

DEPAUL NAMES ITS FIRST LRAP RECIPIENT

Newsletter, Fall 2006

This spring, DePaul University College of Law awarded its first-ever Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) grant to Claudia Valenzuela, a 2002 graduate of DePaul. The LRAP is a “forgivable loan” program awarded to graduates working in public-interest fields, serving poor and under-represented populations.

Claudia was born and raised in Chicago and attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she received her B.A. in Comparative Literature. Before attending DePaul, Claudia taught English, literature, poetry and journalism courses at an alternative high school in Bucktown.

It was a desire to be involved in public interest law that initially attracted Claudia to DePaul.

“I was interested in the Americas program of the International Human Rights Law Institute,” said Claudia, “and I liked what I viewed as DePaul’s general mission to serve Chicago’s impoverished communities.”

The DePaul community helped foster Claudia’s desire to be involved in public interest law in several ways.

“I had some great professors who embodied what public interest is all about. I learned a great deal from them, not just on the substantive law, but in terms of commitment to good causes. I also felt there was a good, strong community of students very much devoted to public interest law, which was always encouraging.”

Following her first year at DePaul, Claudia participated in the Human Rights Practicum in Chiapas, Mexico through the International Human Rights Law

Following graduation, Claudia applied

for a position assisting Guatemalan and Salvadoran individuals apply for their permanent residence in the United States.

“Because I had previously worked with Guatemalan immigrants and asylum-seekers, I had a strong background in the issues affecting Central Americans as well as issues relating to the civil conflicts in their home countries,” said Claudia. “After my first summer at National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC), I confirmed for myself that my area of interest was immigration law.”

Currently, Claudia is the supervising attorney for the Adult Detention and Unaccompanied Minor’s Projects at the NIJC. Through these projects, Claudia represents individuals and minors held in detention by Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), aiding them in their removal proceedings. In addition, she advocates for them on larger policy issues, such as better legal access and conditions in detention. She also periodically visits the different facilities where Chicago ICE holds individuals in detention and conducts what are called “Know Your Rights” presentations.

Claudia also has some advice for students interested in public interest law.

“Keep up your grades, participate in clinics as much as possible; get as much hands-on experience as you can. And once you do get a job in public interest law, take care of yourself – it is physically and emotionally draining to work in public interest and we cannot have people burning out too soon! People like that are sorely needed in this field.”

A reception to formally recognize Claudia’s award is planned by the College of Law LRAP Committee and the Center for Public Interest Law.

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“I liked what I viewed as DePaul’s general mission to serve Chicago’s impoverished communities.”

Claudia Valenzuela



SUSAN DECOSTANZA: CUDAHY FELLOW, SUMMER 2006

I listened as the men told stories of their wives, sons, cousins and friends. I was sitting at a conference table in a back office of the international terminal at O'Hare Airport. To my left sat chiefs, officers and directors of the United States Customs and Border Protection operation in Chicago. To my right sat Imams, organizers and community members of the Chicago-area Muslim population.



The stories told included a son who asked his father's advice on whether he should change his name in order to avoid suspicion at the airport, and a cousin who missed his plane because he was questioned for 6 hours, then released without explanation. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection chiefs explained new methods that had been implemented in order to better distinguish between passengers who are or may be true threats from passengers whose names had simply been confused with the names of possibly dangerous people. In this way, the agency is attempting to reduce the number of travelers who are deterred for interviews without reason.

This summer I have had the honor of working at the Chicago Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-Chicago) in the Civil Rights De-

partment. I am the Travel Free Project Coordinator, meaning I manage a caseload of about 15 clients by assisting them through the Passenger Identity Verification process

which generally allows passengers to avoid undue delays at the airport simply because of the way they may look, the way their name sounds, or because they are perceived to be of a particular religion. I also organized the round-table discussion and operations tour of U.S. Customs and Border Protection at O'Hare, researched religious discrimination cases against airlines and airport security, and set up sensitivity training sessions to educate employees and officers of different agencies around Chicago about Islam.

CAIR is the nation's largest Muslim civil rights advocacy group. CAIR-Chicago's Civil Rights Department takes complaints from community members who have been discriminated against because of religion in Illinois and the surrounding states. CAIR-Chicago has undertaken cases

involving religious discrimination in travel, police misconduct, employment, and is currently filing a class action lawsuit on behalf of applicants for U.S. citizenship for whom the process has been unreasonably delayed.

CAIR also works to build relationships and publicize the many positive activities and contributions that the Muslim community is both participating in and spearheading. CAIR offices all over the country are constantly distinguishing themselves and the majority of the 6 - 7 million Muslims in the United States from those few who say they work in the name of Islam, but actually represent violence and destruction, quite the opposite of the peaceful values of Islam. The work I have participated in this summer, such as the relationship we are building with U.S. Customs and Borders, is part of an effort to move from damage control to proactive media relations and portrayals of American Muslims.

To learn more about CAIR-Chicago or Islam visit: www.cairchicago.org

To learn more about Islam visit: www.islamicity.com

Susan is a 2L at the College of Law who was named a Cudahy Fellow for this summer.



Vincentian Conference—September 20th

The Center for Public Interest Law is sponsoring a conference to address creative solutions to the problem of legal services for the poor. It appears the time is ripe. In a first-ever comprehensive study of the legal needs of our nation's poor, Legal Services Corporation concluded that "There is a serious justice gap in America. Stagnant federal funding and an increased poverty population have served to increase the unmet demand (for legal assistance)." In fact, the study concluded, 50% of those who sought the aid of Legal Services were turned away due to insufficient resources on the part of the program. Given this state of affairs, how to provide low income individuals and families equal access to our justice system should be a question for every legal practitioner working today.

DePaul will do its part to answer this question at the inaugural Vincentian Public Interest Law Conference, occurring on Wednesday evening September 20th. Nationally recognized Constitutional Law scholar and Duke University Professor Erwin Chemerinsky will be the keynote speaker and will look at the underlying dilemma of restricted access to benefits in general experienced by the poor and the unresponsiveness of courts to remedy the situation. He will then be joined by a panel of long-time public service attorneys, from both private and public arenas, to take up the issues surrounding inequalities in service and how they might be minimized. A formal question and answer period will follow and time for informal conversation will also be included.

The Conference is scheduled to be held at Sonnenschein Law Firm, 7800 Sears Tower, 233 S. Wacker, Wednesday, September 20th, 5:30pm. All are welcome and the admission is free.

Alumna Profile: Ilyce Shugall

Thinking about working in immigration? DePaul Law alum Ilyce Shugall talks about her work as an Associate Attorney at Van Der Hout, Brigagliano, & Nightingale, LLP, an immigration law firm associated with the National Lawyer's Guild.

Q: What made you choose a career in public interest law?

A: I wanted to help people and make a difference in the world.

Q: Do you feel that you do?

A: It's all that I do! I primarily do deportation defense so I spend every day preventing deportation, keeping families together, and keeping people in the U.S.

Q: How do you feel DePaul Law helped you?

A: Because of my involvement with the International Human Rights Law Institute and PILA, I was able to get a lot of really great experiences, including a Sullivan Summer Internship in Peru the summer after my second year and getting involved in the Chiapas program. I think those experiences were very helpful to my development as an attorney. I also think that having the support of public interest minded professors was really helpful because I was able to get really good career advice from them as well as positive reinforcement about being a public interest lawyer. It is hard to be a public interest minded person in law school because most people are not.

Q: How did those programs influence your development as an attorney?

A: My work in the Institute my second year, in which I compiled information on cases from the inter-American system and analyzed various things about Peru, lead to my summer internship in Peru working on South American human rights issues. It was very challenging because I worked with limited resources but it was fascinating work that I wouldn't have gotten the opportunity to do otherwise. It helped prepare me for non-profit environments. I learned that non-profit work requires a lot from you with limited resources; you have to work hard but it is incredibly rewarding. I built up my analytical skills in different ways than class teaches and I worked directly with attorneys on the same tasks they performed themselves

Q: What motivates you to continue what you do?

A: Immigration law is a very difficult, complicated, and highly controversial area of law. It is very important that people have good representation in immigration proceedings because they have a huge impact on peoples' lives. The immigration laws keep getting worse, and as they get worse, more people need representation because people are getting treated badly. We need to keep fighting for the rights of the people who are living and working in this country. I also think that self-motivation is really the key to public interest work. You are often thrown in situations you don't feel prepared for but you learn that you can handle it and come out having experienced something really great.

"...having the support of public interest minded professors was really helpful because I was able to get really good career advice from them as well as positive reinforcement about being a public interest lawyer."

Q: What DePaul classes, groups, or activities were most helpful to you?

A: The most influential programs were International Human Rights Law Institute, PILA, and the National Lawyer's Guild. The most helpful classes were International Human Rights Law, Trial Advocacy, Immigration Law, The Asylum Law Clinic, Civil Rights Law, and Legal Writing.

Q: What advice would you give to students interested in a public interest career?

A: Don't go to a big firm!!! Stick with it. We need more dedicated, good, public interest lawyers. Do what you have to do to get good public interest experience while in law school, because that really matters to employers. I know the financial realities of public interest work are difficult, but there are options. DePaul now has a Loan Re-

payment Assistance Program (LRAP).

Also, there are a lot of really good public interest firms, especially doing immigration law because there is not a lot of funding for immigration and deportation defense work. It really is possible to do good public interest work in private practice. The National Lawyer's Guild is a great group to be involved with as well because many of the NLG attorneys have public interest-minded firms.

Outside of immigration work and private firms, fellowships right out of school are the way to go. I had an Equal Justice Works Fellowship in my first 2 years out of school. It was a great experience and it pays better than a lot of non-profit organization jobs and has loan repayment. Though it is hard and frustrating at times, just suck it up and remember why you are doing what you're doing. Remember why you went to law school and do not lose sight of that

Q: What can new attorneys expect from a public interest career?

A: Working a lot of hours (not everywhere, but in a lot of places), feeling rewarded on a regular basis, being challenged both intellectually and emotionally on a daily basis.

Q: What are the difficulties and how can they prepare for them?

A: The hours, having work take over your life, getting too emotionally involved in cases. I think everyone needs to have something outside of work that they enjoy doing and that they do not lose sight of so that. There needs to be something besides work to keep you going. It is important to have ways of dealing with stress, like exercise, or other hobbies.

Q: What is the best piece of advice you've been given?

A: Be patient.

Q: Chicago v. San Francisco?

A: San Francisco. Mountains, Ocean, No Snow, No Humidity.

Intrigued by Ilyce's answers or want to learn more about practicing immigration law? Ilyce can be contacted at IShu@vblaw.com for follow up.

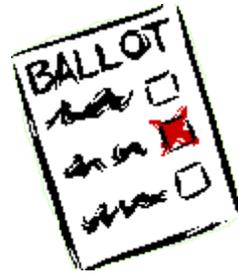
DePaul Votes 'YES' for LRAP Fees!

After ten years of hard work by public interest minded students and faculty, DePaul's Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) has finally become a reality at the College of Law. The LRAP is a loan forgiveness program aimed at attorneys in public interest careers. The program will assist DePaul graduates with lower-paying public sector jobs manage their educational debt.

The LRAP Committee recently named Claudia Valenzuela ('02), a staff attorney at the National Immigrant Justice Center (formerly the Midwest Immigration and Human Rights Center), as the first recipient of this prestigious award. Claudia's proven dedication to public interest law made her an outstanding choice for the award. The Public Interest Law Committee (PILC) will be hosting a reception in the fall to recognize Claudia's accomplishments and to celebrate the launch of the LRAP.

Last spring, the Committee received LRAP applications from a large number of qualified and deserving DePaul graduates who have demonstrated a commitment to public interest law. Although only one LRAP award was available in this inaugural year, the Committee hopes to eventually make awards to all graduates who qualify and expects that funding will dramatically increase in the next several years.

In order to make the program available to more graduates, the LRAP Committee has made building funding sources a priority. One such initiative was to propose a \$10 per semester activity fee for current law students.



In order to measure the student body's support for such a measure, the Committee asked the Student Bar Association to include an LRAP student activity fee referendum on its March election ballot. Participating students voted overwhelmingly to approve the additional \$10 per semester fee. Approximately 83% voted in favor of the fee.

Pending approval by the University, this student activity fee specifically designated to the LRAP will probably come into effect in 2007. The fee would produce a consistent income stream of approximately \$18,000 per year, thereby enabling the College of Law to fund a significant number of awards per year. The student-fee method has been used by several other law schools to spike alumni support. At DePaul, and endowed LRAP fund has been established for alumni contributions to the LRAP.

The LRAP Committee is humbled and gratified by this strong showing of support from students. In addition, the Committee will continue its faculty campaign in the fall, in which it hopes to add \$4000 to the \$25,000 that College of Law Dean Glen Weissenberger personally donated to the LRAP earlier this year.

The LRAP Committee firmly believes that the LRAP will benefit not only DePaul law graduates working in the public interest, but also the College of Law's reputation in the legal and academic communities. An LRAP will place DePaul among the many highly ranked law schools offering LRAPs. Most importantly, the LRAP will communicate DePaul's commitment to the Vincentian values of service, community, and social justice, upon which the University was founded.

"The LRAP will communicate DePaul's commitment to the Vincentian values of service, community, and social justice, upon which the University was founded"

2006 Award Recipients

PILA Stipend Recipients

Luke Ruse
Christina Villareal
Catherine Diggins
Nina Murphy
Susan DeCostanza
Patricia Pizarro
Rachel Koch
Joseph Carter
Eleni Wolfe-Roubatis

Senior Service Award Recipients:

Asif Sayani
Emily Miller
Teri Ross
Jessica Covell

Cudahy Fellows

Catherine Diggins
Mike Gentithes
Jennifer Keys
Susan DeCostanza
Tricia Kemling
Ashleigh McKeigue
Michele Duff

Helen McGillicuddy

Suheily Natal

Sonnenschein Scholars:

Sarah Gelsomino
Dima Khalidi

Equal Justice Works:

2006 Summer Corps members (\$1000 scholarship after 300 hours of work):

Maria DeHowitt, California Rural Legal Assistance, Fresno, CA (Farmworkers)

Alysia Franklin, Bethel New Life, Chicago, IL (Prisoners' Rights)

Eleni Wolfe-Roubatis, MIHRC, Chicago, IL (Immigrant Populations/ Minorities)

Fellowships:

Cecilia Abundis, 2004 Fellow (fellowship is a 2-year commitment)

Equal Justice America:

Nelly Aguilar
Jennifer Keys

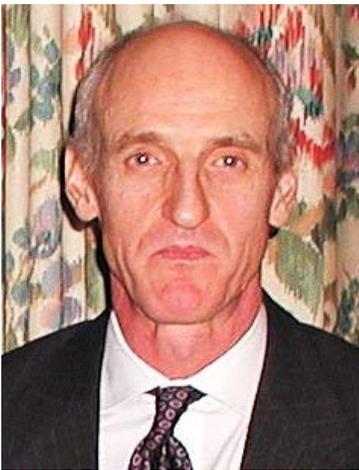
What is Public Interest Law?

Public interest law serves individuals, groups, and social interests that are traditionally underserved by our law and government. It seeks to empower subordinated persons and communities, redress the imbalance of power between individuals and government, and promote social justice. It encompasses working to end discrimination and inequality based on class, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability; lawyering on behalf of significant issues, such as the environment, healthcare, consumer protection, free speech, and voting rights; and representing people who cannot afford or do not have access to adequate legal representation, including children, the poor, criminal defendants, and institutionalized individuals.

What is the Center for Public Interest?

DePaul's Public Interest Law Program, now the Center for Public Interest Law, was initiated in 2004 by four students, determined to see the College of Law formalize its commitment to public interest law. Their efforts led to the creation of the Program, broader public interest law course offerings, institution-wide support for public interest endeavors, and the creation of Chicago's first Public Interest Law Certificate program, designed to acknowledge those students with a demonstrated interest in the field. Today, the program has expanded beyond ex-

George Hausen: Public Interest Alumna ('88)



George Hausen, a Chicago native and DePaul Law alumnus ('88) is the Executive Director of Legal Aid of North Carolina in Raleigh, North Carolina where he oversees the state's 25 regional offices.

For many years before law school, George has worked for social justice by working on such projects as the 1972 McGovern campaign and with the Chicago city council. George chose to attend law school where he believed he could learn more about constitutional rights and get a better sense of how those rights relate to the law and its enforcement.

After receiving his law degree from DePaul, George joined the Peace Corps where he spent two years in Haiti and the Dominican Republic working on a children's survival project. George then took a position as a staff attorney at the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing in

Chicago where he served for six and a half years until 1999 when he and his wife moved to North Carolina to become the Deputy Director for Litigation and Advocacy at Legal Aid of North Carolina. He was later made the Executive Director after a series of consolidations and reorganizations within the various Legal Aid offices.

George chose DePaul because he strongly believed that, with the degree he received, he could make a difference in the lives of many Americans and effect changes that would benefit underrepresented citizens. Helping the underrepresented, George believes, is one of the greatest ways to serve your country.

Working for the underrepresented, however, has become increasingly difficult in recent years because public funding for legal services has been cut and eligibility standards have been raised, making it more difficult for individuals to obtain legal assistance. Likewise, salaries for legal aid professionals have remained stagnant. As a result, public interests lawyers often end up working "with their hands tied behind their backs."

However, law student interest in public interest has not waned. Though salaries are low and jobs lack glamour, George still continues to see a steady flow of excellent students from top-notch universities and from all walks of life applying for positions with Legal Aid of North Carolina.

George credits much of his success in the

legal profession to the encouragement and guidance of his mentors at DePaul and remains grateful for the advice he was given. Though George was more interested in the policy-making aspects of law when he began law school, mentors like Professor Cavise encouraged him to practice for a few years to gain some experience. George followed this advice, and as a result, has found a position which he can truly be passionate about, that constantly challenges him and brings out the best in him. George drew inspiration from other professors as well like Professor Abrahamson and Professor Shaman who taught his Constitutional Law class. He also believes that his experience volunteering at the Cabrini Green Legal Clinic while he was a law student taught him a great deal about being a public interest lawyer and the problems that many clients face every day.

To future public interest lawyers, George offers this advice: press to get involved wherever you can. Start early, and get in the door when you can. Get as much real experience as possible so you can gain the tools to be the best lawyer you can be. When you start practicing, you will have to hit the ground running, and your clients need the best representation they can get. And finally, good lawyers need to be eternal students. Be curious about the world. Read the newspapers, the blogs, or any publication that can give you more insight into your legal realm.

Calendar of Events

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| Fall 2006 Classes Begin..... | August 23 |
| Public Interest Law Program Welcome/1L reception. . | August 24 |
| Community Service Initiative (CSI) meeting. | August 30 |
| Vincentian Conference | September 20 |
| Judicial Clerkship Panel. | September 5 |
| Chicago Area Law School Consortium (CALSC) Public Interest "Meet the Firms" Event | October 11 |
| Equal Justice Works Conference/Career Fair. . . | October 19 & 20 |
| Thanksgiving. | November 23 |
| Fall 2006 Final Exams begin. | December 7 |
| Winter Service Immersion Trip. | Early January, TBA |
| Spring 2007 Classes Begin. | January 13 |
| Hang-out lunches for DePaul law students interested in Public Interest work | Mondays throughout the semester |

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The Center for Public Interest Law Committee

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Jarrett Knox / Jennifer Keys / Jeffrey Oudsema
Patty Pizarro / Kathryn Richards / Meredith Schmitt
Molly Stofen / Carmelita Tiu / Tracy Walsh
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Newsletter and sources available on the web!

Go to www.law.depaul.edu/programs and click on PI



COLLEGE OF LAW

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