

# Create Change

## Alum Serves as Legal Counsel to President of Palau

Alex Weber, JD '12 is in the enviable position of serving as Legal Counsel to the President of [Palau](#), an archipelago of hundreds of tropical islands in the Western Pacific that offer stunning views and world-class diving.

Weber is responsible for handling issues of foreign affairs and steers litigation matters to the Attorney General's office. His projects include the effort to lay a fiber optic cable that will markedly increase Palau's connectivity with the rest of the world; the development, revision and ratification of Palau's Climate Change Policy in advance of [COP-21](#); Palau's accession to the New York Arbitration Convention, which is viewed as a necessary step in Palau's transition to a more high-end, low-volume (and accordingly more environmentally friendly and sustainable) tourism industry; and legislation and regulations to address Palau's problem with corrupt foreign labor recruiting agencies. The [New York Times](#) recently profiled Palau's campaign to fight illegal fishing.

He emphasizes that the fiber optic cable is one of his biggest projects.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEX WEBER

Alex Weber, JD '12 enjoys many of the scenic benefits of living in Palau.

"A fiber optic cable promises to significantly increase Palau's access to the rest of the world, including resources we take for granted like online banking, shopping and education. This is a \$20 million project being financed by the Asian Development Bank and pursued in coordination with a project to lay a fiber optic cable connecting the island of Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia, which is being financed by the World Bank. The amounts of money involved,

which for a small island nation are very substantial, logistics, loan agreements and capital expense sharing, relative lack of infrastructure and need to effectively construct a brand new telecommunications law and regulatory framework from scratch have made for a challenging process. I've actually asked for and received help with the development of the telecom law from [Laura Fong, JD '12](#), a cyberlaw

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## Executive Director's Note



*Be the change you wish to see in the world . . .*

*- Gandhi*

Twelve years ago, shortly after I started at Stanford Law School, I launched this newsletter, *Create Change*. I believe it has been an effective way to document and share the many wonderful developments in our public interest community with a greater audience of alumni, prospective students, and employers.

Over the years, the newsletter has captured many special moments and memorialized them for all time. Looking back at old issues, I enjoy seeing the familiar faces of former students and marvel at how many of them are now in leadership roles at public interest entities (including Jesse Hahnel, JD '08 who was quoted on page 10 of this Spring 2007 [issue](#) about his summer internship at the nonprofit that he now directs!). In addition to highlighting campus events and activities, we have also profiled public interest alumni and faculty. All our [past issues](#) are available on-line, if you, too, are nostalgic.

In 2010, we shifted our newsletter format to take advantage of the benefits of using a special web-based platform. However, we recently decided to return to our roots and showcase the vibrancy and strength of our community in a traditional newsletter format. This is especially helpful because we have more space to go into detail and the ability to share more photos. Our [Facebook](#) page continues to be a steady source of brief announcements, but this quarterly newsletter enables us to offer lengthier updates.

There are certainly many advantages to changing with the times, but sometimes it is worth the extra effort to do things the old-fashioned way. I hope you enjoy this issue and welcome your feedback.

Sincerely,  
Anna

## News Briefs

### **#SLSforJustice Initiative Focused on Religion, National Security, and US Immigration Policy**

The Levin Center hosted several events as part of our [#SLSforJustice](#) initiative. The [#SLSforJustice](#) hashtag and the accompanying schedule of programs and events were created in January 2015 as a response to a series of highly publicized incidents of racial violence across the country.

In winter 2016, we delved into the current national dialogue on the intersection of religion, national security, and US immigration policy, particularly as they relate to Muslims. On January 19, we hosted, "Race, Fear, and National Security: Lessons from the Japanese Incarceration of WWII." This conversation with Dale Minami and Professor Shirin Sinnar, moderated by Professor Jayashri Srikantiah, is available [on-line](#).

On January 21, we co-sponsored "The Immigration & Nationality Act at 50" with the Immigrants' Rights Clinic and the American Constitution Society. This talk featured Dean Kevin Johnson of UC Davis' School of Law and Professor Jennifer Chacón, a Visiting Professor this year, also moderated by Professor Jayashri Srikantiah. They explored current controversies in immigration and refugee law and policy, with attention to the persistence of racial animus in shaping exclusionary policies more than fifty years after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.

On February 16, we hosted "After San Bernardino: Xenophobia and Islamophobia in State and Federal Policymaking" with Cecilia Wang, director of the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project, and Nasrina Bargzie, the National Security and Civil Rights Project Director at Asian Law Caucus. Professor Jennifer Chacón moderated the discussion, which is also available [on-line](#).

More events are planned in the spring.

### **SLS to Celebrate Public Interest Awards**

Save the date! The SLS community will gather the evening of May 18 in Manning Lounge to honor graduating students who have earned Pro Bono Distinction and students selected for public interest honors, including postgraduate fellowships and governmental honors programs. For more details and to RSVP, please visit us on the [web](#).

### **SPILF Auction Set for Saturday, April 16**

Don't miss out on one of the biggest parties of the year for the SLS community. The upcoming [Stanford Public Interest Law Foundation](#) (SPILF) auction will be Saturday, April 16. The evening is a semi-formal event complete with both silent and live auctions, as well as food, drinks, and entertainment. Auction tickets will go on sale beforehand but will also be available at the door.

## Students Attend Rebellious Lawyering Conference at Yale Law

In February, five students received travel grants funded by the Levin Center, the Stanford Public Interest Law Foundation, and Shaking the Foundations to attend Yale Law School's Annual [Rebellious Lawyering Conference](#), a student-run event that brings together practitioners, law students, and community advocates from around the country to discuss innovative, progressive approaches to law and social change.

Yvette Borja, JD '18; Robert Curran, JD '16; Sean McGuire, JD '17; Deena Tumeh, JD '17; and Hao Yan, LLM '16 received support.

Tumeh stated, "RebLaw allowed me the opportunity to meet and learn from social justice practitioners, activists, and law school students working in various public interest fields. It also furthered my interest in specific social justice issues, including climate-induced migration."

McGuire shared, "I'm particularly grateful to have had the opportunity to meet with the group of Yale students who founded and run the Asylum Seekers Advocacy Project,



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAO YAN

Left to right: Yvette Borja, JD '18; Deena Tumeh, JD '17; Sean McGuire, JD '17; Robert Curran, JD '16; and Hao Yan, LLM '16 at Yale Law School

which helps people escape violence in Central America. Because of that meeting, I'm looking into creating an ASAP chapter at Stanford."

Borja added. "The panels touched on the most pressing issues of injustice including mass incarceration, the targeted killing program, and police brutality, and

the ways in which lawyers can best insert themselves into activist movements working to overhaul these systems. Both keynote speakers, Kent Wong and Jaribu Hill, encouraged students to stay committed to public interest lawyering and their social justice values more generally." ■

### Pro Bono Spotlight:

## Program Continues to Grow, New Recognition Levels Announced

The Law School has implemented improvements to the [Pro Bono Program](#) to recognize students who volunteer significant pro bono service above and beyond the current 50 hour threshold.

After discussing ideas with current pro bono project leaders and students who sit on the Pro Bono advisory committee, Jory Steele, director of the Pro Bono and Externship Programs, announced in February that there will be two new recognition levels above the current recognition threshold.



PHOTO BY ALEX MURRAY

Tiffany Yang, JD '15 and Jessica Dragonetti, JD '15 both earned Pro Bono Distinction and wore the special lapel pins at graduation last year.

In a message sent to students, she stated, "Many students complete

far more than the 50 hours of Pro Bono required to graduate with Distinction. We would like to recognize your extraordinary commitment to serving those who most need your help. Those of you who complete 150 hours or more of Pro Bono may graduate with High Distinction, and those of you who manage to find time to complete 300 hours or more will graduate with Highest Distinction. You may note your level of distinction on your resumes, and it will also be noted in the graduation program." ■

# Alum Advises on Foreign Affairs for Palau's President

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specialist who has provided technical assistance as part of a pro bono project for her law firm.”

Weber will be the first to tell you that he did not plan this career move from the outset. He earned dual degrees in Physics-Engineering and Politics from Washington and Lee University in 2009 and then went directly to Stanford.

He chose Stanford Law School because he was deciding between intellectual property and public interest law and he felt SLS promised amazing opportunities in both fields. “I was particularly excited by [LRAP](#) [the Loan Repayment Assistance Program], which is what made my pursuit of a public interest career possible.”

Weber adds, “A few months into law school I was committed to a career in public interest law, though I still wasn't quite sure doing what. I was mainly thinking along the lines of public defense or legal aid, but one of my last courses in college had been comparative genocide studies, which had given me my first real exposure to international criminal law and I found myself drawn to it. So I jumped at the opportunity to intern with two war crimes tribunals [for Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia] during law school, though in the end I became a little disillusioned with this line of work. Fortunately, Stanford's [Rule of Law Program](#) was there to introduce me to the field of capacity building. That's pretty much what brought me to where I am now and I hope to continue in this field.”

While at SLS, Weber was a pro bono project leader for the Volunteer Attorney Program with Community



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE BAKER

Levin Center staff posed at the 2016 Fall Public Service Awards dinner. Left to right: Titi Liu, Jory Steele, Diane Chin, Anna Wang, and Holly Parrish

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## About *Create Change*

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*Create Change* is designed and produced quarterly by the staff of the John and Terry Levin Center for Public Service and Public Interest Law. Unless specifically noted, all articles are written by staff:

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Legal Services in East Palo Alto, project leader and author for the Timor-Leste Legal Education Project, a Public Interest Fellow, Executive Board Vice President for the Stanford Public Interest Law Foundation, Managing Editor of the Stanford Journal of International Law, and a research assistant for Professor Jenny Martinez.

After graduating in 2012, Weber clerked for two years for the Honorable Nanette K. Laughrey in Missouri and then served as Court Counsel for the Supreme Court of Palau for a little over a year. From there, he moved over to the President's office.

Weber concludes, “The best advice I ever received in law school was, ‘Follow your passion and everything else will come.’ I have tried to live by that motto and feel I've really benefited from it. Forget your ten-year plan, just focus on working hard at something you care about, something that makes you excited to get up in the mornings, and don't hesitate to jump at every opportunity that comes along. Security is a poor substitute for fulfillment and it is absolutely possible to have both, so don't be afraid to follow an unconventional path if that's what makes you happy.” ■