



Brooklyn  
Law School

# CLINICS

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WHERE LAW COMES TO LIFE

## Summer in the Corporate and Real Estate Clinic: A Co-op Unit Sale

Fatima Salazar '25, a summer student in the Corporate and Real Estate Clinic, conducted a closing for a low-income co-op unit sale on June 23, 2023. As a rising 2L, Fatima hadn't taken the Real Estate Practice course yet, but she was able to understand the outlines of the deal by reviewing the contract of sale prepared by spring semester students. She then proceeded to prepare the assignment and assumption of lease and other closing documents. Fatima guided the co-op President through the closing and handled questions from the buyer's attorney and the lender attorney. She was supervised by clinic director, Professor Debbie Bechtel. The closing brought the Harlem co-op one step closer to complying with a lender requirement to increase shareholders and also provided a first home for a young low-income neighborhood resident.



Fatima Salazar '25 left, new co-op owner middle, co-op President right

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## Permanent Residence for Safe Harbor Clients—At Last

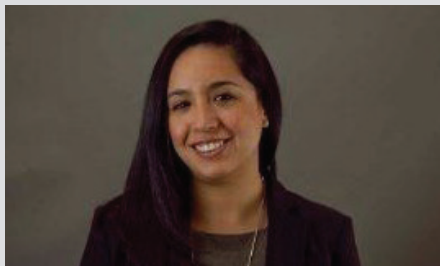
The huge backlogs in processing times at USCIS delay the issuance of green cards to clinic clients who have received asylum. This summer, two long-time clients, one from Russia and the other from Togo, finally received theirs.

## Saskia Valencia Joins Disability and Civil Rights Clinic as Fellow

Saskia Valencia, who began in July 2023, teaches in the Disability and Civil Rights Clinic. Prior to joining the Clinic, she was a senior staff attorney at Brooklyn Defender Services' Family Defense Practice (BDS) where she represented indigent parents accused of abuse and neglect. At BDS, Professor Valencia was a member of the Preserving Family Bonds team, which had a specialty focus on post-dispositional and termination of parental rights-stage cases.

Before her work as a public defender, Professor Valencia began her legal career as a Skadden Fellow at Youth Represent where she implemented the organization's first medical-legal partnership (MLP) dedicated to providing reentry legal services to young people who had been diagnosed with mental illness. Following her fellowship, Professor Valencia remained at Youth Represent where she continued working with and supervising the MLP, while also implementing the organization's first project dedicated to working with immigrant youth involved in the criminal justice system.

Prior to becoming an attorney, Professor Valencia was a community-based family therapist working with families with children involved in the juvenile justice system in NYC and unhoused and at-risk youth and families in San Diego, CA.



Saskia Valencia

## Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic: Fighting Extreme Prison Sentences and Advocating to Bring People Home

The Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic (CDAC) continues to fight for, and win, freedom for domestic violence survivors serving extreme sentences in New York State prisons. CDAC's work extends beyond the academic terms, continuing past the semester and over the summer.

In August, rising 3L and CDAC member Rahmel Lee Robinson '24 appeared with Professor Kate Mogulescu in Albany County Court after winning resentencing for an incarcerated survivor of domestic violence under the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act.

Rahmel worked on the case for the entire 2022-23 academic year, together with recent alumni Gregory Chang '23 and Taylor Ramirez '23.

The team's efforts resulted in immediate release from prison for the survivor, saving nearly 10 years from what would have been her earliest possible release date and eliminating a potential life sentence.

This marks CDAC's eleventh successful resentencing, which works statewide, having won cases in ten different counties over the last three years – including Albany, Bronx, Erie, Nassau, Oswego, Queens, Orange, Rockland, and Suffolk.

The clinic also began the Fall semester with another critical milestone. In September, NYS Governor Kathy Hochul granted clemency to Myeshia Hawkins-Taylor (photo below) a survivor of domestic violence incarcerated at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, New York's maximum-security prison for women. CDAC has worked with Myeshia for nearly four years. In that time, she has become an integral presence in the clinic, joining the Advisory Group of the [Survivors Justice Project](#), CDAC's advocacy collective, frequently joining seminar sessions to co-teach with Professor Mogulescu and supporting other survivors inside the prison.



Although Myeshia's original application for resentencing under the DVSJA was denied, her sentence commutation represents a clear recognition of her accomplishments and of the injustice of her continued incarceration. Many generations of CDAC students have worked alongside and learned from Myeshia over the years, building on the tireless efforts of Jane Brennan '20, Taylor Bleistein '20, Mia Guthart '21 and Nicole Sowers '21.



Rahmel Lee Robinson '24

# BLIP Update

This past year, Bloomberg Law declared the BLIP Clinic among the inaugural [“Top 10 Law School Innovators”](#) January 17, 2023

Professor Askin has also been named an inaugural [“Education Award Finalist” in the “Americal Technology Awards”](#)

BLIP represented more than 70 startups and entrepreneurs over the past year, while also focusing on broader policy issues designed to advance technology, the law, and society.

Among the more interesting projects the BLIP Clinic is pursuing are the following:

- [Building a suite of tools and apps for Citizen Reentry](#) (courtesy of a grant from the American Family Dreams Foundation)
- Submitted an amicus brief to SCOTUS asking that they consider the law surrounding AI inventorship, particularly in light of the policies set forth in the CHIPS Act.
- Explored the concept of “Google Dorking” with the white hacker community how to help lawyers and citizens better understand how nefarious actors gain access to user data to invade privacy exploit citizens.
- Fought HBO over its decision to, first, purchase, children’s programming such as Sesame Street, charge for viewing, and then determine to make the content unavailable.
- Fought NYC over its decision to yank the contracts of Peoples Choice Communications from offering free broadband to NYCHA housing in order to give exclusive contracts to Verizon, Comcast, and Altice, the largest telecom and cable providers.
- Helped prepare legislation to allow for NY to become the first state to provide a data tax on large Internet companies



use of personal data without compensation to such users. The objective is to help the state and users derive some of the revenue from exploitation of user data and to combat excessive capital flight from NY to a few well-heeled tech companies in Silicon Valley.

- Fighting for “Right to Repair” policies to better enable owners of electronic equipment to fiddle with their own devices or preferred mechanics, so that they are not subject to the unilateral determinations and repairs of the large vendors of electronic equipment. Prepared a White Paper on Federal Cannabis Policy Reform with an emphasis on such issues as promotion of the Right to Travel and compliance with the Dormant Commerce Clause, as well as examination of the effects and process of Rescheduling Cannabis as something other than a Schedule 1 drug.

Of particular note, the BLIP Clinic is currently working on an initiative to reimagine what a living, breathing constitution could look like in the Digital Age: The BLIP Clinic has been approached by citizens from a war-torn, authoritarian, anti-democratic, anti-pluralistic nation to prepare a forward-looking constitution in hopes that these citizens may establish a break-away nation-state founded on principles of democracy, pluralism, and secular liberalism. This project is exploring how technological advances could shape the laws of a newly founded nation-states (or whatever organizing systems might supplant the nation-state. Specifically, this project focuses on how lawmakers could harness the knowledge society gained on technology in the Digital Age to develop a digitally aware body of laws that takes into account the benefits and dangers of technological advances. This project explores both procedural and substantive rights to create a governance and societal framework that might best serve humanity and evolve with changing technologies and circumstances.

## Externship News

Diana Hortsch has joined BLS Clinics as Assistant Director of Externship Programs and will focus on student communications and counseling, and on relationships with our field placements and supervisors. Diana will also teach the Learning From Practice externship seminar. With over 500 students enrolled in BLS externship courses every year, Diana’s contributions meaningfully enhance program administration and educational value.

Diana previously taught legal research and writing at BLS, George Washington University, and NYU School of Law. Diana came to academia after working for two decades in reproductive and human rights advocacy, including as Senior Director of the Law School Initiative at the Center for Reproductive Rights. She clerked for Federal

Magistrate Judge Cheryl Pollak in the Eastern District of New York. Diana received an AB from Bryn Mawr College, and a JD and MSW from NYU.



*Diana Hortsch*