

Alumni support makes DePaul Law Auction a huge success

By David Zwaska ('12)

What do Bulls tickets, WhirlyBall games with professors, and Cubs rooftop tickets have in common? They all helped raise more than \$30,000 at the DePaul Law Auction in February. The money raised at the auction helps fund public interest summer fellowships for students pursuing legal careers that benefit indigent individuals and disadvantaged communities. Events like the auction are critical to enabling students to continue the work they came to law school to pursue, as most public interest summer positions are unpaid.

This year, the 16th annual DePaul Law Auction, formerly known as the Public Interest Law Association (PILA) Auction, raised 65 percent more revenue than in 2011 and saw a marked increase in alumni attendance over previous years. Dean Gregory Mark generously hosted this year's "Sweet 16 Auction" at the Union League Club of Chicago, which helped set the tone for the gala event. More than 150 alumni and students, along with a large number of professors and faculty, attended.

The atmosphere was lively as bidding began. At one point, a bidding war ensued for a night at the movies with Professor Wayne Lewis. With arms proudly raised, a group of students led by John Morris ('14) and an alumni group led by Katie Diggins ('08) dueled back-and-forth until the alumni bid reached \$850. Instead of awarding the gift to the alumni, Professor Lewis decided to donate two movie nights: the alumni group paid \$850 for the donation and the students paid their highest bid of \$700, raising \$1,550 for student scholarships.

In years past, PILA held the auction in a more informal setting, and students made up the majority of the bidders. Because the event relied on students' limited spending ability, the fundraising potential was limited. Oftentimes, student bidders were the same public interest students who later received summer fellowships funded by auction revenue. This system not only limited the revenue the auction could raise, but was unsustainable.

The "Sweet 16 Auction" marks a real upgrade in fundraising for public interest students. PILA public relations chair Bret Bender ('12) sees the new format as a positive move. "This was a transition year for the auction as it moved from being a red cup party to a formal affair," says Bender. "After 16 years, it's the right time for the auction to mature. With Dean Mark showing such a strong interest in the auction this year, I suspect it will grow and prosper for years to come."



Professor Howard Rubin serves as auctioneer during the live auction.

Many students viewed the increased number of alumni attendees at the auction as a welcome change. Auction committee member Sondra Tenorio ('12) believes the new format will help bring more attention to public interest law. "The change in venue drew in more alumni, which is very important," says Tenorio. "It was great to see the auction much bigger this year. More people means more awareness of public interest at DePaul."

DePaul now follows in the steps of other law schools that hold formal auctions to benefit public interest scholarships. When Dean Mark served at Rutgers, a formal auction raised more than \$44,000 and funded summer grants for 12 students to pursue public interest work. PILA and the Center for Public Interest Law (CPIL) hope the DePaul Law Auction will eventually raise a comparable amount of funds for DePaul students.

A small group of dedicated students were instrumental in making this year's auction a success. Auction committee co-chair Sami Silverstein ('13) led the planning and worked closely with Dean Mark to create the new format. "The auction is a testament to what students can do if they push the envelope and work together to achieve a goal," says Silverstein. "Dean Mark constantly reminds us that if guaranteed funding is something we want, it's something that we need to push for, and consider this year's auction the first push for guaranteed funding."

As Silverstein points out, students need to push for the initiatives and funding opportunities that can support public interest career paths. Next year's auction will likely follow the 2012 format, with high hopes of raising up to \$100,000 to celebrate the College of Law's 100th year.

Common sense solutions to common sense problems with Harvard Law Professor Lawrence Lessig

By David Porter ('12)

"There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root," began Harvard Law Professor Lawrence Lessig, quoting Henry David Thoreau. "Will you be a root striker?" This was the question Professor Lessig posed during his lecture at DePaul last December.

Discussing his new book, *REPUBLIC LOST: HOW MONEY CORRUPTS CONGRESS—AND A PLAN TO STOP IT*, Professor Lessig urged DePaul faculty, students and the public alike to stop hacking at the branches of evil plaguing our republic, and begin striking at the root: money.

Speaking to a diverse audience that included 7th Circuit Judge Richard Posner, whom Professor Lessig clerked for after law school, he made the case that campaign finance laws have a corrupting influence on our elected officials. Spending close to 70 percent of their time raising funds for their own reelection, members of Congress are obsessed with courting those who are willing and able to contribute the most to their campaigns. And who makes up this subsection of the population that contributes the most to election campaigns? The top 0.05 percent of the population.

According to Professor Lessig, money, though it may not buy influence, provides access that 99.95 percent of the public does not possess. As a result, Congress has become dependent, not on the people alone, as the founders intended, but on the top 0.05 percent of those in society able to max out the campaign contribution limit.

Professor Lessig's lecture at DePaul, co-hosted by the Chicago and DePaul chapters of the American Constitution Society, could not have come at a better time. In a period fraught with economic and political paralysis, Professor Lessig's prognosis and prescription cut straight to the heart—or root, as he would call it—of the major problems plaguing our country. His plan to revamp our campaign finance system is not his first attempt to make our laws work for the public good. In 1998, he founded Creative Commons, a group that advocates for smarter, more lenient copyright laws.

Much like his work with Creative Commons, Professor Lessig's proposal for cleaning up Congress involves



Lawrence Lessig

changing the laws to give more access to the 99.95 percent. Like others, he believes a major part of the solution is taking money completely out of politics. However, DePaul Professor Stephen Siegel, who also attended the event, points out, "In one way, Professor Lessig's analysis has been surpassed by events. He downplays the roadblocks to reform created by Supreme Court decisions. Yet, this year's primary campaign illustrates the problem caused by the Supreme Court's equating money with speech."

Perhaps acknowledging these constitutional difficulties, Professor Lessig has a second, bolder solution: a second Constitutional Convention. And while skeptics criticize the grandiose approach as naive, it resonates with those who prefer common sense solutions to common sense problems. "If money is the problem in our political system, and that same problem is preventing us from fixing it," says Aaron Dozeman ('12), "the only viable solution I see is Lessig's call for a second Constitutional Convention."

Only time will tell if Professor Lessig's proposed solutions will provide a broader segment of the public access to their members of Congress. In the end, the exact path to re-orienting Congress' focus back onto the people is not nearly as important as Professor Lessig's broader point: to solve the major problems in society, we must be root strikers.

Your pain is my pain: Reflections on DePaul's service immersion trip

By Chaplain Tom Judge, University Ministry

You wake up on the hard church basement floor, roll your sleeping bag tight, and extract a few pieces of clothing to wear from your duffle bag. You wait your turn to take a brief shower, quickly stow your belongings in a locked van so they won't be taken while you are gone, and the day begins.

Eleven DePaul law students experienced this morning routine for just three days at a homeless shelter during a recent service immersion trip to Washington, D.C. Yet, the discomfort, the inconvenience and strangeness of the experience took its toll. On the last morning, when a student said, "I'll be glad when I get to sleep in my own bed and don't have to pack my stuff every morning," at some level, we all agreed.

At the shelter, another dim truth began to dawn on me and the other participants; if I felt tired and worn after a short, relatively easy stay, how must someone who has dealt with burdens far heavier than my burdens, and for much longer,



Service immersion group at a D.C. kitchen in January 2012.

feel? St. Vincent de Paul once wrote "your pain is my pain" as he tried to express the sense of solidarity and compassion for the poor, and for those who worked with them, who were essential to his ministry of service and justice. It would be wrong to claim our short stay created the same level of empathy that St. Vincent and others gained after a lifetime of service, but perhaps our experience did help to spark an awareness and concern for the poor that can lead to more encounters, increased service, and greater work for justice.

Twenty-two DePaul law students participated in service immersion trips to New Orleans and Washington, D.C., in January. The program is a collaboration between DePaul's University Ministry and College of Law.

Food deserts and the politics of food insecurity: Structures and sustainability

By Renee Gross ('13)

DePaul College of Law commemorated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day with a symposium focused on food deserts and the politics of food insecurity. Two keynote speakers, Dr. LaVonna Blair Lewis, clinical associate professor at the University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy, and Dr. Angela Odoms-Young, assistant professor of kinesiology and nutrition at the University of Illinois-Chicago, framed the discussion from national and local perspectives.

Professor Lewis shared her research on food deserts in Los Angeles neighborhoods and suggested a model for change. This model has national relevance because it aims at mobilizing all stakeholders in neighborhoods, including politicians, community members, farmers, storeowners, and the academic community, to address food deserts. Professor Lewis' model uses a two-pronged approach to understanding and addressing the issue of food deserts: first, incentivize the community to take ownership of its current food landscape through paid community organizer positions; and second, limit access to low-nutrient, fast food options through zoning restrictions and caps on the number of such restaurants allowed in certain areas, such as South Los Angeles.

In addition to limiting access, Professor Lewis acknowledged the importance of prioritizing access to fresh foods with public policies that support the development of stores that offer good quality, affordable, fresh produce and not just processed foods. She stated, "Two-thirds of what I see is behind my eyes," as a way of explaining the importance of weighing a community's strengths and weaknesses from the residents' perspective. Professor Lewis emphasized that any lasting solution to the problem of food deserts must stem from within the community, not simply from outside actors such as developers and politicians.

Professor Odoms-Young provided a historical background on food deserts, noting that the term food desert is a community-derived phrase with roots stemming from the United Kingdom. She explained that "ghetto groceries," those markets, typically liquor stores, with only heavily processed food options in

low-income communities have been staples in U.S. neighborhoods since the 1960s and 70s. She stated that disparate access to food in poor neighborhoods is not a new problem. Professor Odoms-Young made timely reference to Dr. King's six steps to nonviolent social change, finally suggesting that positive movement, specifically eliminating food deserts in low-income communities, will only happen if society is willing to make this change. Professor Odoms-Young further explained that supermarket companies that decide to open in low-income neighborhoods do not bestow a favor to that community, because access to food is a basic human right. A supermarket's presence in any community should be understood as an exchange, a joint venture, and not just a social benefit. She further explained that a supermarket is not a solution if it does not offer good quality, affordable fresh produce.



Dr. Angela Odoms-Young and Dr. LaVonna Blair Lewis answer questions from the audience at DePaul's 14th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration.

A screening of the documentary "Food Deserts in a Land of Plenty" highlighted food access issues affecting both urban neighborhoods and rural towns throughout Illinois. Local filmmaker Sarah Carlson illustrated interwoven factors that contribute to a rise in food deserts, namely government food subsidies, financial barriers to market entry for small farms, and political initiatives aimed at corporate solutions over community-minded models. Urban solutions that suggested greater long-term promise included child-parent cooking classes and community-run gardens, like those found at the Gary Comer Youth Center on Chicago's South Side.



Sheelah Muhammad, co-founder of Fresh Moves, Mike Simmons, policy director from the mayor's office, and France Spenser, from Pendulum Partners, responded to the keynotes by discussing Chicago-based initiatives. Muhammad explained that their market operates weekly on a renovated CTA bus and travels to communities with severely limited access to produce. They sell a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that are necessary for maintaining healthy and nutritionally balanced diets. The van is so popular that it regularly sells out of produce. Simmons reported on the mayor's work over the past seven months to engage developers and food stores in addressing the food deserts in Chicago. The mayor's team has secured the promise for 36 food stores in several local food deserts in the next few years. Spenser also shared her work in organizing developers for food summits to build collaborations between businesses in the community to address the lack of food stores in certain communities.

For more information, or to volunteer, visit FreshMoves.org.

The Blagojevich family tragedy: A tale of two brothers

By Megan Davis ('14)

When it comes to criminal prosecution, the government is not afraid to play dirty. That was Robert Blagojevich's message to the DePaul law community on January 26. A packed room of students, faculty and practitioners listened intently as Robert spoke candidly at a CPIL-sponsored talk about the trial of his brother, former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich. Professor Leonard Cavise, faculty director of the Center for Public Interest Law, moderated the hour-long discussion, during which Robert recounted his story as a criminal defendant and a source of support for his brother.



He began his presentation by recalling the events of his brother's indictment on December 9, 2008, with perfect clarity. FBI agents arrived early in the morning demanding access to his brother's campaign fundraising offices, which he was managing. The U.S. attorney held a press conference later that morning announcing that the governor (whom he labeled a "one-man crime spree") was charged with federal corruption and bribery in connection to an alleged scheme to sell President Obama's vacated U.S. Senate seat "to the highest bidder." It was then that Robert, watching with horror as the scandal unfolded before his eyes, realized the magnitude of the situation. "Clearly, that day, the presumption of innocence was lost."

For three years, the charges against Rod Blagojevich have been in the political spotlight. Most recently, he was sentenced in December to 14 years in federal prison following his conviction for fraud. Through it all, Robert battled his own charges of wire fraud and testified as a defense witness. He refers to the trial proceedings as his personal "David and Goliath" experience, a biblical metaphor reinforced by the intimidating memory of appearing at court: "There were swarms of people outside the court room ... the media, the crowds, the FBI ... it was the worst day of my life."

Although the charges against him were dropped, Robert's perspective of the criminal justice system has been forever altered. Despite his unblemished criminal record, it was apparent from the beginning that the government was not on his side. Robert resents that they used him as leverage to reach his brother.

"There were swarms of people outside the court room ... the media, the crowds, the FBI ... it was the worst day of my life."



Students gather to meet Robert Blagojevich and ask questions following the presentation.

The prosecution wanted a plea bargain, he remarked, and felt "comfortable with pitting siblings against each other in order to get what they wanted."

As for the trial outcome, Robert stands by his brother's innocence, asserting that the tapes submitted at trial showed no criminal intent to commit fraud or succumb to bribery. According to Robert, the media publicity skewed the truth and aroused widespread public scorn of the former governor. It distresses him to imagine what their parents would think to see their two sons today. "It's a Blagojevich family tragedy," he says, shaking his head in dismay. "We've been put through the ultimate test" as a result of the charges.

As one who feels his civil liberties were violated, Robert hopes that his story will caution others to have a "healthy skepticism" of the government and its ability to fairly administer justice.

Public Service Loan Forgiveness Update

In January, the Department of Education released its Public Service Loan Forgiveness employment certification procedure and forms. **It is very important that student loan borrowers are aware of this new procedure.** Student loan borrowers can earn Public Service Loan Forgiveness by making 120 of the right kind of payments, on the right kind of loans, while working in the right kind of job. To determine if you're eligible and figure out what "right" means, please visit the website of the national expert on student loans, Heather Jarvis at www.askheatherjarvis.com. The Employment Certification for Public Service Loan Forgiveness form and instructions and the Department of Education's Letter to Borrowers about the process are available on the website.

Criminal defense: What are they fighting for?

By Anna Szymczak ('14)

Criminal defense attorneys sometimes find that their work is stigmatized as the defense of crime rather than of the accused individuals. At a recent CPIL-sponsored lunchtime panel, students and faculty learned what criminal defense is really like from four local attorneys.



Law students listen intently to the criminal defense panel.



Criminal defense attorneys, left to right: Jessica Hunter, Molly Armour, Anthony Plaid and Carol Brook.

Speaking at the event were Molly Armour, private criminal defense practitioner; Carol Brook, executive director of the Federal Defender Program; Jessica Hunter, state appellate defender; and Anthony Plaid, Cook County public defender. The four speakers had distinct backgrounds before entering into law, but backgrounds aside, all four share an enthusiasm about defense work and helping others, as well as an unyielding commitment to preserving the integrity of the judicial system. "Fundamentally it's about the fairness of the system. Democracy counts on it," says Armour.

The four panelists discussed not only what they do, but also how they feel about the work and what it means to them. The speakers expressed a passion to advocate for the underdog, to fight for marginalized individuals who either lack a voice or whose voices are just not heard.

The discussion explored the complex nature of criminal defense work; the speakers called it an "emotional rollercoaster" and "constant uphill battle." One of the highs in criminal defense work is, of course, winning a case. "A win makes an impact on a macro level because it's not only for that one client, but every other person. It becomes case law, it becomes precedent," Hunter continued, "It's not sexy work, but we are the force of change."

The panelists spoke frankly and acknowledged that a defense attorney may not always like the clients or the acts the clients allegedly committed. However, the panelists encouraged exploration of the interplay of critical and substantive issues, including socioeconomic status, education level, and institutional discrimination. Plaid, who holds a master's degree in sociology, reflectively urged, "What if you had those same experiences?" To Plaid, being a public defender is more than work: "It's a philosophical exploration of yourself and human nature."

The speakers advised students who are interested in criminal defense work to take all available courses relevant to criminal law and procedure. Students can also gain experience by taking trial advocacy courses and honing those skills by participating in activities like moot court and mock trial. Brook suggested finding and talking with sympathetic professors, exploring the resources available, and building a track to follow.

Internships are available at the 1st District office year-round and at the Federal Defender's office in the spring and fall semesters. Students also can visit www.first-defense.org for contacts and volunteer opportunities. According to the speakers, the only prerequisites recommended for working in criminal defense are strength, dedication and a fire within.

Wedded to Public Interest

By Margaret Duval, Center for Public Interest Law

Jed Untereker and his wife Melissa, both 2006 DePaul law graduates, are public interest attorneys who went into their educational debt with their eyes wide open. Parents to two-year-old Leila and baby Ari, Jed and Melissa share a commitment to social justice that is unshaken even in the face of loan payments that are the “equivalent of renting a second apartment,” says Jed.

Now, after years in the Chicago area, Jed and Melissa have made the choice to move to Texas where Jed will work at Paso del Norte Civil Rights Clinic serving immigrants facing deportation. For the past two years, Jed worked as a legal content manager with Illinois Legal Aid Online, and before that, served several years as the litigation director for Working Hands Legal Clinic, so his new position will be both a substantive and a geographical change. Still, he is excited about the prospect of providing direct service to clients.

As for Melissa, she’s game for the big transitions in store for their family. Currently a supervising attorney at the National Immigrant Justice Center, she shares Jed’s commitment to providing legal services for immigrants. Melissa has not yet found work in Texas, but is confident that her job search will be brief.

For Professor Len Cavise, learning that the Untereker family is moving to Texas to serve immigrant clients at the border was not a surprise. “Both Jed and Melissa have had an unwavering commitment to public interest work. Following them through the years, through tough, low-paying jobs, through grueling schedules, through two children, there has never been a doubt in my mind that their commitment to social justice and the poor was solid. Doing direct service work in South Texas is but a logical extension of a very progressive career path.”

Still, their debt—on top of childcare, diapers and clothing for two small children—has a day to day impact: “You’re unable to save the way your peers save,” says Jed. It’s not for lack of budgeting. Jed reports that his interns are sometimes a little shocked to see their supervisor eating peanut butter sandwiches for lunch every day, but he maintains that it’s a good reality check for them. With his LRAP award, his life is short on frills (he hasn’t bought a new pair of jeans in four years) but “it’s manageable. I hope to never be in the position of choosing between public interest work and greater financial stability.”

For more information about the Loan Repayment Assistance Program, please visit law.depaul.edu/lrap.

Skadden Foundation Fellowship recipient Margaret Kuzma ('12) provides legal assistance to military families

By Kimberly Voichescu ('14)

Margaret Kuzma is DePaul’s first Skadden Foundation Fellowship recipient in more than 20 years. Inspired by her experiences in the military community, Kuzma developed a project to provide direct representation to National Guard service members and their families, during and after deployments. Before law school, Kuzma ran the U.S. Army sexual assault prevention program on two different Army bases.

Kuzma is humble and quick to acknowledge those who helped her develop the military family-centered project that secured the prestigious Skadden Foundation Fellowship. Shaye Loughlin, director of the Center for Public Interest Law (CPIL), first suggested the fellowship to Kuzma when she was contemplating summer work with the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF) after receiving a summer stipend from the Mansfield Foundation and the Cudahy Fund. While developing her Skadden Fellowship proposal, Kuzma reached out to her first-year legal writing teacher, Professor Sarah Klaper, a military spouse whose husband serves in the Illinois National Guard. Kuzma was astonished when she learned that all of the benefits active duty soldiers receive on the military bases are virtually nonexistent for the National Guard.

Kuzma recognizes an important need to educate military families of their rights and benefits. “My goal is to provide the legal services these families so desperately need and deserve. America has been at war for over 10 years, and part of the Illinois National Guard has been in a warzone nearly every moment since 2001. When soldiers deploy to take care of us, the least the civilian world can do is to ensure that the soldiers families receive all the care they need. In serving these families, I hope to bring awareness of the tremendous sacrifice these families make on a daily basis.”

Because of Kuzma’s passion, dedicated hard work, and the support of the Skadden Foundation, local National Guard members and their families soon will have access to legal representation in a number of different practice areas, including employment law, housing law, family law and consumer protection.

The Skadden Foundation Fellowship will enable Kuzma to work on her project for the next two years, under the guidance of attorneys at LAF. Kuzma hopes her project will flourish long after her fellowship concludes. Part of her project will be setting up a program through which lawyers can volunteer to help military families on a pro bono basis. Kuzma says this will provide an ongoing platform for nonmilitary lawyers to give back to military families.

In preparation for her interview with the Skadden Foundation, Kuzma reached out to previous Skadden fellows for their advice. “I was immediately struck both by the amazing people who were former Skaddens and by their willingness to drop everything they were doing to help me,” says Kuzma. Her advice to students considering applying for a Skadden Fellowship: “Find something you are passionate about and connect with people in the community who are also interested in that area. Especially if you do not have prior work experience in that area, you need to volunteer. You need to show that you are truly driven; that you will do whatever you can to help your target population; that you will make your project work.”

Kuzma’s award reflects both her dedication and the opportunities she’s had as a student at DePaul. “Margaret is an extraordinarily worthy fellowship winner and a superior student who is very committed to helping low-income veterans,” says Professor Len Cavise, CPIL faculty director. “For DePaul to be recognized with a Skadden winner is further evidence that our public interest-oriented programs are being noticed and recognized as among the best in the country.”

In the last edition of *The Advocate*, the cover story profiled the work of law students teaching Pritzker Elementary students about the people of Chiapas and their use of art to tell the story of their struggles. Students then created their own stencil protest art, which is highlighted below.



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SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, March 28, 2012

New Battlefronts: Struggles for Economic Justice in the Year of Upheaval

A symposium presented by the *DePaul Journal for Social Justice*, featuring renowned labor lawyer Tom Geoghegan on the plight of American workers in the age of austerity and Occupy.

10:30 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.
DePaul Center, Room 8005
1 E. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

Lunch provided. Up to 4 CLE credit hours available.



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Correction

Last edition we credited the article, "Reframing reform: Immigration as the solution," to Professor Sarah Diaz. This article should have been credited to Professor Diaz and Michael Santomauro.

GO GREEN!

If you'd like to receive **The Advocate** as an e-newsletter, please email cpil@depaul.edu.

For more news and information about the Center for Public Interest Law, visit law.depaul.edu/cpil.

Please consider donating to the Center for Public Interest Law (CPIL).

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Thank you for your continued support!