

Identifying Issues and Taking Action to Create Change at the 7th Annual CPIL Symposium

By Courtney Kelledees ('13)

The collateral consequences, or civil punishments, of a criminal record continue long after a person has completed his or her criminal sentence. At its two-day symposium, "Fighting the Stigma: Overcoming the Barriers of a Criminal Record," CPIL examined and addressed the issue of collateral consequences. As part of this year's symposium, CPIL piloted its first-ever symposium action day, which featured a criminal records relief legal training and clinic in partnership with Cabrini Green Legal Aid.

The academic conference provided a venue for discussing the issues, available remedies and paths moving forward, while the action day was a chance for attendees to expand their knowledge and work directly with the community providing brief legal services otherwise difficult for low-income individuals to secure. The action day was a part of the symposium's overarching goal of not merely identifying issues, but furthering remedies.

On March 13, more than 80 students, local practitioners and community members joined CPIL for the symposium's keynote address by Marc Mauer, executive director of The Sentencing Project in Washington, D.C. Mauer presented important background on the history of mass incarceration and sentencing laws. His discussion explored the limited impact of mass incarceration on public safety, while addressing its consequences for people with convictions, for their families and communities, on economic interests and on democracy.

With hope for the future, Mauer encouraged attendees to push for smart legislation like "ban the box" policies, which allow individuals with criminal records to get a fair shot at employment interviews, as well as sentencing reform that works to address the issue on the front end by reducing entry to prisons.

After Mauer's address, the conference hosted two additional panels. Anthony Lowery, director of policy and advocacy, Safer Foundation, started the panel, "Battling Collateral Consequences from the Angles of Policy, Law, and Community Organizing," by highlighting some of Safer Foundation's current work to reduce recidivism through employment. Sage Smith, director of client services, Northwestern Law Bluhm Legal Clinic Center on Wrongful Convictions, and Gail Smith, founder and senior policy director, Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers, expanded on how mass criminalization devastates communities and families. Chris Wilmes, partner, Hughes Socol Piers Resnick & Dym Ltd., rounded out the panel by discussing the use of civil rights impact litigation to battle the collateral consequences of criminal records.



Marc Mauer, executive director of The Sentencing Project, delivers keynote address.

Max Suchan ('15) was impressed by the symposium's dedication to providing multiple viewpoints on the issues. "The symposium was an incredible opportunity to hear from a combination of perspectives involving community organizers, public interest lawyers and academics. It is rare to find these facets of the necessary components for social and political change so consciously integrating their complementary roles in changing the status quo."

Rob Wildeboer, criminal and legal affairs reporter, WBEZ 91.5, moderated the afternoon's final panel, "Statutory Barriers, Remedies, and the Path Moving Forward," which examined legal remedies for overcoming the barriers of a criminal record, with a specific focus on Illinois Certificates of Good Conduct and Rehabilitation, a statutorily created remedy that can waive any employment bar under Illinois state law and protect employers from negligent hiring claims.

Darrell Langdon, stationary engineer, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), told his story of struggling to become re-employed with CPS, and eventually being granted Illinois' first Certificate of Good Conduct. Panelist Beth Johnson, program director, Cabrini Green Legal Aid (CGLA), discussed her representation of Langdon and current advocacy work to expand remedies for individuals with criminal records through lobbying and educational efforts.

Judge Michael McHale, Cook County Circuit Court, Criminal Division, also spoke about his views on the available remedies for individuals with criminal records, noting that his perception has changed significantly since participating in the sealing and expungement court call. "Don't ever say people can't change, they can change," advised Judge McHale.

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ALUMNI PROFILE: Beth Johnson (JD '05)

Program Director, Cabrini Green Legal Aid

By Marie Silver ('15)



Beth Johnson serves as the program director for Cabrini Green Legal Aid (CGLA), where she has worked since graduating from DePaul in 2005. Johnson has repeatedly been recognized for her work in the area of criminal records, receiving loan repayment assistance awards through the Chicago Bar Foundation Sun-Times Fellowship and DePaul University. She was a 2010 recipient of the Safer Foundation's Visionary Award, and was recognized as one of the 2011 Outstanding Women in Nonprofits by the Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court. Johnson also has been honored for her work by former state representative Constance Howard.

Johnson fights for change on behalf of people whose criminal records unjustly hinder their ability to live and work. She currently focuses on lobbying efforts and policy work, advocating for expansion of remedies for individuals with criminal records.

How did your experience at DePaul help shape your career path?

The many opportunities at DePaul to be involved in the field of public interest helped expose me to all of the different legal aids out there. In fact, an attorney from CGLA was on one of the public interest panels at school, and she helped me to get my first internship here. DePaul really helps you to network, and the professors guide you, respect you and encourage you to go into this kind of work.

What do you feel were the most valuable experiences you had while in school?

The Community Development Clinic that DePaul used to offer was great, and I really enjoyed the spring break trip to Harlingen, Texas. The courses on civil rights were also very meaningful for me. Having professors put words to the things I knew, or had hunches about, was influential and motivating.

Additionally, internships and externships were critical. Through the hands-on work, I was able to focus and figure out what I wanted to do with my legal education. You have to experience things to figure it out. I worked at Arise Chicago, which is a workers' rights organization (formerly called Chicago Interfaith), and I worked for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Those experiences instilled in me the tremendous importance of jobs. I realized that a lot of legal work is done just so people can get jobs and that jobs are so essential to people's identities, which led me to realize the fight for workers' rights is extremely impactful.

What do you believe is key to doing successful legal work on behalf of underserved clients?

The key is getting to know your clients as fellow humans and community members. Along the same lines, follow-up advocacy is so important. You can't just finish a case and move on from it. People need continued help and service.

I also think advocating for broader change is key. In direct service, true in-depth involvement is essential, and if in doing

direct service you see the same injustices over and over again with your clients, you can then advocate for bigger changes.

What do you feel are the benefits and challenges of direct representation versus policy work?

First, I think it is hard to advocate for greater changes without having provided direct service. It's difficult to do policy work if you haven't been in the trenches with the clients. Each individual client I've worked with impacts the changes in the law that we fight for and have achieved. Their stories alter perspectives about the law. When you experience issues firsthand, you are able to speak about how to make those bigger systemic changes.

In direct representation, you are working with a person, not just a legal problem, and you are working to change that individual's life. However, you also bear their pain, and sometimes you feel like you aren't making a big difference. CGLA is a great organization because of our holistic approach. We provide many different kinds of services. We work to help individuals with their problems, but we also address the underlying issues that create those individual problems.

How do you balance being program director and a mother of two?

Having my first child actually forced me to have that balance in my life. Family definitely gives you perspective. Now I can't feel guilty for not working constantly because I have to take care of my family. You have to help your family just like you help your clients. You and your family members are just as important as the people you advocate for. Of course, time management is also a big part of implementing balance.

What do you suggest to students who are interested in working for nonprofit organizations?

Get out there and do it. Get a variety of experiences. Public interest law is such an expansive area of law: find what fits for you. Find what your skills are and what you are passionate about, and then match your job to that.

Generally, people who are interested in nonprofit work are passionate about serving those who can't afford attorneys. While it is important to have different experiences, it is also important to focus your work in order to demonstrate that passion. Get as much hands-on experience as possible helping those populations.

For those students interested in my field of work, it is particularly important to note that what we do is advocate for people who make mistakes. Not everyone has the same privileges, and it is often easy for someone who has more to sit back and blame or judge others. People make mistakes for different reasons, and clearing and mitigating criminal records is a way to prevent such harsh, misinformed judgment. Criminal records work is not just expungements; it is all forms of relief from a record. We advocate for our clients on a variety of levels. We also connect and collaborate with people who work in other spheres in an effort to help clients access additional resources.

Restorative Justice Leaders Bring the “Circle” to DePaul

By Stefani Silberstein ('13)



Students practice restorative justice through circle discussion.

When you hear the words “circle,” “check-in,” “trust” and “talking piece,” what comes to mind? For me, I think of Restorative Justice and Peter Newman and Elizabeth Vastine. Although, my thoughts tend to drift to what specific talking piece I would select when it is my turn to speak (and, in case you are wondering, typically I would choose a stuffed animal).

DePaul adjunct professors Peter Newman and Elizabeth Vastine, who co-teach the Restorative Justice course at the College of Law, are both longtime restorative justice practitioners in the Chicago area. Newman and Vastine were approached in 2008 by Judge Martha Mills, the former supervising judge of the Cook County Parentage and Child Support Court (PCSC), and asked to serve as “circle keepers” for a family that Judge Mills thought would benefit from a restorative process. This conversation was the catalyst for the Restorative Justice Pilot Project.

Restorative justice is a value-based, dialogue-driven approach to conflict resolution that acknowledges damaged relationships as well as injuries sustained by victims, and that focuses on healing for all those involved. Restorative justice processes have been utilized for centuries, with roots deriving from indigenous practices and traditions throughout the world.

The philosophies of restorative justice have been given contemporary application within western society in criminal and juvenile justice, community, school and faith-based contexts. However, the pilot project is the first of its kind to apply restorative processes in the family setting to address child support, custody, parenting time and related matters.

Through the process of sitting in a circle with families referred to the pilot project by judges from the PCSC, Newman and Vastine seek to provide parents, many of whom are physically, emotionally and financially exhausted, with a safe space to communicate and

make decisions on their own outside of the courtroom. In 2010, Newman and Vastine partnered with DePaul to create a Restorative Justice course for upper-level students. The course offers students an opportunity to enhance their communication, listening and critical thinking skills to assist them as advocates, counselors, colleagues, mentors, advisors, volunteers and community members.

In addition, upon completion of the course, law students are invited to apprentice as circle keepers under Newman and Vastine’s supervision and guidance with the ultimate goal of continuing to volunteer in a pro bono capacity to further develop their facilitation skills after graduation. Students consistently speak highly about the skills gained in the course and the idea that restorative justice training be required for all attorneys because it forces attorneys to think outside of the adversary process.

Newman and Vastine have been invited to speak at various conferences throughout the world to share the pioneering work that the PCSC and DePaul have been doing to enhance communication between families and rebuild relationships so parents may more effectively co-parent.

Currently, Newman and Vastine are teaching a skills series on restorative justice in partnership with DePaul’s Center for Public Interest Law. They have expressed throughout the skills series the hope “to explore how the circle process may be applied to different aspects of the students’ lives as well as to a variety of settings and communities to discuss issues, concerns, challenges and dynamics in a meaningful and respectful manner.”

This unique skills series provides students with an opportunity to learn about the restorative philosophy and to experience the circle process during a three-week workshop series held over the lunch hour. The series was capped at 16 students with a nearly 30-student waiting list.

Adrienne Packard

CPIL's New Assistant Director



Adrienne Packard, graduate of Howard University School of Law, recently joined DePaul University's staff as part-time assistant director of the Center for Public Interest Law. Following graduation, Packard launched her career as a fair housing law fellow, which then translated into legal aid positions serving low-income, minority populations in Washington, D.C., and Boston. In 2011, she moved to Chicago to help run the American Bar Association's pro bono and public service initiatives.

By Renee Gross ('13)

What made you decide to study law?

I remember sitting in a sociology class while in college, watching a documentary about how the juvenile justice system was actually helping boys become better criminals. It had an emotional effect on me and I thought the best way to be part of creating a better outcome would be to become a juvenile public defender. Once in law school, I realized I was too emotional to handle criminal work. But I found that if I pursued public interest law, I could provide a civil service that would satisfy my underlying desire to help people and my community.

What kind of opportunities did you explore while in law school?

In law school, I didn't know what type of public interest law I wanted to do, but I enjoyed educating people about their rights and helping them with real life issues. I applied for public interest scholarship funding, and was placed at the Legal Aid Society. There, I provided direct services to low-income D.C. residents and was exposed to client interviewing, shadowing attorneys and helping with filings. This experience solidified my feelings about working in legal aid.

Dean Erwin Chemerisny, the founding dean of the University of California's Irvine School of Law, recently spoke at DePaul about mandating pro bono service as part of the JD requirement. What are your thoughts on his proposal?

Doing pro bono in law school is important and every student can benefit tremendously by providing this type of service. This work lays a foundation for helping others as an attorney and gives students exposure to helping those who otherwise would not have legal access. Attorneys have a monopoly on the practice of law, so we have a responsibility to help those who have no means to pay for legal assistance. I applaud what Dean Chemerisny and law schools around the country are doing to provide opportunities for students to participate in invaluable pro bono service.

What projects do you hope to accomplish while working with students at CPIL?

My hope is to work at providing more opportunities for students to participate in public service and pro bono work. DePaul already has such great programming and I am hoping to support those efforts as well as find more ways to involve students focused on public service and those who are not. Over spring break, I organized a pilot pro bono Staycation; this experience gave students the opportunity to work alongside and build relationships with public interest attorneys in Chicago. Students were able to assist legal aid organizations with closing their cases, interview clients and learn substantive information that would be helpful in their practice after graduation. I aim to create experiences for students that get them exposure to different parts of the legal aid community, while making an impact.

Launch of the Chicago Public Interest Staycation

By **Adrienne Packard**, Assistant Director, CPIL

Most agree that the time we spend in law school provides an opportunity to learn the letter of the law, make lifelong friends, and gain invaluable experiences in our field of interest. It is also important to take advantage of the opportunity to learn the practice of law and to experience the full benefit of providing service to those in need. Several law students learned this firsthand during the inaugural Pro Bono Staycation held over spring break in Chicago.

Rather than spend their spring break relaxing or traveling, Kevin O'Donnell ('13), Brooke Tucker ('14), Jennifer Thomas ('15) and Sylvia Zarski ('15) decided to work with the Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services and The Center for Disability and Elder Law (CDEL). The students started off the week at the Legal Aid Society where they assisted the family law practice group in wrapping up their



open files and shadowing attorneys in court. By having the students close cases, attorneys were able to focus more of their energy on the advocacy aspect of their work, rather than the administrative. They also provided the students opportunities to see firsthand the daily work of legal aid family law attorneys.

The students spent the remainder of their week volunteering with CDEL, where they interviewed clients and assisted in drafting powers of attorneys for healthcare and property for low-income senior citizens as part of CDEL's Senior Legal Assistance Clinics. Despite the fact that the services provided by the students spanned the course of only a few days, participants were able to see the immediate impact of their work and walk away knowing they had helped clients with something they may not have accomplished on their own. These clients, who were elderly and spoke limited English, worked with the students and interpreters to complete and execute documents that, if needed, will make their care and protection seamless.

Tom Wendt, legal director at CDEL, explains the impact and importance of student volunteer service: "Having students in our office allows CDEL to provide services to a greater number of low-income seniors and people with disabilities. As a volunteer-based organization, CDEL literally could not exist without the dedicated volunteers that offer their time and talents to CDEL and its clients."

Wendt advocated for students to commit to regular volunteer work. He maintains, "The impact that

volunteering has on the students is really three-fold. First, student volunteers learn valuable, practical legal skills, which can augment the more theoretical learning in the law school classroom. Second, it provides students with the opportunity to hone various skills, [such as] drafting, interpersonal and client-relations skills, etc. Finally, volunteering at an organization like CDEL provides students with an introduction into the world of pro bono legal service, something that they can take with them into private practice."

Although DePaul offers many opportunities for students to participate in spring break service projects outside the Chicago area, the Staycation is unique in that the work is provided in our own backyard. Cheryl Price, director of the Pro Bono & Community Service Initiative, explains it best: "One of the wonderful things about the pro bono Staycation is the opportunity to work locally with programs in the Chicago area and with client populations in our local community. Although you can provide service anywhere, working outside of the Chicago area does not provide the opportunity to build relationships with community partners or potential future employers in the Chicago area."

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7th Annual CPIL Symposium

On March 15, instead of merely staying within the walls of the law school, symposium attendees participated in CPIL's first-ever symposium action day, which featured a criminal records relief legal training and clinic in partnership with CGLA.

After attending the academic conference portion of the symposium, Megan Davis ('14) was "eager for the opportunity to assist real people who are struggling with the everyday stigma of a criminal record." Davis continued, "The most rewarding part of the day was helping to prepare a clemency petition for a client with a single, nonviolent drug conviction from 20 years ago, which to this day still hinders her ability to find employment."

Paul Haidle, CGLA Criminal Records Program supervising attorney, provided a criminal records relief legal training in the morning, after which volunteer students and attorneys transitioned to the one-day clinic hosted at Grace Place. Clients at the action day were identified and referred through CGLA's free expungement and sealing help desk at the Daley Center. Clients included individuals who had records that were statutorily ineligible to be expunged or fully sealed.

At the action day clinic, CGLA attorneys supervised volunteers working in teams of two to provide brief services to 56 individuals with criminal records, including assistance with Health Care Worker Waivers, Certificates of Good Conduct and Relief from Disability, and Petitions for Executive Clemency.

Volunteers first empowered clients by reviewing their available remedies, and then asked clients to share



Students participate in action day clinic.

their stories, so that they could effectively help write petitions and waiver applications. Clients left the action day with completed or partially completed petitions and detailed information on their next steps. Volunteers gained valuable transferrable legal skills and made new connections within the community.

"Action day was a huge success and hopefully will serve as a model for future collaboration between legal aid and the law schools in Chicago. I was extremely impressed by the dedication of the DePaul law students who cheerfully gave up an entire Friday to serve clients who would never have been able to afford an attorney otherwise," said Haidle. "This event was all about providing access to relief from a criminal record, and at the end of the day, more than 50 clients received high-quality legal services."

Journal for Social Justice Hosts “Take Shelter: Keep Shelter” Symposium

By Erin Grotheer ('13)

The *DePaul Journal for Social Justice* hosted its annual symposium on April 17, 2013, which focused on housing issues as they affect low-income populations in Chicago. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Center for Public Interest Law and supported by the Vincentian Endowment Fund. Take Shelter: Keep Shelter, the theme of the event, provided information and discussion on the mortgage foreclosure crisis, the creation of affordable housing, and the Chicago Housing Authority's one-strike eviction policy to more than 70 attorneys, law students and community members.

During the first panel, speakers discussed the mortgage foreclosure crisis, including its history, lasting effects and proposed solutions for working with clients who have been hardest hit by the crisis. Daniel Lindsey, supervisory attorney for the consumer practice group at Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, started the panel with an apt comparison of the mortgage bubble to the creation and ultimate demise of the infamous *Titanic*.

Alumna Cecilia Abundis ('04), an assistant attorney general, highlighted the investigations and meaningful litigation the Illinois Attorney General's office has been engaging in for more than a decade to combat fraudulent mortgage-related activity and to hold lenders accountable for their actions. Finally, Liz Caton, housing counselor for Northwest Side Housing Center, encouraged attorneys and law students to work directly with housing counselors to provide a more holistic service for clients undergoing foreclosure. Caton emphasized the need to truly counsel clients on financial planning, working with banks, and how to survive and carry on post-foreclosure.

The symposium's keynote speaker, Nicholas Brunick, partner at Applegate & Thorne-Thomsen, gave an impassioned speech on creating sustainable development and affordable housing in struggling communities, and encouraged attendees to find and commit their life to their passion. The fundamental message was that at the core of all development or private investment is a community: when you have an organized community that is committed to growth and fostering safe, productive neighborhoods, you are more likely to have successful community development projects.

The second panel of the day addressed the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA) one-strike eviction policy, which removes an individual and his or her entire family from a site-based housing program or from the Section 8 voucher program for any criminal conduct. Alan Mills, attorney at Uptown People's Law Center, explained how the policy, designed to reduce criminal activity in public housing, serves as a blanket policy of mandatory eviction for any arrest—more often than not, for possession of a negligible amount of marijuana.

Lawrence Wood, director of the housing legal group at Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, expanded on the CHA policy by explaining how one simple arrest, regardless of conviction, can mean



Nicholas Brunick, partner at Applegate & Thorne-Thomsen, gave the keynote address for “Take Shelter: Keep Shelter” on creating affordable housing and sustaining community development.



termination from the housing program for the entire family living with the arrested individual. Wood also provided the defenses that attorneys representing tenants often use to prevent one-strike policy evictions. Tenants often claim the “innocent tenant” defense or have the individual barred from the premises as a show of amelioration, even when that individual is a teenager.

At the close of the CHA one-strike policy panel, Professor Michael Seng of the John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Legal Support Center illustrated how the policy is actually racially discriminatory because the incarceration rate affects a disproportionate amount of African Americans. He proposed using the Fair Housing Act to show that the one-strike policy has a disparate impact on certain races considering the concentration of police power and criminal prosecutions on predominantly African American neighborhoods.

“I knew that the collateral consequences of a criminal record were far-reaching, but CHA's one-strike policies are even more deplorable than I realized before this panel,” said Courtney Kelledees ('13). “I was grateful to hear Professor Seng's exciting proposals for the use of existing laws to overcome the barriers faced by individuals with criminal records in both the public and private housing sectors.”

“Take Shelter: Keep Shelter” was a forum for scholars and practitioners in various areas of housing law to educate on substantive issues and proposed policy changes, but also a place to create dialogue about the current state of housing in Chicago. One attorney in attendance stated after the symposium, “These issues of inadequate housing in Chicago are why I went to law school. This symposium brought me back to my roots.”

100 Years: Progress Through Diversity

By Beckee Birger ('13)



Katie Calhoun ('13) and La'Shon DeFell ('12) assist client at action day.

Diversity Week is meant to highlight diversity within the DePaul community. Each year in the spring, law students come together to explore diversity and celebrate the unique aspects of our community. Diversity Week underwent a major makeover during the College of Law's centennial year with the hope of engaging even more students. In years past, the week has mainly featured speakers that focus on different topics of diversity, such as voting rights and housing inequality.

This year, the Student Bar Association (SBA) wanted to create a week that combined the academic aspects of Diversity Week with different activities that would engage a larger audience. "SBA is proud of the work that went into this year's Diversity Week. We tried something different, and I think it paid off," said Robert Alexander ('13), who serves as SBA Community Service Chair.

The SBA reached out to the Center for Public Interest Law (CPIL) and the Chicago Bar Association as well as many student organizations to create a new set of events. There was something for every student: networking with young attorneys from the Chicago Bar Association, a tour of the Art Institute of Chicago that explored the diversity within its collection, an open house for students to learn more about DePaul's student organizations. Diversity Week included the CPIL Vincentian Public Interest Law Symposium and action day as the volunteer opportunity.

Fifteen student organizations participated in the open house, and more than 50 students participated in the networking event. The tour of the Art Institute was "the sort of event that was a rewarding experience for everyone from first-time museum visitors to seasoned vets," said Pete Chambers ('13). "The tour guide expertly chose pieces that reflected diversity locally, nationally and globally."

DePaul is unique in having a weeklong celebration of diversity. Many schools have only a single day, if anything. Yet, it is not surprising that diversity is taken seriously at DePaul. Since the law school's inception, it has welcomed those—including women, people of color and people of differing religious backgrounds, who have not been accepted at other schools. We are home to organizations like the Women's Bar Association and Law Students for Reproductive Justice, and organizations like the Black Law Student Association and the Latino Law Student Association are some of the largest on campus.

We have students and faculty representing every walk of life. One might wonder why we still need Diversity Week in a community that is already so diverse.

The truth is that DePaul is a bit of an anomaly. The American Bar Association estimates that racial minorities made up about 11.2 percent of the profession in 2000 and about 11.9 percent of the profession in 2010. Twenty-three percent of lawyers were women in 2000 and 30 percent of lawyers were women in 2010.

DePaul is a much-needed leader in diversity within the legal field. By continuing to have an entire week of events dedicated to diversity, DePaul students prepare to be leaders once we leave this school. We instill the importance of diversity in this setting in the hopes of encouraging our students to continue to foster diversity in places where it is not as common. Diversity Week is a fun week of events, but also an important statement: DePaul University College of Law is dedicated to supporting diversity within the legal community.

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