Justice*, about grassroots efforts to reform the criminal

justice system. She first conceived of Rethinking Justice for required first-year Criminal Law classes. In 2022, the center launched the program with six student fellows, and four formerly incarcerated partners (each of whom is either an advocate for VOCAL-NY, a grassroots movement to create healthy and just communities, or the Survivors Justice Project, which fights for decarceration through the New York Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA). The center quickly decided to expand the program into elective courses. Rethinking Justice continues this school year, with stipends for the partners and fellows funded by a two-year grant from the Vital Projects Fund.

A former public defender in the Bronx, Simonson represented nearly 2,000 criminal defendants in five years, virtually all people of color. That experience made her frustrated at how criminal law classes largely did not reflect the experiences of people facing criminal charges, nor did they contextualize the impact of race, gender, and class on the criminal adjudication system.

“There is a growing sense that for big change to ever happen, it has to be led by the people who are directly impacted by the criminal system,” Simonson said.

One thing that distinguishes Rethinking Justice from other programs featuring the directly impacted voices is the way partners’ stories connect to the classroom curriculum, helping students learn the doctrine, she said. “There is a lot of pedagogical literature that shows that you’re more likely to retain information if it’s connected to a story.”

In the first-year criminal law classes, Smith shared her experience with students learning the degrees of homicide.

“We would have the statute behind her on a screen and go through each element,” Parks said. “Usually, students are just reading cases that are decades old, that have no personal meaning to us. When Roz was sitting there discussing her experience of being charged with a double homicide, that’s something that you remember and take home with you.”

The fellows emphasized that one of the most powerful parts of the program is working with someone who has spent

time in prison; most law school students, especially first-year students, have never had that experience.

“It’s very easy to look at someone on paper and make assumptions about their life, or what should happen to them, but when you listen to someone like Roz tell her story in full, [your thoughts become] less ‘she’s just a criminal,’ and more ‘this is why these things happen,’” Parks said. “Look at her life, her past, how she grew up. It makes students—including those who want to become prosecutors—think, ‘How can we change the system?’ ‘How can we help this neighborhood?’ and ‘How can we implement resources?’”

Pavia, who in August began working in the Staff Attorney’s Office for the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, agreed. “We need to be really cognizant of the impact that we all have as law students and future criminal defense attorneys, future prosecutors, future judges... All of us have so much more power than we realize,” she said.

The experiences of each of the four previously incarcerated partners also provide lessons in how careless mistakes, and sometimes outright misconduct, by defense attorneys, prosecutors, and police, can lead to wrongful convictions.

CRIMINAL PROCEDURES: A JAILHOUSE LAWYER’S LESSON ON INTERROGATIONS

Reading a book on criminal interrogations is one way to learn the subject matter. Hearing Rethinking Justice partner Kelly Harnett is another lesson entirely. She described witnessing her abusive boyfriend kill a man in a Queens, N.Y., park and then tell her “you’re next,” only for her to be handcuffed, arrested, and questioned by police as a suspect immediately afterward.

After the prosecution charged her with the killing, Harnett sought to defend herself in court, becoming a jailhouse lawyer, deeply versed in the law and her own case. Over the next six years she immersed herself in the Rikers Island law library and, lacking access to the internet or a law dictionary, deciphered unfamiliar terms by searching a database for case law examples. Although she successfully petitioned the court to dismiss the felony murder and robbery charges before her

trial, she was ultimately convicted of second-degree murder under New York’s accomplice liability theory. After filing an appeal, she spent the next seven years incarcerated in Bedford Hills, working on her own and other people’s cases, filing Article 78 proceedings (to review a state decision), resentencing motions, and writs of habeas corpus. She was released after filing a resentencing application under the state’s 2019 DVSJA which allows certain incarcerated domestic violence victims to obtain reduced sentences. Harnett maintains that being present at the scene of the crime is not actually illegal and continues to seek justice in clearing her name. She said she recently uncovered evidence that raises suspicion about the motives of the sole eyewitness in the case.

Alongside fellows **Caroline Golub ’24**, **Justine Woods ’23**, and **Keanu Velez ’23**, Harnett spoke to Professor Alice Ristroph’s Criminal Procedure: Investigations classroom last spring.

“We worked closely with the criminal law faculty, studying their syllabi and identifying doctrinal and policy areas that we thought our partners could really weigh in on,” Golub said. For Ristroph’s class, which was studying police interrogations, Harnett described her arrest and the questioning that followed in vivid detail. The students were able to recognize the ways police may violate the rights of the accused.

Harnett spent two and a half days in a police interrogation room wearing a white jail jumpsuit streaked with her own menstrual blood and asking for a lawyer and her seizure medication, to no avail.

“Would you say the doctrinal rules, the guidance for these interrogations, don’t matter because police ignore them anyway?” Ristroph asked Harnett.

Harnett agreed, with one exception. “The thing that was legal was the trickery and deception,” Harnett said. “The police are legally allowed to go into the room and say, ‘she said you did it’ or ‘he said you did it [regardless of whether that is true or not].’ However, everything else was illegal.”

The deceptive interrogation tactic was important to her case. Her former boyfriend, who pleaded guilty to manslaughter, initially blamed Harnett for

the killing but later recanted his statement in a letter to Harnett’s attorney in which he admitted he lied to keep Harnett from going free without him. The letter was never presented in court, nor was her ex called as a witness. However, after working with Professor Kate Mogulescu, along with Law School students in the Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic and the Survivors Justice Project, Harnett was released early. She contended that her abusive relationship was pivotal to her case because her boyfriend threatened to kill her, too, on the night of the park slaying.

In partnering with Rethinking Justice, Harnett explained that she looks out at the classroom of students who will become defense attorneys or prosecutors and hopes to get at least one to remember that the accused may be innocent.

“I spoke a lot about professional responsibility, about the ethical guidelines, and how, whether it be a defense attorney or a potential prosecutor, if they fail to follow their ethical obligations, such as turning over material that is conducive to the defense, they could potentially be putting an innocent person in jail,” Harnett said.

EVIDENCE OR THE LACK THEREOF AND ONE WOMAN’S SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Prior to attending Brooklyn Law School, fellow Caroline Golub served as the associate director of the Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia Law School, a position that inspired her to pursue a career in public interest law.

“We did a lot of community-based project work in collaboration with the school, trying to bridge the academic nature of what students learn in law school with the realities of the system that people experience every day, and the devastating effect on their communities,” said Golub.

Those realities were on display this spring, when Golub attended Professor Anna Roberts’ Evidence class alongside partner Candie Hailey-Means. A mother and teacher, Hailey-Means spent 1,122 out of 1,168 days on Rikers Island in solitary confinement, unable to raise \$100,000 bail, confused as to what she was charged



“THERE IS A GROWING SENSE THAT FOR BIG CHANGE TO EVER HAPPEN, IT HAS TO BE LED BY THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DIRECTLY IMPACTED BY THE CRIMINAL SYSTEM.”

—Professor **Jocelyn Simonson**, author of *Radical Acts of Justice*



Rethinking Justice partner Kelly Harnett (above) speaks to *Brooklyn Law Notes* about what she hopes the students learned from her presentations. Candie Hailey-Means (third from left) speaks to students after an Evidence class where Caroline Golub ’24, a Center for Criminal Justice fellow (second from left) joined the discussion.



with, and distrustful of her public defender, who wouldn't listen to her story.

Hailey-Means had been charged with assault and attempted murder, after being wrongly accused of stabbing an infant injured during a melee. In truth, a vindictive former friend and two other women attacked Hailey-Means, who was walking with her friend's 4-year-old daughter in the Bronx. One of the three women, who was wheeling a baby in a stroller, launched the stroller at Hailey-Means, causing the infant inside to fall out and reopen a scab. The women claimed it was a freshly inflicted knife wound.

Before Hailey-Means was exonerated, her public defender urged her to accept a plea for 18 months for time served instead of standing trial and potentially facing 25 years to life.

"It's a prime example of the 'trial penalty' that we learn about in class, the way that people are often threatened with incredibly long sentences for refusing to take a plea," Golub said.

Another program partner, Eileen Maher, was charged with a burglary she said her ex-boyfriend committed after stealing keys from her apartment and gaining access to the home of a pet-sitting client of hers. The prosecutor was trying to charge her with conspiracy, which carried a 15-year minimum sentence.

"I didn't want that for myself," Maher told the class, adding that after 420 days in

Rikers Island, she took a plea as the most expeditious way out.

Hailey-Means opted against the plea, and the case began falling apart, even pre-trial. The witnesses that her lawyer said would testify against her—an EMT, a police officer, and a deli owner—were dismissed as offering only hearsay because they saw nothing firsthand and believed the lies of the actual attackers. The EMT did say that the baby had a scab on her head, bolstering Hailey-Means' argument that she did not have a knife and would not stab a child.

The key piece of trial evidence emerged after Hailey-Means insisted, against her lawyer's advice, that a 911 call be played. She had called 911 three times seeking help for herself and her friend's 4-year-old, whom she referred to as "my baby" for expediency, but her attackers then stole her phone, and even her own lawyer thought the call came from the women with the infant.

"The woman on the call said 'My baby and I was just jumped, my baby and I was just jumped. They robbed me, they robbed me, I need police assistance,'" Golub said.



"WE NEED TO BE REALLY COGNIZANT OF THE IMPACT THAT WE ALL HAVE AS LAW STUDENTS AND FUTURE CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEYS, FUTURE PROSECUTORS, FUTURE JUDGES... ALL OF US HAVE SO MUCH MORE POWER THAN WE REALIZE."

—Kaitlin Pavia '23, Rethinking Justice fellow

Hailey-Means recalled. "So, I'm sitting in a chair thinking, 'That's my f**ing voice.'"

Hailey-Means recited her own phone number for the court, saying it was her voice on the 911 call. Three days later, Sprint, her phone company, confirmed that she, not her attackers, owned the phone the calls were made from.

Testifying on her own behalf, Hailey-Means told jurors, "That was me. That was my voice saying, 'help me, help me.'" As she told the story to students, Hailey-Means broke into tears at the memory, saying, "I'm sorry, class. They took three years of my life. You know, all they had to do was just listen to the phone call."

It wasn't just the nightmarish story that registered with the students, Golub said. It was the ways in which Hailey-Means' defense attorney, the prosecutor, and the criminal legal system at large failed her, resulting in Hailey-Means spending years in a cell by herself 24 hours a day for a crime she did not commit. She now advocates for ending solitary confinement.

"It's wild to me that you can go your entire law school career without ever interacting with someone who has lived experience within the carceral system," said Golub, who is again serving as a senior fellow in the program this year.

"A friend told me that students continued to bring up Candie's visit for weeks afterwards. When the application of an evidence rule came up in case law, a student raised their hand and said, 'Well, wait a minute. What about what happened to Candie?' And to me," Golub said, "that exemplifies exactly what you hope to get out of a program like this."

Hailey-Means said that while retelling her experience was difficult, it was worth it to raise awareness among future attorneys.

"Whether it's a free lawyer or whether it's a paid lawyer, we need more good lawyers," Hailey-Means said. "If I had a good lawyer, I wouldn't have spent three years on Rikers." ■



See our digital version of the magazine at www.brooklaw.edu to view video interviews for this article.



The Faithful Scholar

Professor Aaron Twerski is a master of torts, and even decades later, his students still remember his axioms and colorful lessons in law. Perhaps lesser known is how much faith and family has inspired the beloved Brooklyn Law School professor to help students, clients, and the community—whenever, wherever he is needed.

BY NANETTE MAXIM

PORTRAIT BY TODD FRANCE



GROWING UP IN THE CLOSE-KNIT ORTHODOX JEWISH COMMUNITY OF MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN,

where his father was the chief rabbi, Aaron Twerski learned that his family’s home was never closed to anyone who needed help.

“My father came to Milwaukee from Russia in 1927,” said Twerski, the Irwin and Jill Cohen Professor of Law. “He had infinite love and compassion for people, and they were drawn to him. And so he built a community. My parents’ door was open to everyone from five o’clock in the morning till five o’clock the next morning... and the next. They had ancestors who were outstanding Jewish leaders in Russia and Poland, and they were raised to live for others. It motivated their lives. It was the air that we breathed.”

This spirit of community was the foundation not only for Twerski’s own deep faith and compassion but also for his strong commitment to the field of tort law, for which he has been a powerful voice as a respected lawyer, professor, and scholar for more than 50 years. His attraction to the field as a student was almost instantaneous, when he realized that the often quotidian matters that tort law addresses meant much more than they seemed to mean at first.

“In torts, we take everyday, common affairs and turn them into important law questions both for the individual and for society,” Twerski said. “Within three weeks of studying torts at law school, I knew I wanted to be a professor and teach torts. I was like a fish in the water.”

Twerski’s countless contributions to the Law School (which he initially joined in 1986) and the academy were celebrated in April at the *Brooklyn Journal of Corporate, Financial & Commercial Law* Annual Symposium, Professor Aaron Twerski and the Law of Torts: Duty, Design, and Conflicts.*

The symposium brought together scholars from around the country to honor Twerski through the presentation of papers that explored duty, product liability, mass torts, immunity, and conflicts of law, and

L-R: At a 2010 Law School event, Professor Twerski is joined by Michael London '97 and current Board of Trustees Chair Frank Aquila '83. Below, his accomplishments were celebrated at a 2023 Brooklyn Law symposium.



discussions in which they shared their thoughts on his importance to their own lives and work.

“He is a lion of our faculty and of his field,” said Professor Michael Cahill, who was president and Joseph Crea Dean at the time of the symposium. “He has been and done everything that one can over the course of his distinguished and illustrious career.”

That career began in the mid-1960s, when, after graduating from Marquette University Law School, Twerski joined the U.S. Department of Justice as a trial attorney at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. He brought the first Title

VII employment discrimination case in Virginia, and one of the first public accommodation cases in South Carolina.

“Those were heady days,” Twerski said. “We had a lot of responsibility. And I would travel down South to take depositions in areas where they didn’t like the lawyers from the North, and they had never seen a Jew before.”

The experience of being viewed as an outsider was, sadly, not a singular one. In 1967, Twerski went on to excel as a teaching fellow at Harvard Law School. Yet, despite receiving the highest recommendation from Harvard, he, unlike his fellow colleagues, received no offers to

The Twerski Effect

AT THE TWERSKI SYMPOSIUM, Brooklyn Law School alumna **Hon. Claire R. Kelly '93**, a United States Court of International Trade judge, relayed that she was “an expert witness” on Twerski’s teaching style and shared an anecdote.

“Once you take one Twerski class, you tend to sign up for them all,” Kelly said. “As a first-year student, to have him as a torts professor was nothing short of magical. And in case you think I am exaggerating, I will tell you a true story. A classmate of mine once brought a date to Professor Twerski’s class and she wasn’t even a law student or a lawyer. But his class was so good that his pedagogical skills were something that someone chose to use to impress the object of his affection.”

After we posted on social media about the symposium, alumni responded with their own memories of Twerski and his influence on their careers. Here are just a few among the dozens of tributes:

“Within three weeks of studying torts at law school, I knew I wanted to be a professor and teach torts. I was like a fish in the water.”

“In many decisions from the bench, I have repeated some of the axioms that...Professor Twerski taught me during law school.”

— **Hon. Brian P. Stern '91**,
Associate Justice,
Rhode Island Superior Court

“His teaching transcended legal education. His methodology for issue identification and reasoning is something I use to this day.”

— **Dominic Morandi '91**,
Vice President,
Chicago Title Insurance Co.

“I can still hear so many of his lessons in my head... Especially the butterfly test! Thank you, Professor... You have made a lasting impact on so many of us.”

— **Elizabeth Werner '96**,
Senior Director, Brand Partnerships, Lifestyle Expert,
Knocking

Note: In the butterfly test, Twerski said, “I would tell students that in order for a judge to decide certain issues, he/she had to get butterflies in the stomach before making the decision. In other words, the judge had to feel very uncomfortable about making the decision.”

join a university faculty. “The head of the teaching fellows program said, ‘You’re not getting offers because they will not hire someone who looks like you,’” Twerski said. “I was shattered.”

Months later, however, Duquesne University, a Jesuit school like his alma mater Marquette, phoned to invite him to fill a position. “It’s where my teaching career started,” Twerski said. “But it almost didn’t happen.”

In 2019, in accepting Marquette’s Lifetime Achievement Award, he said, “Marquette is extraordinarily hospitable. The school was based on an orthodox religious faith, and they understood not

“Professor Twerski lit my passion for complex torts. His ‘in-and-out-of-the-fog’ metaphor will echo through my mind until my final day. [It] showed me how to navigate the legal writing process with confidence and enthusiasm to get to the bottom of the day’s mystery.”

— **Katherine E. Mayo '13**,
Senior Associate,
Locks Law Firm

“Professor Twerski was and remains a legend and the epitome of what an educator should be. I am quite convinced that any success I may have enjoyed professionally [comes] in large part from learning from this elite professor.”

— **Mark Kornfeld '92**,
Shareholder,
Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney



Revered for his depth of knowledge, clear presentation, compassion, and humor, Twerski, shown here in the classroom, says teaching is his great love. When his students begin to put together all he's taught them, he said, "it's exhilarating for the students and exhilarating for the professor."



only my appearance and the rest, but that if there was a religious demand made on me, it came first."

Twerski went on to teach at Hofstra University School of Law (where he also served as dean from 2005 to 2007), playing a crucial role in several landmark legal cases at the same time. Among them was litigation concerning the effects of the herbicide Agent Orange, as a member of the Law Committee (1979–84). He represented the plaintiffs, Vietnam War veterans and their families, who had brought a suit against the deep-pocketed defendants, the U.S. government and seven major chemical companies, despite having little money for legal assistance.

Twerski was a special master in the federal case involving more than 10,000 plaintiffs who suffered adverse health effects after being involved in the cleanup of the World Trade Center following the 9/11 terrorist attacks). Twerski and

his colleague created a database of 9/11 victims and the severity of their injuries that served as a model for the current case concerning exposure to tainted water at the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C.

While simultaneously teaching at Brooklyn Law School, Twerski labored for six years as co-reporter of the *Restatement of Torts, Third: Products Liability* (American Law Institute [ALI], 1998), with his longtime colleague on scholarly articles, James Henderson of Cornell Law School.

That distinguished work led to Twerski being awarded the ALI's prestigious designation of R. Ammi Cutter Reporter. His numerous law review articles and casebooks have covered the landscape of tort law and product liability—from examining the principles of the law of informed consent to the liability of digital platforms such as Amazon as product sellers. His contributions have

been noted for their combination of wisdom, pragmatism, and prudent and principled sense of justice. In 2016, he was given the William L. Prosser Award by the Torts Section of the Association of American Law Schools for his outstanding contributions to the field.

Among Twerski's vast scholarly endeavors, it is teaching that he says is his great love. That love is echoed by his students' affection for his teaching (see "The Twerski Effect," p. 33).

"I love the first-year class," he said. "The students can come in knowing nothing, and by the time they're finished with the first-year torts course they have been transformed. They learn to be critical thinkers. They learn to question. They ask me, 'Is this case wrong?' And I say, in the words of my former teacher Rabbi Nachum Sacks, 'You're 100 percent right, but I'll show you where you're wrong. I'm going to critique it so that you can decide whether it is right or wrong. But you have to pay attention to the critique and analyze the case with that in mind.' That's what I've done, and I think students appreciate it. They see their own progress, which is enormous. And when they finally are preparing for exams, they put it all together. It's an exhilarating experience for students and exhilarating for the professor."

On any given day, amid his classes and appointments and research, you'll likely find Twerski on the phone or on Zoom or meeting in person with someone in his community who's seeking advice—legal, personal, or something in between. As was the case for his parents and his siblings, including the late Dr. Abraham Twerski, a renowned psychiatrist and rabbi who did remarkable work with people facing addiction, and his twin brother, Michel, now the rabbi of the synagogue their father founded, Twerski's door is always open.

*The symposium papers will be published this fall in a "Festschrift" volume of the *Brooklyn Journal of Corporate, Financial & Commercial Law*.

The Consensus Builder



The work of 1901 Distinguished Research Professor of Law Neil Cohen was celebrated in a symposium in the spring of 2022, just before he retired.

Professor Neil Cohen's accomplishments were celebrated in a symposium where scholars and experts praised not only his expertise in the harmonization of commercial law, but his compassion and ability to find common ground.

FOR 40-PLUS YEARS, Cohen has been an intellectual force in the field of contract and commercial law—as teacher, scholar, and participant in domestic and global harmonization projects. Whether serving as a delegate to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) or undertaking scholarly work as the reporter for both the American Law Institute's (ALI's) *Restatement of the Law of Suretyship and Guaranty* (1996) and the Revised Article 1 of the Uniform Commercial Code (2001), Cohen has left an indelible mark on commercial law's progress.

In May 2022, as Cohen retired from teaching after 37 years at Brooklyn Law School, he was named the Law School's 1901 Distinguished Research Professor of Law. His peers gathered for a symposium held in his honor, titled *Commercial Law Harmonization: Past as Prologue*.^{*} Cohen himself summed up the event's focus: "After a half century of commercial law harmonization, both domestically and internationally, what have we learned and what should we do next?"

"Statutory harmonization requires consensus," said symposium moderator **Ted Janger**, the David M. Barse Professor of Law. "Consensus sometimes minimizes the scope of what can be done. This can be frustrating, but knowing the bounds of the possible is an essential skill... Neil Cohen is not only a consummate draftsman, but brilliant as a consensus builder."

Consensus was a recurring theme in the tributes to Cohen. Professor Catherine Walsh of the McGill University Faculty of Law cited Cohen's even temperament, patience, good humor, and genuine interest in and compassion for others. "He has the ability to seek and achieve consensus by reminding us of the basic goals of a project and asking whether we are, after all, as far apart as we might think," Walsh said.

Hal Burman of the Office of the Legal Adviser, U.S. Department

of State (retired), described Cohen's gift for exhibiting diplomacy while working with international associations whose members might not share the thinking, law school training, and court systems of their U.S. counterparts. "If it wasn't for people like Neil Cohen," Burman said, "all of these factors would not have allowed [the international players] to produce what they were able to produce."

Ignacio Tirado, secretary-general of UNIDROIT (the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law), discussing the qualities of a perfect international law expert, described Cohen as "a simple hero, an enormously decent person who nurtures quietly for the good of everyone."

Cohen's Brooklyn Law School colleagues also participated.

"All of you know Neil's brilliance," said **Aaron Twerski**, Irwin and Jill Cohen Professor of Law. "Generally, when you get somebody who has that degree of brilliance, they're really full of themselves. Neil is the very opposite of that. He has no hubris."

Professor of Law Emerita **Roberta Karmel**, who presented on securities law harmonization, said she attended the symposium out of friendship, respect, and admiration for its honoree. "I'm not a contracts, bankruptcy, or commercial law expert. My knowledge of these subjects comes primarily from Neil Cohen," Karmel said.

Cohen thanked his peers for their friendship, likening the group to scientists and engineers collaborating. "This has been a great balance between theory and execution—people talking high theory and people talking about how to get things done," Cohen said. "I owe you all a lot of appreciation and thanks for your patience with me along the way. Everyone here is my teacher."

^{*}The symposium was presented by the *Brooklyn Journal of Corporate, Financial & Commercial Law* and Brooklyn Law School's Center for the Study of Business Law and Regulation. Symposium papers have been published in the journal's Volume 17, Issues 1 and 2 (2022).

Faculty

New Faculty Members Bring Unique Thought Leadership to Our Community

The expertise of six faculty members joining Brooklyn Law School—including in racial equality, the right to privacy, and international investment—encompasses some of the most pressing legal issues of the moment.

The Law School extends a warm welcome to these new professors, whose talent as teachers and scholars will enhance the student experience and further enrich a highly esteemed intellectual community. Meet the professors, who officially joined the faculty on July 1.



Media law scholar Amy Gajda has joined Brooklyn Law School as Jeffrey D. Forchelli Professor of Law.

Amy Gajda, a journalist turned lawyer and internationally recognized privacy and media law scholar, has joined the Law School as the incoming Jeffrey D. Forchelli Professor of Law. Previously, Gajda was Class of 1937 Professor of Law at Tulane University School of Law, where she was the recipient of both the Felix Frankfurter Award for Distinguished Teaching and the Tulane President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. Much of her scholarship explores the tensions between social regulation of access to information and First Amendment values,

particularly the shifting boundaries of press freedoms and rising public anxieties about the erosion of privacy.

“The thing that I find most intriguing about the privacy aspect of media law is its rapid change over the past few years,” Gajda said. “When I started teaching, the internet was relatively new, so it’s been interesting to watch media evolve, to see privacy sensibilities grow, and to study the law’s at-times dynamic response.”

Gajda’s publications include her latest book, *Seek and Hide: The Tangled History of the Right to Privacy* (Viking, 2022), and

scholarly articles in journals that include the *American Historical Review*, *California Law Review*, and *Washington Law Review*. She is also the author of the leading casebooks *Media Law* (Foundation Press, 2016) and *The Law and Higher Education* (Carolina Academic Press, 2015).

“I’m working on several projects at the moment,” Gajda said, “including a book project on privacy in one’s criminal records, a book project on children’s privacy in the age of the internet, and an article on the use of artificial intelligence in journalism and other media and how courts might respond.”

Gajda currently serves as an adviser on the American Law Institute’s new *Restatement Third of Torts: Defamation and Privacy*. Gajda joins Brooklyn Law School along with her husband, the newly appointed President and Joseph Crea Dean, David D. Meyer.

“First, I’m excited to be working with the internationally known scholars who write and teach at Brooklyn Law School,” she said. “Second, as a media law scholar, I’m delighted to be working in New York City, home to important publishers of all types. Third, I love Brooklyn and can’t wait to learn even more about this wonderful borough and all it has to offer.”

Brooklyn favorites: “In a previous semester [when I was] a visiting professor at Brooklyn Law School, one of our traditions was dinner at Junior’s (with dessert!) followed by a walk to the Promenade. I assure you that this tradition will continue.”



Aissatou Barry, who has deep experience in civil rights, housing, and immigration law, joins the faculty as Assistant Professor and will direct the new Housing Justice Clinic, which launches in January 2024. A longtime social justice advocate for traditionally marginalized communities, Barry most recently served as a housing attorney at the Bronx Neighborhood Office of the Legal Aid Society. Barry was chosen as one of the Top 25 Pro Bono Advocates of 2015 by Legal Services of New York for her immigration law work. She was an adjunct professor at the CUNY School of Law and co-facilitated a Housing Clinic externship at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

Brooklyn favorites: “One of my favorite activities is riding the New York City ferry. Being on the water is calming, and the rides provide easy access to different parts of Brooklyn.”



Elizabeth Chen has joined the permanent faculty as an Assistant Professor after serving as a Visiting Assistant Professor of legal writing during the 2022–23 academic year. Chen’s research is focused on anti-discrimination law, reproductive justice, and relationships and the law. Chen previously served as acting assistant professor of lawyering at NYU School of Law and was a litigator on behalf of caregivers and pregnant workers at the nonprofit organization A Better Balance. She also worked for Wigdor, a plaintiff-side employment law firm, on behalf of civil rights plaintiffs. Her legal career began as an If/When/How Reproductive Justice fellow at the Center for American Progress and as a law clerk for the Hon. William Joseph Haynes of the U.S. District Court of the Middle District of Tennessee.

Brooklyn favorites: “I enjoy a Saturday morning run through Industry City and over to Bush Terminal Park, a hidden gem just down the hill from Sunset Park, where there are incredible views of the Statue of Liberty.”



Yuvraj Joshi, a respected scholar in the areas of constitutional and comparative law, racial equality law, gender and sexuality law, and human rights, joins the faculty as Assistant Professor. Previously on the faculty at the University of British Columbia Peter A. Allard School of Law, Joshi has written articles for numerous scholarly journals, such as the *Columbia Law Review*, *Georgetown Law Journal*, and *California Law Review*.

His career encompasses extensive work in human rights research and advocacy, including for Human Rights Watch and Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. He is also a faculty affiliate at the UCLA Promise Institute for Human Rights and a research scholar

at the University of California Berkeley Miller Institute for Global Challenges and the Law.

Brooklyn favorites: “I look forward to joining the incredible Brooklyn Law School community and returning to a neighborhood I lived in and loved while working with Human Rights Watch and Lambda Legal, from 2015 to 2021. Life is made better by proximity to family, friends, and Yemen Café!”



Stratos Pahlis, who specializes in international economic law, joins the Law School as Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the Dennis J. Block Center on International Business Law. Previously, he was a member of the Wake Forest University School of Law faculty. Pahlis’ current research combines law and economics to explore the relationships

among international investment law, climate change, and national security. His scholarship has been widely published in scholarly journals, including the *American Journal of International Law*, the *Journal of International Economic Law*, the *World Trade Review*, and the *Yale Journal of International Law*. He received the 2022 Francis Deák Prize, awarded by the *American Journal of International Law*, for his research on international investment law and sovereign debt.

Brooklyn favorites: “Brooklyn was my home before the pandemic, and I’m so happy it will be my home again. I’m especially excited about getting back to Prospect Park, eating pizza at Sottocasa (best pizza in Brooklyn and only a short walk from the Law School!), and being close to my extended family in Connecticut.”



Naveen Thomas, whose focus is on business law and innovative experiential education, is joining the faculty as Assistant Professor of Law. Thomas’ scholarship has a twofold path: He illuminates and develops innovations in corporate governance and social enterprise, and identifies and bridges gaps between theory and practice in

contract design. His research has been published in the *Harvard Business Law Review* and the *Duke Journal of Comparative & International Law*. Previously, he taught law, directed transactional clinics, and designed new simulation courses in contract drafting and negotiation at both the University of Chicago and New York University. As founder of the New York law firm Thomas Law, he has represented nonprofit organizations, social enterprises, impact investors, startup companies, and small businesses across a range of legal matters.

Brooklyn favorites: “Before moving to Brooklyn from Manhattan three years ago, I enjoyed crossing the river to explore the unique cultural institutions, public spaces, and restaurants integrated into this intricate network of communities. But since living here, I have come to appreciate Brooklyn even more for its engaging people.”

In the News

THE LAW SCHOOL IS frequently in the news, with members of the faculty quoted and featured in major media outlets, providing expert commentary on critical issues in the law, business, and policy.



April 22

“What you’ll notice when these mayors are making announcements about bail and crime is that they are not able to use statistics that link bail reform to an increase in so-called violent crime.”

—**PROFESSOR JOCELYN SIMONSON**, in a video discussing the effect of bail reform on crime.



May 13

“As the [1984 Bernhard] Goetz case made clear, whether a person is legally justified in using deadly force in self-defense—i.e., permitted to kill another person—turns on whether he reasonably believes the other person is about to use deadly force on him.”

—**PROFESSOR CYNTHIA GODSOE**, in an op-ed on the similarities of the Daniel Penny and Goetz subway murder cases.



June 7

“That level of uncertainty certainly harms consumers and investors, because the government isn’t sure what it can or cannot enforce.”

—**PROFESSOR MIRIAM BAER**, on this year’s Supreme Court rulings on white-collar fraud and their effect on future cases.



July 5

“The work that people do in prison, on their own, often with very little support, to become educated, to grieve, to atone; there’s real work being done by people in these long sentences. To be able to acknowledge that and bring that to the surface is critical.”

—**PROFESSOR KATE MOGULESCU**, on granting early release to incarcerated people under the New York State Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act.



July 7

“It could be that the court is a little suspicious that the law makes it really easy for people to have their guns confiscated, even if they’ve not been judged to be dangerous.”

—**PROFESSOR WILLIAM ARAIZA**, on the Supreme Court case centering on the intersection of gun rights and domestic violence.



July 7

“Rent-to-own has this really sordid history. It’s an area of the housing market that remains underregulated. That’s part of the attraction for many operators.”

—**PROFESSOR DAVID REISS**, on the pitfalls homebuyers face when they turn to the rent-to-own housing market.



July 12

“There is a possibility that the hearings today actually strengthened the PGA Tour’s bargaining position because of congressional insistence that the final, definitive agreement contains provisions that void censoring players, that ensure long-term PGA control over the sport.”

—**PROFESSOR JODI BALSAM**, in response to the congressional subcommittee hearing on the PGA Tour and LIV Golf merger.



July 13

“It hasn’t died in over a century. It hasn’t died in the States, where many have successfully enacted their own constitutional amendments to guarantee gender equality. On the national scale, political actors are thinking about the political times with abortion, marriage equality, and other gendered issues arising.”

—**PROFESSOR WILFRED CODRINGTON III**, on the Congressional Democrats’ new push for the Equal Rights Amendment.

Faculty Scholarship

NEW IN FACULTY BOOKS

Miriam Baer, *Myths and Misunderstandings in White-Collar Crime* (Cambridge University Press, 2023)



USING REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES to explore the pathologies that hamper our ability to understand and redress white-collar crime, Baer's book provides a step-by-step framework for reorienting the ways in which we prohibit, enforce, and discuss white-collar crime.

Dana Brakman Reiser, *For-Profit Philanthropy: Elite Power and the Threat of Limited Liability Companies, Donor-Advised Funds, and Strategic Corporate Giving* (Oxford University Press, 2023)

EXPOSING A MIGRATION of business practices, players, and norms into philanthropy, co-author Brakman Reiser explains how this shift strains the regulatory regime sustaining public trust in elite generosity through accountability and transparency, and how to restore that trust.

James Fanto, *Broker-Dealer Compliance: A Case-based Guide to Compliance Program Elements and Practices* (Edward Elgar, 2023)

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE that reviews the state of broker-dealer compliance, from both general and practical perspectives, Fanto's book makes use of legal scholarship and behavioral and organizational literature on compliance.

Marsha Garrison, *Family Life, Family Law, and Family Justice: Tying the Knot* (Routledge, 2023)

COMBINING HISTORY, SOCIAL SCIENCE, AND LEGAL ANALYSIS, Garrison charts the evolution and interdependence of family life and family law, portrays current trends in family life, explains the pressing policy challenges these trends have produced, and analyzes the essential family law changes needed to meet these challenges.

Andrew Gold, *The American Law Institute: A Centennial History* (Oxford Academic, 2023)

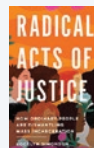
IN HONOR OF the American Law Institute's Centennial, the book features a series of original essays authored by leading experts in their fields, including contract, tort, property, and criminal law, often including current and former restatement reporters, and is co-edited by Gold.

Susan N. Herman, *Advanced Introduction to US Civil Liberties* (Edward Elgar, 2023)



HERMAN'S KALEIDOSCOPIC overview of key U.S. civil liberties, includes freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion; limitations on search and seizure, due process in criminal proceedings, autonomy rights, rights of equality, and democratic participation.

Jocelyn Simonson, *Radical Acts of Justice: How Ordinary People Are Dismantling Mass Incarceration* (The New Press, 2023)



THE ANSWER TO MASS INCARCERATION lies not with experts and pundits but with ordinary people taking extraordinary actions together,

Simonson writes in her new book, which examines the many ways people unite to reconceive ideas of justice and safety.

Bradley T. Borden, *Dialogue Debunking the Section 1031 Holding Period Myth, Tax Notes Federal*, V. 179, p. 43 (April 3, 2023)

USING A HYPOTHETICAL DIALOGUE between a tax adviser and an exchanger, Borden shows that the Section 1031 qualified use requirement does not impose a holding period requirement, and that suggestions otherwise appear based solely on perceptions of the likelihood of audit or the issue being raised on audit, which factors are prohibited in giving tax advice.

Alexis Hoag-Fordjour, *White Is Right: The Racial Construction of Effective Assistance of Counsel*, 98 *New York University Law Review* 770 (2023)

EXAMINING THE RACE-CONSTRUCTING ROLE the ineffective assistance of counsel standard

plays in determining whether a defendant received effective representation, Hoag-Fordjour outlines a structural framework for understanding right to counsel jurisprudence.

Joy Kanwar, *Stories from the Negative Spaces: United States v. Thind and the Narratives of (Non) Whiteness*, 74 *Mercer Law Review* 801 (2023)

THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION in *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, which turned a century old this year, remains relatively unknown. But its impact is monumental when it comes to the history of Asians—particularly South Asians—in America. The case captures its historical moment and provides lessons in the ways we understand race, citizenship, and what it means to be an American today.

Christina Mulligan, *Data Property*, 72 *American University Law Review* 829 (2023) (with James Grimmelmann)

DATA HAS BECOME one of society's most important resources, but property law does not recognize intangible data itself as an asset that can be owned. In *Data Property*, the authors propose a new framework for recognizing non-exclusive, personal-property-like rights in data.

Anna Roberts, *Criminal Terms*, 107 *Minnesota Law Review* 1495 (2023)

ALTHOUGH RECENT LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP has identified subtle ways in which we send pro-carceral messages, vocabulary change has not been part of the scholarship, but it should be, in recognition of the harm that such messages can do.

Faiza W. Sayed, *The Immigration Shadow Docket*, 117 *Northwestern University Law Review* 893 (2023)

EACH YEAR, THE BOARD OF IMMIGRATION APPEALS (BIA), which reviews decisions of immigration judges and decides the fate of thousands of noncitizens, publicly issues 20 to 30 published, precedential decisions. But most of the BIA's decision-making happens on its unpublished "immigration shadow docket," whose harms include the creation of "secret law" that is largely inaccessible to the public.

For a complete list of faculty scholarship, visit www.brooklaw.edu/facultyscholarship

Alumni Events

Celebratory Alumni Dinner Reunites Classmates, Honors Esteemed Graduates

FROM CHEERFUL COCKTAIL HOUR CONVERSATIONS to heartfelt honoree speeches, Brooklyn Law School's Alumni Association dinner was a remarkable event, with 355 alumni, faculty, trustees, and guests gathered to reconnect and celebrate at the elegant Cipriani 25 Broadway in Manhattan.

The March 15 gathering, held as a dinner rather than in the lunch format typical in previous years, inspired an overwhelming outpouring of support from alumni in more junior positions, especially those who found it easier to attend an evening event.

Alumni Association Board President **Deborah Riegel '93** led the program, welcoming the evening's three honorees, including Alumnus of the Year **Bernard Nash '66**, Distinguished Service honoree **Debbie Epstein Henry '94**, and Rising Star honoree **Aubria Ralph '19**.

Nash, who is co-chair of the nationally acclaimed State AG Group at Cozen O'Connor, credited colleagues, friends, and family for his success and the ability to give back to Brooklyn Law School.

"I would not be here tonight but for the many people who helped me in so many different ways over the past 50-plus years.

Success is not a solo journey," Nash said.

The Distinguished Service Award honor went to Henry, who is the founder of DEH Consulting and co-founder of Brooklyn Law School's Women's Leadership Circle, which she chairs, and the broader Women's Leadership Network, which celebrated its fifth anniversary this year.

"Two words capture the essence of the Distinguished Service Award: *relationships* and *impact*. But for me, these words go well beyond this award. They demonstrate my goals to build a meaningful life and a purposeful career," Henry said.

Ralph, who is an associate at Weil, Gotshal & Manges, and active in pro bono work, was born in the Caribbean nation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and changed careers multiple times before following her mother's advice to become a lawyer.

"If anyone thinks that the American dream is not real, I am the American dream," Ralph said. "I'm not 40 yet and I'm on my third career, and it's because of the people in my life who just believed in me and allowed me to just be the one beating my own drum, dancing to my own song, and being who I am."



L-R: Stanley A. August Professor William Araiza joins Ankit Kapoor '18 and Harriet Newman Cohen '74.



L-R: Alumnus of the Year Bernard Nash '66 joins Distinguished Service honoree Debbie Epstein Henry '94 and Rising Star honoree Aubria Ralph '19.



L-R: Brooklyn Law School Associate General Counsel Herberth Melendez with Melissa Yermes '15 and Erica Carter '15.



L-R: Newly minted graduates gathered for a photo, including Lane Waples '22, Ariana Catarisano '22, Colleen Cummings '22, and Thomas Pearce '22.



Former classmates reconnected over dinner, with lively conversations contributing to the festive event.

Alumni Join in as Business Boot Camp Celebrates 10th Year of Mixing Instruction and Life Lessons

LAW SCHOOLS are well known for training students to “think like lawyers,” but in the week commonly known as semester break, more than 120 Brooklyn Law School students, faculty, and alumni—working in tandem with a team of Deloitte Financial Advisory professionals—gathered for Business Boot Camp, a four-day crash course designed to help students understand how clients think.

Business Boot Camp, which premiered 10 years ago and was held Jan. 9–12 this year, follows the life cycle of a fictional company as it grows from a family-owned pub into a publicly owned restaurant chain with an appetite for acquisitions.

Students learn how businesspeople work with lawyers as they deal with the growing pains, opportunities, and pitfalls encountered along the way. They learn about developing business plans, budgeting, financing, accounting, valuation, and cryptocurrency. They also work on softer skills, including networking, client development, and leadership. The course is based in part on training that Deloitte provides to new associates at law firms.

Back in 2013, Board of Trustees member **John P. Oswald '84**, president and chief executive officer of Capital Trust Group and event underwriter; **Barry Salzberg '77**, then global CEO of Deloitte Touche

Tohmatsu Ltd.; **Frederick Curry III '03**, anti-money-laundering and sanctions client leader for the Deloitte Risk & Financial Advisory practice; and Brooklyn Law School Professor **Michael Gerber** developed and introduced the Business Boot Camp in collaboration with Deloitte Partner Anthony Campanelli.

The program included keynote and Q&A sessions with distinguished graduates whose careers straddled law and business, and lively panel discussions with alumni who arrived straight from the office or, in some cases, flew to New York to present, sharing experiences and practical advice. The course concluded with breakout sessions in which nearly 100 alumni met students in small groups, followed by a cocktail reception.

In one panel discussion, **Fred Rosen '69**, who was president and CEO of Ticketmaster Group, shed light on hiring decisions in the business world. For those aspiring to be a corporate lawyer, he said, knowledge of contracts and ensuring that what a CEO wants is included in the contract is important, but negotiating skills and the ability to adapt to different settings are also crucial. “What works in New York doesn’t work in Seattle; what works in Seattle doesn’t work in Dallas,” Rosen said. “You need somebody with the ability to interact

with counsel on the other side to get things done... You want really great advocates. It’s not so much getting into courtrooms, because often things get settled. It’s about creating the dynamic so that people take you seriously.”

Gloria Greco '98 spoke to students about her role as chief compliance officer at Bank of America Merrill Lynch during a lunchtime Q&A with Gerber. One regular challenge she faced: business partners who wanted to do things that did not align with her efforts to ensure the company stayed in compliance with financial services industry regulations. Tempers rose and the language got salty in those conversations, but Greco held her ground. “You have to be able to advocate for your position; you have to be able to convince other people,” Greco said. “The critical way to do that is to have confidence and convey that confidence when you’re talking to people.”

Frederick Curry III '03 said his deep knowledge of financial crimes, particularly money laundering, helped catapult him to partner at Deloitte and made him a go-to media expert. “Go really deep,” Curry said during a Q&A session with Oswald. “Whatever it is you are interested in, whatever it is you want to do, you have to be the best in it. You have to be an expert. And that is what I attribute my success to.”



Gloria Greco '98 (left) spoke to students about her role as chief compliance officer at Bank of America Merrill Lynch during a lunchtime Q&A with Professor Michael Gerber.



L–R: **John P. Oswald '84** led a “Practical Day-to-Day Legal Advice” panel featuring fellow Board of Trustees member **Sasha Linney '11**, in-house counsel at GoldenTree Asset Management; **Fred Rosen '69**, former CEO of Ticketmaster Group; **Michael Elkin '84**, vice chairman and New York office managing partner at Winston & Strawn; **Robert Schmidt '89**, partner at Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel; and **Sophia Valiotis '04**, chief legal officer at Alma Realty.



Frederick Curry III '03 (right) in a Q&A session with **John P. Oswald '84**. Both helped develop and introduce the first Business Boot Camp in 2013.

Alumni Impact

Family Increases Gift for Scholarship Named for Hon. Ralph Sansone '79

A FOUNDATION CREATED IN MEMORY OF HON. RALPH SANSONE '79, who grew up in a Brooklyn family devoted to public service and died tragically young, is increasing its support of Brooklyn Law School students.

Ralph Sansone was 32 when he died in a small-engine plane crash while returning home from a Memorial Day golf weekend in 1986. He left behind his son, Zach, who was just 3 months old, and his wife, Eva. His parents, Mary and Zach Sansone, formed the Ralph J. Sansone Foundation and created the endowed Ralph J. Sansone Scholarship Fund at the school in 2006. Now, thanks to a generous foundation gift of more than \$300,000, the amount of each of the scholarship awards will increase dramatically and the scholarship will be awarded to two students every year rather than just one.

“From my perspective, investing in the youth of our society is a way to give back to the community while keeping my father’s memory alive,” said Zach Sansone, who joined the foundation board alongside his father’s former classmate **Sal Aspromonte '79**.

While at Brooklyn Law School, Ralph excelled academically, was listed in *Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges*, and founded the Italian American Law Students Association (IALSA), serving as the first president of an organization that still thrives at the school today.

Aspromonte, who was treasurer, said some of his fondest memories include Ralph. They became best friends in law school, and Ralph influenced him to become interested in politics and social service initiatives to help the poor and disadvantaged.

“In addition to taking our studies seriously—he more than I—we had fun,” Aspromonte said. “Ralph was instrumental in

starting a Brooklyn Law School softball tournament, and he got enough people involved so that IALSA was able to have a team. We also ran the monthly disco dances for the social committee.”

After graduation, Ralph’s strong interest in management and union relations prompted him to specialize in labor law. He was appointed as Metropolitan Hospital’s labor relations director, and later assistant counsel for New York City’s Health and Hospitals Corporation. He was then appointed as first a law judge and then in June 1984, the chief administrative law judge for the New York State Labor Relations Board.

Ralph’s political activities were driven by compassion for those who need the assistance of government the most. He served for many years as a board member and officer of the Congress of Italian Americans Organization (CIAO) and was the founder and first president of the New Era Democrats (NED). His parents and Zach’s grandparents, Zachary Sansone, an attorney, and Mary Sansone, a social worker, who have both passed away, were well known in local political circles. A *New York Times* obituary called Mary Sansone, who died at 101, a “local folk hero and political godmother,” describing how she was courted by political candidates, including New York City mayors, for her grassroots wisdom.

Zach said being involved in his grandparents’ work shaped who he is. “They taught the importance of selflessness, perseverance, hard work, and taking an ethical approach to life,” he said. “Philanthropy is super important to me, and it’s wonderful to be able to continue their work by investing in education at Brooklyn Law School, which will help shape future careers and hopefully instill some of the great characteristics of my father in others.”



The memory of **Hon. Ralph Sansone '79** and his commitment to helping those in need lives on at Brooklyn Law School.



L-R: Zach Sansone with his grandparents, Zach and Mary Sansone, at a 2009 event for the Ralph J. Sansone Foundation, whose beneficiaries include Brooklyn Law School students, through a scholarship program.



L- R: Alumni, including **Irwin Cohen '58**, **Eileen Nugent '78**, Alumni Association President **Deborah Riegel '93** and other members stepped up to create a bar prep fund for students.

Alumni Come Together to Provide Bar Prep Funding for Students

EVERY BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE remembers preparing for the bar exam, from the endless hours of hitting the books to the stress of taking the test itself on exam day.

What many in the school community did not initially realize is that some students have been unable to afford bar prep courses and have missed out on the structured and comprehensive approach to test preparation that such courses provide. When alumni and faculty did learn of the student need, they sprang into action.

Alumni Association President **Deborah Riegel '93**, who is also a member of the Board of Trustees, said the issue first surfaced at a trustees meeting in the spring.

"There was discussion about students who perhaps didn't have what they needed in terms of access to bar review programs, and were potentially struggling, and of evening students who were going to have to take time off work and could not afford to do so," said Riegel, a member of the litigation department at Rosenberg & Estis. Having availed herself of bar prep courses when she was in school, Riegel could not imagine students not doing so. She suggested to the Alumni Association that profits from the March 15, 2023, alumni dinner at Cipriani 25 Broadway be redirected from the Annual Fund to a new fund devoted to bar exam prep. The directors wholeheartedly agreed.

Then, Alumni Association Director **Dexin Deng '16** pointed out that in addition to bar prep costs, some students had trouble being able to afford food while not working and preparing for the exam.

"We started brainstorming how, in

addition to helping with the bar prep, we could feed the students, and that morphed into providing meals not only at the Law School while they were studying for the bar exam, but also setting up tables of food outside on the day of the bar exam," Riegel said. "In addition to the money that we raised at the alumni dinner, there were immediately hands that went up around the table from those who pledged additional gifts, to cover everything we wanted to do for the students."

On the academic side, the Law School began offering its own bar prep classes over the summer. Associate Dean for Academic and Student Success **Karen Porter**, in her new role, helped enlist **Linda Feldman '83**, associate professor of legal writing emerita, a pioneering force in Brooklyn Law School's academic success programming. Over the summer, Feldman served as the director of bar preparation and adjunct professor of law. Summer classes included faculty-led workshops on topics such as constitutional law with Professor **Alice Ristroph** and contracts with Professor **Michael Gerber**. Other pivotal members of the team are Assistant Professors of Academic Success **Cherie N. Brown** and **Flora Midwood**, who also serves as the assistant director of the academic success program, and Assistant Professor of Legal Writing **Meg Holzer**.

Between the Alumni Dinner profits and the donations of members who provided additional gifts, the Alumni Association raised \$50,000 for the bar prep efforts.

Meanwhile, two other generous alumni who are both longtime financial supporters of the school and heard about the need also came forth with major gifts. One was Board of Trustees member **Eileen T. Nugent '78**,

who was an M&A partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom for more than three decades. The other was **Irwin Cohen '58**, the developer of Chelsea Market in Manhattan.

Nugent still remembers and is appreciative of the scholarship she received, and the administration's financial support for related costs, and wants to help students pass the bar, because she said it is critical to their career success and to the school's standing in the legal community.

"Once I learned about all of the issues that students had been dealing with while studying for the bar and the great ideas the faculty had about supporting students both financially and in developing varied methods of instructional support, I knew this was a good place for me to add my financial support," Nugent said.

Cohen said his Law School professors taught him to read every document from beginning to end, and helped him gain confidence as a speaker, crucial to someone who traveled the country for business.

"I don't think I could have accomplished what I have in my business life without going to Brooklyn Law School," Cohen said. He vividly remembers awaiting the bar exam results outside the *New York Times* offices in Times Square, at 2 a.m., eager to see the results, which were then published in the paper. Unfortunately, he had to go through the middle-of-the-night ritual again, because it took him two times to pass the bar. He is happy to help fellow alumni of the future do so as well.

To help support student success, consider a gift to Brooklyn Law School. Learn more at www.brooklaw.edu/give

Vance Foundation Family Pays It Forward with Scholarship, Fellowship Gifts

THE FAMILY OF MATTHEW VANCE '24 was proud when he was named as a recipient of the Roland Thau fellowship, which was created in Thau's memory to support aspiring public defenders attending Brooklyn Law School.

The endowed fellowship provides a permanent source of funding for a grant every year to a student who is dedicated to a career in criminal defense. Vance's parents, who are longtime philanthropists, felt that because they benefited from the Thau family's generosity, they should pay it forward. They did so by stepping up to help other students pay for their education through a major gift from the Lee and Cynthia Vance Foundation to the Law School.

"The school has been generous in terms of giving Matt a merit scholarship, which has helped him thrive. He is very committed to being a public defender, and he's had great opportunities and guidance through the faculty and various internships," said Cynthia Vance, Matthew's mother. "But I feel like we need to replenish the tank so that students who need the financial support can get it."



"I feel like we need to replenish the tank so that students who need the financial support can get it."

—CYNTHIA VANCE, VANCE FOUNDATION

The family set up the Lee and Cynthia Vance Foundation 28 years ago to support educational, social service, public health, public media, and various other causes in New York City that have meaning for them.

Cynthia is a vice president of strategic initiatives at Hunter College, and both she and Lee serve on the boards of various nonprofit institutions.

"We tend to support organizations where we also have a really good feeling for the people and the work they're trying to do, and see ways we can help make that happen," Vance said.

Through the foundation, they not only made a gift to the Thau fellowship, but also created a new scholarship to help provide funding for Brooklyn Law School students of diverse backgrounds in need of financial assistance.

Giving a hand to those in need is a fitting tribute to Thau,

who died on Nov. 10, 2020, at the age of 86, after an extraordinary life and career as a legendary public defender, representing the indigent at the Legal Aid Society and the Federal Defenders of New York.

Clare R. Petti Scholarships Invest in Future Generations of Attorneys



SINCE 2008, the endowed scholarship established by the estate of the late **Clare R. Petti '54**, a trailblazing attorney and advocate for the public interest,

has helped almost three dozen students at Brooklyn Law School achieve their dreams of a legal education.

Petti, who passed away in 2007, experienced firsthand the unique challenges that women law students and attorneys faced. A New York City native, she was one of only four women in the Class of 1954. After passing the bar in New York, Petti wanted to practice in her new home state of New Jersey, but the state's

prerequisite of a clerkship, which was then denied to women, initially prevented her from doing so. Yet she persevered in the New Jersey Supreme Court, helping create an alternative to the clerkship, a skills and methods course that opened the door for countless women to practice in the state.

In addition to Petti's solo practice in Paramus, N.J., which included a great deal of pro bono work, she served on that city's Board of Education. An advocate for sustainable development, Petti was a strong voice at city council and county government meetings, as well as planning board sessions. She also ran for the Paramus mayoral office in 1986.

The impact of Petti's legacy—an original endowment of \$1.5 million that through

investment has increased to more than \$2.3 million—is ongoing and evident in the lives and careers of many of the scholarship recipients. **Sasha Linney '11**, who received a Petti scholarship in 2009–10, is now managing director and senior counsel for GoldenTree Asset Management and a member of the Brooklyn Law School Board of Trustees. "I was, and still am, extremely grateful for the generosity of Clare Petti," Linney said. "The scholarship established by her estate was critical for me, as I was funding my own law school education through scholarships and loans. It is Clare Petti's generosity—and the generosity of so many fellow alums—that inspires me to give back to Brooklyn Law School with my time and money."

Inspired by **Joseph Crea '47**, who was then her Torts professor, **Hilary Fischman Soiefer '75** had “The barrel rolls” inscribed alongside her name on her Moot Court seat. “Always think about that when you’re working with another lawyer. If you’re on top at one point, you may not always be there,” she said.



Hilary Fischman Soiefer and Alan Soiefer, both 1975 graduates, decided to have Moot Court seats inscribed with their names and their favorite catchphrases from Joseph Crea '47, who was their Torts professor.

Class of 1975 Couple Pays Tribute to Favorite Professor's Sayings in Moot Court

HILARY FISCHMAN SOIEFER AND ALAN SOIEFER, both 1975 graduates, have a special connection to Brooklyn Law School, because it is where they first met and started dating more than 50 years ago. Now those memories are part of the school itself.

Over the summer, the Soiefers visited the Law School for the first time in years, with a particularly meaningful stop in the Moot Court Room. Although they give to the school annually, they decided to do more this year, and wanted to see firsthand the two chairs they had inscribed with their names to memorialize their favorite catchphrases from Joseph Crea '47. The legendary professor and scholar, who died in 2019 at the age of 104, taught at Brooklyn Law School for 60 years and was the Soiefers' first-year Torts professor.

“We liked him very much, as everyone else who had him did,” Hilary said. A favorite Crea saying, “The barrel rolls,” is inscribed on her named chair, a reminder to be humble and aware of shifting power dynamics. “Always think about that when you’re working with another lawyer. If you’re on top at one point, you may not always be there,” Hilary said.

“Professor Crea knew he was at the top and students were reporting to him, but at some point, the barrel will roll, and a student might become a judge that he would have to argue a case in front of,” Alan said. “He didn’t ever want to humiliate or embarrass his students, because the barrel rolls.”

Alan had a different Crea gem inscribed on his chair: “Someone always knows,” which was meant as a reminder to seek experts when faced with an unfamiliar problem. “The concept is, you may not know, but find someone who does,” Alan said. “Someone always knows the answer to the question that you have, and it’s just a matter of finding that person.”

Both Soiefers participated in the required annual Moot Court competition, but Hilary was the standout, earning a place in the Moot Court Honor Society. She remains friends with her Moot Court partner and still relishes their Law School victories.

The Soiefers married the year after graduation, and went on to careers in real estate law. After kicking off his legal career at Cravath, Swaine & Moore, Alan capped it as assistant general counsel for MetLife, and Hilary worked primarily in private practice, while they raised their children in Scarsdale, N.Y.

Each originally came to Brooklyn Law School because of its location. Hilary, who grew up in Long Island, N.Y., and attended Skidmore College, said that after four years in upstate New York, she was eager to get back to the New York City area. She was aware of the Law School’s reputation for being inclusive.

“I had heard that Brooklyn Law School was accepting women—remember this was a long time ago, and not all schools were even taking any women yet,” she said. “The year that we started, we had 40 women in the class, and they were so proud that it was 10 percent of the class, which was an all-time high. As students, we 40 women all knew each other. It was special... Brooklyn Law School was so outstandingly advanced with women’s rights at the time.”

Alan had studied at Brandeis University, near Boston, but he, too, wished to study law and be in New York, where his father had a business. Thus, he and Hilary ended up in the same class year and law school section. He was at the back of the room, while she sat in the third row, giving him “the better view,” Hilary joked.

“It was alphabetical order,” Alan said.

Studying came first, so Alan finished his final exams as a third-year student, waiting until Hilary had taken her last final before proposing. “He said to me, ‘I had the ring for a few days, but I didn’t want to give it to you, so you could study,’” Hilary recalled.

Interested in naming a seat? A Moot Court seat dedication is a meaningful way to commemorate your personal experience, or honor someone of importance in your life. Reach out to Annie Nienaber at annie.nienaber@brooklaw.edu or 718-780-7516 to find out more.

ClassNotes

Alan E. Weiner '68, the founding tax partner of Holtz Rubenstein & Co., was presented with the Gary H. Friedenberg Service Award by the Estate Planning Council of Nassau County. The award honors a fellow alumnus, the late **Gary H. Friedenberg '67**, (LL.B. '65) a past president and longtime member and friend of the organization. In presenting the award to Weiner, the council quoted Friedenberg's recommendation to make Weiner a council member. "Gary was a warm, sincere, and smart friend. I am honored to be receiving this award," Weiner said.

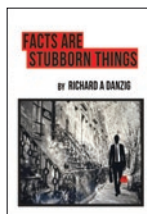
1969

Jeffrey D. Forchelli, chairman and co-managing partner at Forchelli Deegan Terrana, was selected by his peers for inclusion in the 30th edition of *The Best Lawyers in America* for land use and zoning law. He has been recognized annually since 2018.

1974

Joseph S. Karp has again been named a Florida Super Lawyer in the field of elder law, an honor he has received every year since 2009. Karp is the founder and principal of the Karp Law Firm, with offices in Palm Beach Gardens, Boynton Beach, and Port St. Lucie, Florida.

1979



Richard Danzig has published his first novel, *Facts Are Stubborn Things*, a legal thriller whose protagonist is a lawyer practicing in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Richard Stern joined Morgan Lewis as a partner and the lead of a transactional restructuring and bankruptcy litigation team in August. Stern chaired the restructuring and bankruptcy practice of a national law firm and prior to that represented financial institutions for more than 30 years.

1981



Douglas Rowe, a partner in the labor and employment group at Certilman Balin, which has offices in Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, N.Y., has been named to *The Best Lawyers in America* 2024 list.

1982

Barbara Gomes Serafino published her first book, *The Book I Always Promised: Family Curses, Stregas & Adventures from Italy, Portugal & Brooklyn*, about her Italian and Portuguese immigrant family, growing up in Brooklyn, becoming an attorney, and her travel adventures.

1984

James Bertini took on Apple and won in a trademark case to protect his brother Charlie Bertini's right to use Applejazz for concerts and his recording label.

1985

Ellen Greiper joined Wilson Elser as a lateral partner in the firm's complex tort and general casualty, construction, and transportation practices in the New York office, bringing more than 30 years of experience to the position.

Robert G. Leonard joined Dechert as a partner in the financial services and investment management practice in New York, bringing to the position deep experience in the formation and operation of hedge funds on behalf of both domestic and international clients.

1987

Helen Gavaris joined McGuireWoods as a partner in New York. She represents corporate fiduciaries and high-net-worth individuals in complex disputes, focusing on contested accounting and related proceedings involving trust diversification issues, charitable trusts, and the valuation and sale of nonpublic companies. She was previously with Loeb & Loeb.

David Woll was appointed to the New York State Bar Association's new task force on homelessness in July. He is also an adjunct professor at Brooklyn Law School, teaching Complex Securities Litigation.

1989

Michael A. Sussmann joined Fenwick as a partner in April. He has been an internationally recognized privacy, cybersecurity, and national security attorney for more than 25 years, beginning in 1997 as a cybercrime prosecutor at the U.S. Department of Justice.

1991

Nancy Savasta was appointed by New York City Corporation Counsel Sylvia O. Hinds-Radix as chief of the Law Department's new risk management division in May. She will work with agency partners in identifying and

mitigating risks to decrease the potential for harm to the city's residents and visitors while protecting the city financially.



Hon. Ramon E. Reyes '92 was elevated to District Court Judge for the Eastern District of New York. Reyes, who is a member of the Board of Trustees of Brooklyn Law School and is on the Board of Directors of the Federal Bar Association, Eastern District Chapter, swore in the incoming class of Brooklyn Law School students at the 2023 Convocation.

1993

Joseph Rosato was elected president of the Brooklyn Bar Association in June. Rosato attended Brooklyn Law School at night while working as a court officer.

1994

Lisa Bova-Hiatt was named permanent chief executive officer of the New York City Housing Authority in June after serving as interim CEO since September 2022. She was also named to *City @ State New York's* "2023 Real Estate Power 100" in July and was appointed the chair (ex officio) of the newly established board of the New York City Public Housing Preservation Trust in May.

Frank Carone was named to *City @ State New York's* "2023 Brooklyn Power 100." Carone, who is founder and chair of Oaktree Solutions, a public affairs firm, has also returned as of counsel at Abrams Fensterman. He previously spent a year as chief of staff to New York City Mayor Eric Adams.

1996

Ari J. Markenson, a partner at Venable, was elected an American Bar Foundation fellow, included in 2024's *The Best Lawyers in America*, NYC, for healthcare, and named an adjunct associate professor at Pace University's College of Health Professions in the Department of Health Science.

1997

Seth Borden has been named associate general counsel of labor and employee relations at Amazon.com.

David Fertig has joined BakerHostetler's New York office as a partner in the firm's nationwide litigation practice group and a member of its commercial litigation team.

1998

Gabe Nugent was named general counsel and senior vice president of Syracuse University. He was also appointed chair of the New York State Judicial Screening Committee for the Appellate Division, Fourth Department, by Governor Kathy Hochul in May. Nugent was previously a partner at Barclay Damon.

1999

Douglas Eisenberg was named to *City @ State New York's* "2023 Real Estate Power 100." He is co-founder and CEO of A&E Real Estate and was cited for recent acquisitions of two luxury rental buildings on the Upper West Side and a massive apartment portfolio in Brooklyn.

2001

Baaba Halm was appointed to the newly established board of the New York City Public Housing Preservation Trust. Halm is also vice president and New York market leader for Enterprise Community Partners, a national nonprofit focused on affordable rental homes.

Ime Lopez was appointed to the Commission on Judicial Performance for the Fourth Judicial District in Colorado.

2002

Luma Al-Shibib was promoted to co-chair of the Cyber Insurance Recovery Group at Anderson Kill, a national insurance recovery law firm in New York.

Bryan Lewis is rejoining Nixon Peabody as counsel, as the Melville, N.Y.-based firm expands its complex disputes practice. Lewis offers experience representing clients in the banking, construction, healthcare, and technology products and services industries in contractual and business tort litigation. He began his career as an associate at the firm, working there from 2002 to 2009.

Tina Luongo, chief attorney of the Legal Aid Society's criminal defense practice, has been awarded the 2023 Legal Services Justice Award by the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association. In August 2023, Luongo was sworn in as the first gender-nonconforming chair of the American Bar Association's criminal justice section.

2003



Camille Joseph Varlack was named to *City @ State New York's* "2023 Brooklyn Power 100." Varlack is the chief of staff for the New York City Mayor's Office.

Mitchell Korbey was named to *City @ State New York's* "2023 Real Estate Power 100." Korbey, who is a partner and chair of the land use and zoning group at Herrick, and an adjunct professor at Brooklyn Law School, was chosen for his work in helping clients navigate New York City's complex zoning regulations.

2004

Brian Weinberg, who offers nearly 20 years of investigative and prosecutorial experience, was appointed director of investigations and enforcement for the New York State Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government's Investigations and Enforcement Division.

2005

**Hon. Rachel "Ruchie" E. Freier**

was recognized with the 2023 Women of Distinction Award by State Assemblymember Brian Cunningham for her dedication to the legal profession and the Hasidic community in June. Freier is an acting New York State Supreme Court judge and was up for election Nov. 7, 2023.

Jason A. Ganfer joined Goldberg Segalla as partner in real estate litigation and title disputes, real estate and land use, and its commercial litigation and arbitration practices in the firm's Manhattan office. He was previously with Ganfer Shore Leeds & Zauderer in New York.

Errol Louis, the host of "Inside City Hall" on NY1, was named to *City @ State New York's* "2023 Brooklyn Power 100."

Neil Weisbard has joined Seyfarth Shaw as a partner in its real estate department in New York. Weisbard brings to Seyfarth extensive experience in land use, zoning, and administrative law matters, and securing construction permits and matters for real estate development for both residential and commercial properties.

2006

Hon. Alex M. Chintella was named administrative law judge of the Federal Maritime Commission in June. Chintella had served at the Federal Railroad Administration since 2017.

Michael Chung joined Brown Rudnick as a partner in the firm's growth companies and venture capital practice. He was previously a partner at Fox Rothschild.

Barri Kass was elevated to partner at leading fundraising and strategic consulting firm CCS Fundraising. Kass, who joined CCS in 2010, has drawn upon her experience in the legal profession to counsel multiple organizations through intensive campaign goal setting, pipeline building, nationwide planning studies, and case development.

2007

Sidney Bashago made partner at Davis Polk, where she is part of the white-collar defense and investigations practice in New York. She represents companies, boards of directors, financial institutions, and individuals in criminal, regulatory, and internal investigations involving allegations of securities fraud, sexual misconduct, foreign corrupt practices, money laundering, and other financial crimes.

Kristina Heuser has been named to the Florida Southwestern State College District Board of Trustees. She is an attorney at Heuser Law Firm and also currently serves on the Collier County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

2008

Michael Calcagni, who specializes in trusts and estates, including litigation, as a partner at Moritt Hock & Hamroff in Garden City, N.Y., was named to *The Best Lawyers in America: Ones to Watch* in 2024.

2009

Laurian Cristea has joined Barnes & Thornburg as a partner in the corporate department in the firm's New York and Raleigh, N.C., offices.

Matthew Modafferi joined Frier Levitt as a partner in the litigation team after having previously served as assistant U.S. attorney, in the civil division at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. Modafferi will focus his practice

on white-collar defense and investigations, and complex civil litigation. Modafferi is also an adjunct professor at Brooklyn Law School, where he teaches litigation skills and learning from practice.

2010

Alexander Kerzhner, who specializes in corporate law at Forchelli Deegan Terrana, was named to *The Best Lawyers in America: Ones to Watch* 2024 edition.

**Sarah Wilde** joined

Repario, an eDiscovery and digital forensics professional services firm, as its chief human resources officer.

She brings to the position more than 13 years of leadership in the industry, having previously served as the vice president of global human resources at UnitedLex Corp.

2011

Lisa M. Casa, a partner in Forchelli Deegan Terrana's employment and labor practice group, was appointed as vice chair of the Nassau County Bar Association's Labor and Employment Law Committee, effective June 1, 2023. She was also included for the first time in *The Best Lawyers in America: Ones to Watch* in 2024 for her work in commercial litigation and labor and employment law management.

2012

Alumni **Jessi Kleinman** and **Jonathan Byer** celebrated their wedding on May 13, 2023, at the Royalton Mansion in Roslyn, N.Y. The couple lives in New York City, where Kleinman is an associate at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, and Byer is a partner at Katten Muchin Rosenman.

2013

Joe Binder was named partner at Debevoise & Plimpton as a member of the firm's investment management group, based in the San Francisco office.

ALUMNI ROCK *Billboard*'S TOP MUSIC LAWYER LIST

Eight alumni made the 2023 *Billboard* Top Music Lawyers list, as did Brooklyn Law School Adjunct Professor **Vernon Brown**, the CEO and president, of V. Brown & Company, who was recognized for a “formidable” client list including Cash Money, Epic Records artist Pyrex, and Republic Records producer ATL Jacob. Here are the alumni honorees:

Sony Music Publishing’s **Peter Brodsky ’90**, executive vice president of business and legal affairs/general counsel, and **Nicole Giacco ’00**, senior vice president of business and legal affairs, were both recognized for their team’s work in music publishing at Sony, where the legal team closed numerous landmark deals and renewals with music writers in the past year, including Ashley Gorley, Tainy, Anitta, Ryan Tedder, Danger Mouse and Måneskin, and simultaneously expanded its worldwide reach, opening offices in emerging markets including India and Nigeria.

Jordan Bromley ’05, partner/entertainment group leader at Manatt Phelps & Phillips, was part of a team that handled two of the music industry’s top deals of 2022: Dundee Partners’ \$1.1 billion acquisition of Kobalt Capital Limited’s music rights portfolio, KMR Music Royalties II; and Francisco Partners’ move to obtain a majority stake in Kobalt Investment.

Corey Briskin joined boutique litigation firm Yankwitt as counsel after completion of his federal clerkship in the District of Connecticut in April 2023.

Eleor Cohen, an adjunct professor at Brooklyn Law School, made partner at Levitt & Boccio, where he represents for-profit and nonprofit developers in a wide array of real estate transactions, with a particular focus on the construction, rehabilitation, and preservation of multifamily housing, mixed-use projects, and other complex real estate developments.

Alex Kaplan ’00, a partner at Oppenheim + Zembrak, was part of a team that represents three major music groups and was chosen for its record of fighting on their behalf against copyright infringement and piracy.

Cynthia Katz ’10, a partner at Fox Rothschild, was recognized for her work in advising client HarbourView Equity Partners on high-profile acquisitions of music catalogs, including works from Incubus, Brad Paisley, Lady A, and Sum 41.

Paul Schindler ’71, a shareholder/senior chair of New York entertainment and media practice at Greenberg Traurig, was listed as part of a team representing high-profile names including Britney Spears, Katy Perry, and Kacey Musgraves, and organizations including Spotify, Meta, and Epic Games.

Edward Shapiro ’91, a partner in the global entertainment and media industry group at Reed Smith, was lauded for serving as Rihanna’s counsel in all her endeavors, including her Super Bowl halftime show performance and new venture with Puma.

Dorothy Weber ’81, a partner at Herbsman Hafer Weber & Frisch, was credited for working on several catalog sales, including that of Regent Music and Jewel Music to Primary Wave, and the sale of jazz legend Sonny Rollins’ music rights to Reservoir.

Hon. Daniel Faessler became an administrative law judge in 2023 for the California Department of Social Services, State Hearings Division. Previously, he was a senior staff attorney, clinical supervisor, and lecturer at Berkeley Law School’s largest clinical program, East Bay Community Law Center.

Jessica Rickards celebrated her first anniversary with the New York City Department for the Aging as deputy general counsel. She works with Penney Vachirapapun ’05, who has been serving as general counsel since December 2021.

2014

Ruth Corcoran made partner at Kaufman Borgeest & Ryan, where her practice focuses on the defense of hospitals, physicians, nurses, and other healthcare entities in medical malpractice litigation.

Anthony C. Varbero was named partner at Forchelli Deegan Terrana in its newly formed securities litigation & regulation practice group, which he also co-chairs. Previously, he was affiliated with Joseph Mure Jr. & Associates and brings decades of sophisticated New York City financial and legal services to the Long Island market.



Francis W. Yook, an associate at Walsh Pizzi O’Reilly Falanga in Newark, N.J., has been installed as president of the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey for the 2023–24 term.

2015

Lena Smith was named partner at Debevoise & Plimpton, where she is based in the New York office and a member of the firm’s tax group.

2022

Andrew Schouder has joined Norton Rose Fulbright’s New York office, bringing his significant experience advising clients in distressed and special situations, both in and out of court, through restructurings, asset and stock purchases and sales, and loan-to-own transactions.

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In Memoriam



Hon. Sterling Johnson Jr. '66

Hon. Sterling Johnson Jr. '66, a senior judge of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, passed away on Oct. 10, 2022 in Queens, N.Y. He was 88.

Johnson entered Brooklyn Law School in 1963, while he was an officer with the New York City Police Department, switching to night police work so that he could attend classes at Brooklyn Law School during the day, according to *The New York Times*.

He later gave his time to the Law School, serving as one of 22 federal judges from the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York who took part in the school's EDNY Day in 2019. He taught refugee law.

During Johnson's time as a federal judge, the *Times* noted, he was best known for ordering the closing of a Guantanamo Bay detention facility, which he referred to as an "HIV prison camp" for Haitian refugees, and for ruling that New York City had failed to adequately help poor residents who had AIDS.

He presided over civil and criminal cases at the federal level in the Eastern District of New York for 31 years. Prior to his appointment in 1991 by President George H.W. Bush, Johnson also served in a variety of other public roles over nearly three decades.

As the special narcotics prosecutor for the City of New York for 16 years, he supervised assistant district attorneys and investigators responsible for the preparation and prosecution of more than 7,000 criminal cases. He also was executive director of the Civilian Complaint Review Board, and a member of the United States Sentencing Commission.

Johnson was long involved with the National Black Prosecutors Association, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, the Presidential Drug Advisory Council, and task forces on promoting minority representation in the judiciary and gender, racial, and ethnic fairness in the courts, the *Times* noted.

Johnson served as a guest lecturer at many U.S. universities and law schools, as well as in various countries throughout the world. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., Johnson received his B.A. from Brooklyn College and was a U.S. Marine for three years.

1951

Stephen Geffner

Aug. 4, 2023

1952

Charles Berkman

Nov. 18, 2022

Leonard Douglas

May 13, 2023

1953

Seymour Hurwitz

May 25, 2023

Stanley Shields

April 12, 2023

1954

Robert Trainor

Aug. 17, 2023

1956

Lewis Goldman

May 9, 2023

1957

Bertram Bloch

April 23, 2023

Kenneth Allan Greene

June 24, 2023

1958

Ralph Brotter

Aug. 1, 2023

Richard Godosky

April 19, 2023

Albert Schwartzberg

Oct. 28, 2022

1959

Lawrence Rothberg

April 22, 2020

Seymour "Sy" Strongin

Feb. 22, 2023

1961

Robert T. Anker

Aug. 2, 2023

Martin Fingerhut

Dec. 8, 2022

1962

Hon. Donald Friedman

April 6, 2023

1963

George Jesse Bender, Jr.

March 31, 2023

Ron Davies

Jan. 15, 2023

1964

Joshua Elkin

Nov. 24, 2022

1967

William Thomas Alt

June 16, 2023

Gary H. Friedenberg

Jan. 4, 2022

Michael Schaffer

March 8, 2023

Joel F. Spivak

April 8, 2023

1969

Morris Orens

Nov. 29, 2022

1970

Geoffrey K. Orlando

July 9, 2023

1971

Hon. Harold Bauman

June 4, 2023

1974

Howard J. Pobiner

Jan. 5, 2023

1977

Alan Chevat

Sept. 20, 2021

1993

Maura Healy

Dec. 4, 2022

2020

Michael Edward Simmons

Nov. 7, 2021

Laura Cooper '89



Laura Cooper '89, who worked as a securities litigator and in securities enforcement, passed away peacefully on June 15, 2023, after a brief illness.

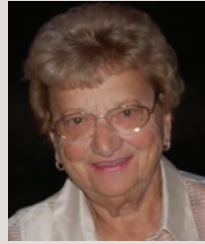
Cooper grew up partly in Greece and partly in the United States, attending the Arsakeion school in Athens, and the Breck School, just outside St. Paul, Minn. She earned a B.A. in political science from Reed College in 1984. Determined from age 9 to be an attorney, Cooper completed juvenile justice internships in high school and college and volunteered in the Washington, D.C., juvenile justice system. While attending Brooklyn Law School, she was the articles editor of the *Brooklyn Law Review*, and graduated magna cum laude and sixth in her class in 1989.

After earning a J.D., Cooper went on to work as a securities litigator at Weil, Gotschal & Manges before moving to the enforcement arm of the New York Stock Exchange, later consolidated as the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, where she also organized attorney professional development training.

Cooper was an enthusiastic cook and loved to prepare and host inventive and elaborate meals and dinner parties for friends and family. Cooper also traveled extensively in Europe, Central and South America, and North Africa. Her other passions and talents included photography, calligraphy, gardening, and enjoying New York City's cultural life. One of her proudest projects was restoring, renovating, and furnishing her landmarked Brooklyn rowhouse with a custom cook's kitchen, garden oasis, and objects from her travels. She proudly participated with her neighbors in the Prospect Lefferts Gardens house and garden tour.

Cooper is survived by her mother, Nancy J. Kelly, of Pittsburgh, Pa., sister, Gigi Cooper, brother-in-law Shane Thomas, nephew Henry Thomas, niece Clea Thomas, extended family, and many friends. Her father, Frederick A. Cooper, predeceased her.

Lillian Lee Port '52



Lillian Lee Port '52, who specialized in education law and also taught the subject for many years at San Francisco State University, passed away on January 10, 2022. She was 97.

Port, who went by her middle name, "Lee," attended City College of New York, where she proudly served as editor of the school newspaper and went on to excel at Brooklyn Law School, graduating as the valedictorian of the Class of 1952. She and her husband, Leonard, moved with their young family to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1964.

Shortly after the move, Port began work as a volunteer with Peninsula Temple Shalom, the American Jewish Congress, and at the Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County. After her children were grown, she commenced practicing law in the San Mateo Office of the District Attorney and County Counsel, which she continued for 25 years. She specialized in education law, representing school districts throughout the county. She taught School Law for Administrators at San Francisco State University for many years, and wrote the textbook used by most educator administrative credential programs in California, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Law for School Administrators*.

After retiring, Port resumed her volunteer activities in the after-school reading program at a local school, and served on the Foster City Education and Dog Park Committees. Port and her husband of almost 56 years, Leonard (1924–2004), traveled the world together, visiting more than 57 countries. She was also known as a skilled baker who had a new cookie for every occasion.

Port is survived by her three children, Penny Bennett (Dick), Jerri Port, and Andrew Port (Debbie); by her grandchildren, Lisa Prange, Amy Bennett, John Bennett, and Jessica and Aaron Port; and by three great-grandchildren.

Robert Stengel '23



Robert Stengel '23, remembered as a brilliant and tenacious student who studied and attended classes via Zoom from his hospital bed even

while undergoing cancer treatment, died on Dec. 8, 2022. He was 34.

Stengel began law school in the fall of 2020, shortly after going into remission from cancer in 2019.

"Rob quickly left an indelible impression on both classmates and professors—myself among them, as his brilliance, warmth, and personality shone in my Criminal Law class his first semester," said Professor Michael T. Cahill, who was dean at the time. "He was a stellar student, and, far more than that, a kindhearted and compassionate colleague and mentor."

Stengel served on *Brooklyn Law Review* in his 2L year and participated in the appellate division of the Moot Court Honor Society. When his cancer returned in May 2022, he spent endless hours in his hospital bed at Memorial Sloan Kettering studying and watching class lectures, completing his postponed spring exams. He attended classes while still undergoing treatment in the fall 2022 semester, but experienced severe side effects that prompted him to focus on palliative care. He married politics and culture writer Ashley Reese in an Oct. 16, 2022, backyard wedding in Brooklyn that was chronicled in *Vogue*. Shortly thereafter, Cahill presented Stengel a Brooklyn Law School diploma, "which he earned as fully and as richly as any Brooklyn Law School student," he said.



A scholarship fund has been set up to honor Robert Stengel '23. To learn more, contact Director of Annual Giving Patty Allen,

patty.allen@brooklaw.edu
or (718) 780-7563.

A Conversation with Susan Herman,
Ruth Bader Ginsburg Professor of Law

The Future of Civil Liberties

Ahead of a scholarly panel discussion on her new book, Advanced Introduction to US Civil Liberties, Ruth Bader Ginsburg Professor of Law Susan Herman shared some insights on the topic, including why she is hopeful.



Why did you write your latest book and what do you hope readers will take away from it?

I wrote this book because I wanted to share what I learned from spending over three decades on the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Board of Directors, including 12 years as president, and four decades teaching about the U.S. Constitution.

I hope that readers will take away an appreciation for how civil liberties came to be recognized in the U.S. during the 20th century and how it has come to pass that we are now losing so much of what our predecessors struggled to win. The opening line of the book is a quote from the ACLU's first executive director, Roger Baldwin, who frequently remarked that no civil liberties battle ever remains won. I would like readers to see the history of civil liberties as involving pendulum swings, and to engage with the question of how we can get the pendulum to swing back in the direction of liberty and equality.

Elgar Press, which invited me to write this book as part of a series, is based in the United Kingdom, so I also wanted to make the uniquely American history and construction of civil liberties accessible to a non-American audience.

What do you anticipate the hot topics will be when civil libertarians gather for your book talk this fall?

I'm very excited about the panelists who have agreed to take part on Oct. 13 in what I think will be an important conversation about the future of civil liberties: Erwin Chemerinsky, dean of Berkeley Law School and celebrated author, speaker, and litigator; Ellis Cose, a stellar journalist who wrote the history of the ACLU for its centennial celebration in 2020 (*Democracy, If We Can Keep It: The ACLU's 100-Year Fight for Rights in America*); Anthony Romero, the brilliant executive director of the ACLU since 2001 (he started the job one week before 9/11), who has led the organization's opposition to terrible ideas ranging from Guantanamo to voter suppression to the Trump administration's family separation policies; and Nadine Strossen, my fabulous predecessor, who during and after her time at the ACLU has been an eloquent and ardent defender of fundamental civil liberties principles, including the freedom of speech at a time when free speech has been under siege from so many directions.

I have invited these panelists to talk about their concerns, hopes, and strategies for the future of civil liberties. Using my book

as prologue, they will discuss general themes—such as what lessons we should take from civil liberties challenges and crises in the past—and will probably also focus on whatever civil liberties issues each of them has been thinking about. I expect that threats to our First Amendment freedoms—freedom of speech, press, and assembly—as well as the Establishment Clause will

be featured prominently, as threats to those liberties are threats to our democracy itself. We'll probably also discuss the overruling of *Roe v. Wade* and the future of abortion, voting rights, and equal protection of the laws. But what I am most excited about is that all of these immensely creative people will probably talk about some things that I don't anticipate. The event recording can be found on the YouTube channel at Brooklaw.edu.

What constitutional issues and debates are most intriguing to you right now?

I am very much interested in all of those critical areas of civil liberties. In addition, one issue I find intriguing at present is the limited nature of our American conception of civil liberties. Our Bill of Rights is almost exclusively negative, announcing what government is not allowed to do. Government, for example, may not tell us what religion to follow, punish us for expressing an unpopular opinion, or lock us up without affording us due process.

The U.S. signed the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which declares the universality not only of civil and political rights like our First Amendment freedoms, but also of affirmative rights, including socioeconomic rights (to basic sustenance, housing), and a right for all to be treated with dignity—rights Eleanor Roosevelt, a leader of the UDHR project, and her husband, Franklin, saw as the next phase of American constitutional development.

The U.S. has, in many ways, been a model of liberty. But we have not figured out how to effectively serve the value of equality, added to our Constitution only after the Civil War. And the third value the French posit as fundamental—fraternity, an inspiration for the UDHR's recognition of a right to dignity—is not on our screen at all. I've been thinking about what an American form of fraternity might look like and how that third value might enable us to harmonize our goals of liberty and equality.

At a time when we are in such a defensive posture about so many of our rights and freedoms, I am enjoying thinking about a more optimistic future in which our panoply of rights might actually expand rather than contract. There's not enough space here to really explain all of this, so stay tuned for another book. ■

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“A big thing that is missing from the legal curriculum is the expertise of people who are impacted, and who know the realities of the justice system.”

—KAITLYN PAVIA '23

Rethinking Justice: Not a Textbook Case, p. 24

