

# Pro Bono & Justice

A periodic publication of the AALS Section on Pro Bono and Public Service Opportunities

Stephen Says....

Spring, 2019

Dear Friends:

I hope you are all doing well!

It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces at our annual meeting in New Orleans in January. The program, spearheaded by Sue Schechter and Jen Tschirch, was phenomenal. Not only did we get to hear from some inspirational speakers, the program was intentionally designed to allow attendees to visit with and learn from one another. I believe that our goal of encouraging everyone to take home something they learned and implement it in their program was achieved. In addition, the service project at Ozanam Inn went great! We had several members show up and volunteer. Please see below for more details.

I am excited about working with all of you in the upcoming year. Not only does it give a place for us to discuss the enduring importance and call to pro bono service, this Section serves as an important connection point for many throughout the country and within many law schools. We have a wonderful group of past leaders and I am extremely fortunate that we have a phenomenal group leading the section this year:

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This newsletter also includes an update on our 2020 program, the results of our latest pop-up survey, and an updated set of by-laws. Please be sure to review the updated by-laws for the Section and give me your feedback by April 15, 2019. We'll be submitting the by-laws, after the comment period, to AALS for approval and then back to the Section for a final vote.

Although many of us attend different conferences around the country, I hope that our Section can continue to serve as a way for all of us to get together – even if only virtually – and share what we're working on and what we'd like to see happen within the Section. If there is ever anything that I can do for you, or if you have any ideas you'd like to talk about implementing, I'd love to talk to you.

Please feel free to contact me at any time. If you have any suggestions for this newsletter, I (and Pam Robinson) would love to hear them.

Best,  
Stephen

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## Drinan and Rhode Award Recipients

On behalf of the AALS Section on Pro Bono and Public Service Opportunities, I am delighted to announce the winners of the Deborah L. Rhode and Father Robert Drinan Awards, selected from an impressive slate of nominees.

The [Deborah L. Rhode Award](#), to a full-time faculty member or dean who has made an outstanding contribution to increasing pro bono and public service in the law school setting through scholarship, leadership, or service, was presented to [Vivian I. Neptune-Rivera](#), Dean of the University of Puerto Rico School of Law. Dean Neptune-Rivera will be honored for greatly expanding pro bono, clinical and doctrinal opportunities focused on access to justice, including, inter alia, the Centre for Integral Support for Victims, which provides services to the elderly and victims of human trafficking and is funded by Puerto Rico's Department of Justice; establishing



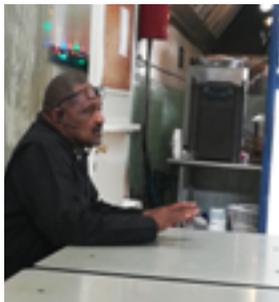
new community relationships that increase public service; advocating for affordable tuition with the philosophy that “access to justice begins with access to legal education;” and zealously and creatively attending to the legal needs of Puerto Rican people and to the personal well-being of her students in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Dean Neptune-Rivera's nominators described that without power and water in a hot and humid climate, no one was more instrumental in making sure that students would be educated, clinics would remain open, and that a sense of commitment to the community would be maintained than Dean Neptune, who established an open air Dean's office, so that all could meet with her and see that legal education was alive and functioning.

The [Father Robert Drinan Award](#), which was presented to [Louis S. Rulli](#) Practice Professor of Law and Director of the Gittis Center for Clinical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, recognizes a professional faculty or staff member at a law school who has forwarded the ethic of pro bono service through personal service, program design or management. Professor Rulli has used his position as a clinical professor and leader to push for law school attention to public service and pro bono as part of law school culture and academic expectations not just at Penn but across the nation. He has been involved in every aspect of law school support for public service, from student loan policy to fellowships to academic courses to actually doing the hands on legal work to benefit vulnerable Americans. He teaches and generously makes himself available as a mentor and support for law students who are figuring out how to move into public service, he pushes law school administrators to keep public interest law in mind at all times, he models the scrupulous advocacy that young lawyers can do by pursuing projects such as his leadership on ending abuses in civil forfeiture and pursuing civil right to counsel, and he writes about his work and visions so that others across the nation can benefit from his wisdom and experience.



The Awards were presented at the Section's meeting on Thursday, January 3, 2019

## Serving in New Orleans



### Service project at Ozanam Inn Co-Sponsored by the Poverty Law Section

Ozanam Inn is a non-profit, direct service agency serving the homeless and needy of greater New Orleans. While the Inn's immediate priority is to offer aid and comfort by providing for basic needs like food, shelter and clothing, they also offer case management and counseling to help move individuals from homelessness to independent living. Volunteers served a midday meal at the Inn. You can tell from the photos that we had a blast!



# Recap of 2019 Annual Meeting

The Pro Bono & Public Service Opportunities Section conducted a session at this year's AALS Annual Meeting in New Orleans entitled Encouraging and Empowering the Next Generation of Leaders. The program, co-sponsored by the Leadership Section, focused on the critical role of law schools in redefining what it means to be a lawyer. We explored ways to guide students looking for alternative career trajectories; discussed creative ways to help them explore pathways consistent with their values; and provided ideas attendees can translate into action.

Here are some takeaways from our panelists, A'Niya Robinson, Alanah Odoms Herbert, Diane Chin and Bill Quigley:

- \*Faculty and staff can honor students' sense of outrage when they reach out and are angry about an issue. Help them understand that they can do something about it; encourage community involvement to foster an understanding of the overall interconnectedness of our society and the importance of conscious lawyering.

- \*Communicate early and often – reach out to first years early in their career so that they know that there are options for social justice. Create a complementary narrative that they can learn practical skills through pro bono and public service.

- \*Be explicit that what you want for them is what you have for yourself – a happy lawyering career.

- \*Remind them that law students are whole people, not “non-lawyers.” Their experiences and values are valuable and critical to them becoming a lawyer and thinking like a lawyer.

- \*Advise them to listen to their gut and trust their instincts. Just because it's the law doesn't mean it's right. As lawyers, you can do something about it. Think through the strategies about how to change that law. Explore what the roles of lawyers are in society and changing injustices.

- \*For those who are entering law school to do public service work, they need help finding their people. Create small opportunities for people to get together through speaker events, mentoring programs, informal hangouts, and significant moments like when grades come out.

- \*Query how the law plays a role in movements. Sometimes it isn't lawyer driven. Litigation may be met with policy reform. Help students realize how they can get involved (running for office, volunteering for campaigns, etc.)

- \*Social justice work is a source of joy and fulfillment; both student and faculty are transformed.

- \*When a student really wants to do something, tell them to get 4 more people, and if they're all passionate, he can help them find a home and direction. If they can't, then you can help them find something that they can do on their own.

Encourage doctrinal faculty to talk about these issues and get involved. Ask them to volunteer 5 hours; help by writing a position paper, writing an amicus in litigation, etc. Consider awards for faculty who are involved.

The Section also co-sponsored a program spearheaded by the Leadership Section entitled Leadership in Times of Challenge. The panel consisting of Stephen Bright, Garry Jenkins, Bob Post, Susan Sturm and Kellye Testy, moderated by Deborah Rhode, explored challenges facing contemporary lawyer leaders, strategies to address them, and what legal education can do to more intentionally and effectively prepare graduates for leadership responsibilities. We encourage you to listen to the recording and subscribe to the Leadership Section newsletter to learn more about what was discussed as well as plans for upcoming dialogues

## 2020 AALS Program

### Pro Bono and Public Service: Pillars of Democracy and the Legal Profession

Lawyers have an obligation to uphold the rule of law and be the guardians of our legal system and society. Pro bono and public service are essential elements to the profession remaining a profession – helping those who cannot help themselves and who have no one else to help them. These historical roles of the lawyer have been critical in protecting our society through cases for individual clients, serving as advisors for non-profit organizations, or serving in public office. Indeed, the enduring importance of these roles cannot be understated.

But pro bono and public service is not just good for clients and society, it is also good for the lawyer doing it. This session will focus upon the importance of pro bono work in providing fulfilling lives, enhancing overall wellness, and benefitting careers (both professionally and the bottom line). This session will also provide some practical tips and sample programs, such as voting rights projects, that attendees can implement at their home schools.



Welcome to the **Pro Bono Collaboration Corner**. AALS members have come together with representatives from NALP, Equal Justice Works (EJW), the ABA Center for Pro Bono, and the Clinical Legal Education Association (CLEA) to share information on law school pro bono. The goal is to provide our greater communities with news, events, conference recaps, and more so that we are not

Efforts to meet informally prior to each of the main public interest and pro bono conferences are being implemented. If you are attending one of these conferences and would like to connect with colleagues, contact Stephen Rispoli

## Join us for the 2019 EJC Law School Pro Bono Advisor's Pre-Conference



Spring is around the corner! Spring's return means the 2019 ABA/NLADA Equal Justice Conference (EJC) is almost here, and with it, the annual Law School Pro Bono Advisor's Pre-Conference! The 2019 EJC is May 8-11, 2019 in Louisville, Kentucky at the Louisville Downtown Marriott. The Law School Pro Bono Advisors Pre-Conference will take place on May 8, 2019 from 8am-5pm.

This year's pre-conference will offer programming on a variety of topics relevant to law school pro bono advisors. We will open the pre-conference with an inspirational and interactive session exploring self-care for pro bono advisors to sustain themselves and their students in challenging times. Law school pro bono colleagues will then lead attendees in the annual Connecting with Colleagues session, which gives attendees a chance to network and connect with colleagues from across the country. Colleagues can explore common obstacles to completing their work and discuss what they find most fulfilling about their jobs.

Next, the entire group will participate in a Project Exchange session, which will allow colleagues to brainstorm and exchange ideas on different models of pro bono projects used by schools across the country. Attendees will be able to brainstorm with colleagues from similarly situated programs to discuss ideas for new pro bono projects and solutions to common obstacles faced in the law school pro bono realm.

After lunch, participants will head into breakout sessions that address the following topics:

- The basics of running a law school pro bono program for those newer to the field. Learn the basics of building and re-energizing a pro bono program, and how to tackle specific issues in your program such as recognition, tracking hours, and troubleshooting challenges.
- Strategies for schools in remote areas to serve clients through a pro bono program and ways for schools in more urban areas to tackle the rural pro bono needs.
- A session on doing more with less, to help pro bono coordinators strategize how to involve more students in pro bono, raise the profile of your pro bono program, and meet challenges you face as you gain a fresh start on your program.

Plan to come away from the pre-conference with an action plan that you can implement to reinvigorate your pro bono program. Following the pre-conference, an exciting EJC awaits! This year's Conference will have 85 CLE accredited sessions, energizing speakers, and numerous networking opportunities. The Conference provides a wide range of learning and sharing experiences for all attendees. We hope to see you there!

Please contact [Marissa LaVette](#) if you have additional questions!

## Pro Bono & Public Interest Advocates Dialogue

Last October, we held a convening of members of the law school community in DC just prior to the NALP Public Interest Mini-Conference. The goal was to get a group from the experiential learning realm in the room to break down silos and talk about what resources exist, how we can better collaborate, and how we can do more to encourage our law students pursuing public interest/pro bono opportunities, and to support ourselves.



One quite telling indicator of what we're juggling on our respective campuses: The 22 attendees collectively held 55 job titles, including Faculty Lecturer, Academic Success Director, Director of Clinical Programs, Externships Director, Director of Experiential Learning, Career Counselor, and Pro Bono Coordinator. Together we tackled the following:

1. Pro Bono Collaborations: How to Build and Sustain Them
2. Cross-Functionality: What Are Your Duties, Do They Make Sense, How to Limit Them, Make Them Work and When Is Enough, Enough
3. Points of Contact with Public Interest/Social Justice Law Students: Classes, Programs, Advising, and More – Orientation to Graduation and Beyond
4. What Keeps Us Going: How Do We Support Ourselves, Others, and Causes/Communities

The discussion covered a broad range of issues: tracking pro bono hours, mandatory vs voluntary programs, incentivizing feedback on projects, faculty engagement, effective communication, recruiting legal supervision, utilizing alumni, self-care, and the list goes on. We hope to continue these conversations at conferences, through the Collaboration Committee, etc., so please keep your energy and ideas flowing!



Interested in more engagement with the Section?  
Join in for the Quarterly Call

No longer have an interest in receiving the Listserv?  
Simply remove yourself from the Section on the AALS  
Website, we will miss you!

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## Bylaws Review and Update

The Section bylaws are being amended to better reflect the reality of our operation. Have comments, questions or recommendations?  
Contact Stephen Rispoli

<https://baylor.box.com/s/pofmoh1e6hw3lfns8yez7ttug9uu0df0>



# Calendar of Events

National Pro Bono and Public Interest Calendar of Events

## 2019

<b>April 9-12, 2019</b>	<b>NALP Conference San Diego, CA</b>
<b>May 4-7, 2019</b>	<b>AALS Section on Clinical Legal Education San Francisco, CA</b>
<b>May 9-11, 2019</b>	<b>ABA Equal Justice Conference Louisville, KY</b>
<b>October 18-19, 2019</b>	<b>Equal Justice Works Conference Arlington, VA</b>

## 2020

<b>January 2-5, 2020</b>	<b>AALS Annual Meeting and Conference Washington, DC</b>
<b>April 28-May 1, 2020</b>	<b>NALP Conference Montreal, Canada</b>
<b>TBD</b>	<b>ABA Equal Justice Conference Atlanta, GA</b>

AALS -Association for American Law Schools  
<http://www.aals.org>

ABA- American Bar Association Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service  
[http://www.americanbar.org/groups/probono\\_public\\_service.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/probono_public_service.html)

EJW- Equal Justice Works  
<http://www.equaljusticeworks.org>

NALP- National Association for Law Placement  
<http://www.nalp.org>

PSJD-Public Service Job Directory  
<http://www.psjd.org>



# RESULTS

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Periodically the Section will post a Survey question on the Listserv, results will be published in the next newsletter

**QUESTION: What is your best pro bono success story?**

**The one that you use in speeches and makes you happy every time you tell it**

“This debt is older than my co-counsel.” A 74-year-old disabled Vietnam combat veteran contacted us in October 2016. He was being sued for \$8,164.86 by a local bank in justice court for an unsecured personal loan from 1984. Under the supervision of clinic director Josh Borderud, third year Baylor Law School students Allen Waddell and Javier Cabanillas (both with their State Bar of Texas temporary trial cards) met with the veteran and his wife of 45 years and began preparing for the trial. At the trial, the bank president testified and presented the thirty-two year-old debt to the court. First chair Allen Waddell, a combat veteran himself, argued the debt was clearly barred by the statute of limitations, and was, in fact, older than the second chair, Javier Cabanillas. The court’s verdict dismissed the debt claim described in our motion for summary judgment as not only stale, but in an, “advanced stage of decomposition.” Overjoyed at the dismissal after traveling three hours from their North Texas home to court, the couple insisted on treating the students to coffee and cupcakes at a nearby bakery following the trial.

A disabled veteran came to see us at the law school. His elderly mother had signed a contract with an unscrupulous contractor to remodel her bathroom. Not only did the contract contain an absurdly high (but not technically usurious) interest rate, they over-charged and their work was sub-par. His mother subsequently died and left him the house. The veteran could not afford to pay the note and the bathroom had completely fallen apart after the “remodel” - there was a gaping hole in the floor. As the client was confined to a wheelchair, this was particularly problematic. To make matters worse, in Texas you can pierce the homestead protection for materialmans’ liens (on remodels or other construction). By the time he came to see us, the client had stopped paying the contractor several months before. As a result, the contractor had started the foreclosure process. After getting involved, we discovered that the contractor had not complied with the Texas Constitution in executing the contract and that the contract was thus void. The contractor agreed to drop the foreclosure proceedings and stop contacting our client. The client was even able to get some friends to help him fix the bathroom. Our client was thrilled and the law students working on the case learned just how much a lawyer can help.

A story about being appointed to represent a very young child in a custody case and finding out that the child’s mother was 11 when she was kidnapped by the father of her child and brought to Texas. We were able to reunite the mother (and her baby) with her family who thought she was dead.

In November, right before finals, our law students organized service learning trips to Tijuana to help Central American migrants seeking asylum. Probably 30 or so have gone, most of them during the winter break including over the holiday period. Many have gone more than once, and for some the service learning trips were transformative, e.g., helping first year students decide to spend their summer and possibly their legal careers focused on detention and asylum issues.

In Winter 2010 I started taking students to the courthouse to assist DV victims with declarations. It was “guerilla pro bono” in that we would just show up with laptops and assist. Quickly it was formalized with a few volunteer attorneys supervising students. A Legal Services organization took notice, and it evolved into a full project housed at the courthouse with law firm and student volunteers assisting twice a week.

For us, it’s sharing the message about what we are already doing. For instance, we found out last year that the graduating class contributed over 42,000 hours of pro bono work through clinics, externships, summer pro bono, and student-led pro bono projects. Talking about this top-line number helps explain how much our students are already doing. It’s my favorite success story at the moment.

in my veterans project we met a fragile couple who had been taken advantage of in a rent to own home situation. part of the property burned and the owners had it double insured but only offered our clients \$3000 of all they had paid. After much work we were able to get the couple the house, and about \$64,000. It really showed my team of students how badly vets are treated, but also the POWER of being represented by counsel. We may never have a case like this again, for for all of us involved, we will never forget this case!

A law student, serving as a volunteer income tax preparer told me that “he made a client cry”. My first thought was YIKES but further conversation resulted in this story I use at Orientation. The client cried because she had never received a tax refund and she had just lost her job. The law student took the time to amend her past year’s return and get her another refund! The best part of the story. That volunteer is now a lawyer and leads the volunteer income tax assistance in his city.

The DC Bar Pro Bono Center holds monthly Small Business Brief Advice Legal Clinics to provide legal information to prospective entrepreneurs and small business owners who operate in economically disadvantaged areas or who have limited financial resources. The Center typically welcomes 2-3 law students per clinic to assist with intake. It’s a wonderful way for students to get exposure to transactional issues at any point during their law school tenure. And it was quite a treat to learn that the three volunteers at last month’s clinic happened to be a 1L, a 2L, and a 3L from Georgetown Law. Great mentoring all around!



Thanks to the following leaders who shared their success stories

Josh Borderud, Baylor Law School, Veterans Clinic Director, [josh\\_borderud@baylor.edu](mailto:josh_borderud@baylor.edu)

Stephen Rispoli, Baylor Law, Asst. Dean, [Stephen\\_Rispoli@Baylor.edu](mailto:Stephen_Rispoli@Baylor.edu)

Karin Wang, UCLA School of Law, Executive Director of the David J. Epstein Program for Public Interest Law and Policy, [wangk@law.ucla.edu](mailto:wangk@law.ucla.edu)

Anna Davis, UC Irvine School of Law, Director of Pro Bono Programs, [adavis@law.uci.edu](mailto:adavis@law.uci.edu)

Ted De Barbieri, Albany Law School, Assistant Professor and Director of the Community Development Clinic, [edeba@albanylaw.edu](mailto:edeba@albanylaw.edu)

Cybele Smith, OSU Moritz College of Law, Dir., Public Service Law Center

Pamela Robinson, USC Law, Director, Pro Bono Program, [Robinspd@law.sc.edu](mailto:Robinspd@law.sc.edu)

Jennifer Tschirch, Associate Director of Pro Bono Programs, Office of Public Interest & Community

# Meet a Colleague

Pro bono leaders are spread across the entire country! You may know the leaders in your state, city or community. Expand your networking by learning a bit about a fellow leader. In each Newsletter we will introduce you to one of your colleagues through a short Q & A. Learn about what makes them tick!



**Name:** Darcy Meals

**Title:** Assistant Director, Center for Access to Justice

**School:** Georgia State University College of Law

Photo: Darcy accepting the plaque from the Georgia State Bar Access to Justice, The Georgia State University College of Law Pro Bono Program won the Law School Excellence in Access to Justice award.

Please give a brief description of your school pro bono program or efforts?

And your role in making things happen.

I am the faculty supervisor for GSU's student-run Pro Bono Program. Founded in 2017, the Pro Bono Program connects students with legal volunteer opportunities in and around Atlanta. Our program is structured around standing 1.5-3 hour shifts tailored to the GSU class schedule, so students can commit to as much or as little as they'd like as the different work, clients, and skills they can gain with our Pro Bono Program partner organizations.

As part of the Pro Bono Program, I also coordinate Alternative Spring Break trips that give students a week-long immersion in a particular area of law while they conduct related pro bono service. Our students have conducted criminal court observation in connection with the Mississippi Office of the State Public Defender; represented detained immigrants at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia; worked with Atlanta families facing eviction or poor housing conditions, and seen firsthand how housing instability impacts kids in elementary schools; and traveled to southwest Georgia to understand the distinct access to justice issues facing rural litigants.

Why do you think this job is important?

The Pro Bono Program and Alternative Spring Break are important because they afford students an opportunity to see themselves as agents for change. Pro bono service allows them to operationalize what they're learning in the classroom in a way that can make a real difference for people. In just a few hours, or during the week of alternative spring break, students recognize not just the power that law has (for better and for worse), but their own ability to harness that power and be problemsolvers. My hope is that they take that with them, and their experiences with pro bono service become foundational as they form their own professional identities.

What special skills or attributes do you bring to it?

Like many would-be lawyers, I entered law school wanting to do public interest work. And then, like many new law school graduates, I went into "big law" instead. For a variety of reasons, the years I spent at the law firm have been very valuable in this role. Prior to being a public-interest-minded person in a firm, I might have seen lawyers as falling into two distinct camps, but I am now able to speak from experience in encouraging students that they can always do work in the public interest, no matter what their full time job.

Who is your go-to person when you need advice on law school pro bono matters?

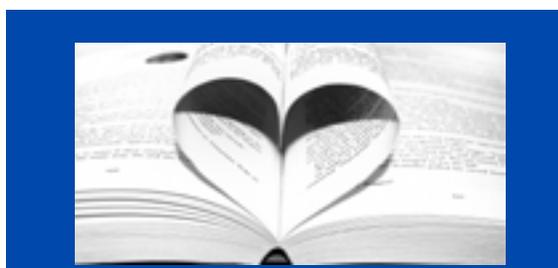
I have had the good fortune to be able to call on the team from my alma mater, the UCLA Law David J. Epstein Program in Public Interest Law and Policy, when building out our pro bono and public interest offerings at GSU. They have been an invaluable resource to me, and I'm so grateful that they're always willing to take my calls and connect me to others whose experience might be instructive.

Do you have a favorite quote? Is yes, will you share it with us.

"Embrace fully who you are and freely impart that to others. Most of all, be a champion for equality whatever you do and wherever you go." - Ruth Simmons

Will you share something about yourself that your colleagues might not know about you? Your hobbies? Cat or dog person? Favorite place on Earth? What makes you laugh?

You may recognize me from my first career as a (very famous) diaper model in a Pampers commercial.



## Books We Love

You Can't Go Wrong Doing Right:  
How a Child of Poverty Rose to the White House and Helped Change the World by  
Robert J. Brown      Reviewed by Eve Ross\*

Robert J. Brown grew up in poverty in central North Carolina and credits his upbringing for providing the moral center to guide his life. His grandmother, Nellie Brown, taught him through word and example always to help others.

As a young man in public relations, Brown became involved with the civil rights movement primarily by mediating between corporations and civil rights groups, convincing business leaders to move quickly and peacefully toward respect and equity. From there, opportunities continued to arise for him to be present at key moments as the US, and later South Africa, made historic strides toward racial justice.

The tone of this memoir is humble and conversational. Its historical perspective may interest those who weren't aware of Brown's contributions. And it may inspire those who hope that helping others will allow them to truly make a difference, as Brown did.

\*Eve Ross, 2019. Reference Librarian, Law Library, University of South Carolina School of Law, Columbia, SC