

Create Change

Alumna Protects Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

“It’s important to know that there are different ways to be a public interest lawyer and you should think about what path is best suited for your personality and strengths,” advises Mariko Hirose, JD ’08. She is a senior staff attorney at the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), where she has worked on cases involving free speech, privacy, government transparency, criminal justice, and gender and sexual orientation discrimination.

When asked what personality trait is most suitable for the work she does, Hirose replied, “Persistence. Systemic reform litigation takes a long time and no change happens instantly. It’s frustrating because you see your clients suffering from injustice and all you can say to them is that we are working hard so that some years down the line, after hundreds of hours of research and discovery and trial or settlement and implementation of the remedy, things will be better. But you have to believe that is true and keep working at all the little pieces that will move the ball

forward towards eventual change. You have to also understand that litigation is imperfect and it should be just a component of an overall strategy of change that may include legislation, policy advocacy, and/or public education.”

As an undergraduate at Yale, Hirose was inspired to pursue a public interest career after internships with New Haven Legal Assistance and at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. She observed how attorneys were able to get people the concrete help that they needed—whether to seek housing or asylum. Hirose confides, “I have to admit, though, that I didn’t have any concrete ideas of what kind of a public interest lawyer I wanted to be when I got to law school. I feel lucky that I was able to figure this out during law school—through classes and internships.”

Hirose explains, “The internship that cemented my desire to pursue a career in civil rights and civil liberties, and in particular in impact litigation, was my first summer internship with

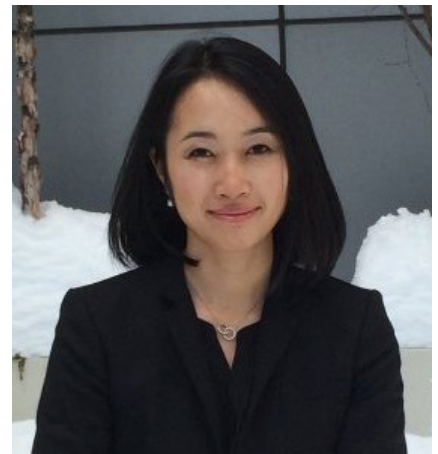


PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIKO HIROSE

Mariko Hirose, JD '08

the Center for Constitutional Rights. I had wanted to intern there because they were one of the organizations engaged in international human rights litigation in U.S. courts. I got exposure to those cases, but also to the whole range of CCR’s work on domestic civil rights issues. CCR has a wonderful summer internship program that is really geared toward encouraging students to be the next generation of civil rights lawyers.”

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Executive Director's Note



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

Graduation always prompts mixed emotions for me. While I am thrilled to celebrate this milestone, I also am reminded that our graduates will embark upon the next chapters of their lives elsewhere.

From the day students arrive on campus, the Levin Center welcomes them into our public interest community. We urge everyone to participate in pro bono service and to explore public interest careers. We connect incoming students to current students, faculty, and alumni mentors. Three of the five Levin Center staff also teach public interest courses. Throughout their time here, students are an integral part of the Levin Center's daily rhythms.

We will miss the members of the Class of 2016, yet I know they will continue to be part of our public interest community. In fact, I hope to see some at our regional summer receptions. We will be in Los Angeles on July 13, San Francisco the following week, and then New York City and DC in early August. I hope current students and alumni will also attend and congratulate our 2016 grads in person. Details will be shared via e-mail and our Facebook page. Stay tuned!

Sincerely,
Anna

News Briefs

Darren Walker, President of Ford Foundation, Met with Stanford Law Students

The Levin Center and the Stanford Criminal Justice Center hosted an intimate breakfast reception for public interest students to meet with Darren Walker, the president of the Ford Foundation, on Tuesday, May 3.



PHOTO BY ANNA WANG

Walker shared with the students the Foundation's ongoing commitment to supporting public interest lawyering as a "critical tool" to address racism and other forms of inequality. He also noted, "Hope is the best daily practice to deploy for lawyers committed to public interest practice that will change our society." ■

"Fun" Committee Promoted Public Interest Community Through Social Events

A committee of public interest students organized a series of events Spring quarter to bring students together. Marcus Bourassa, JD '16; Gagan Gupta, JD '16; Ginny Halden, JD '16; Haley Millner, JD '18; and Serena Premjee, JD '16

Premjee coordinated the Public Interest Social Hour events (on alternating Wednesday lunches and Monday evenings), which provided an informal opportunity for students to drop in and meet others in the public interest community. On April 21, Gupta led efforts to gather about 30 students in Portola Valley at the historic Zott's (aka Alpine Inn Beer Garden). On May 8, Millner organized a BBQ at the Munger Graduate Residence's BBQ pit for over 20 students. Finally, on Wednesday, May 11, Halden planned a gathering of 30 students on the rooftop of the new McMurtry Arts Building near the Cantor Arts Museum. The Levin Center provided funds to offer light refreshments at these events.

Millner stated, "As a 1L, these events have been especially enjoyable because they've made the public interest community more visible. It's been a delight to get to know other students who are following similar career paths and meet more 2- and 3L students outside of the classroom."

Bourassa added, "Students are eager for opportunities to meet their peers with shared interests, but need the extra nudge of unique events, good weather, and light refreshments to snap them out of their studying routine. That said, it is no real surprise that the Public Interest Fun Committee has been so fun in its first year - our name required as much." ■

Levin Center Convened Public Interest Student Leaders for All-Day Retreat

Levin Center staff planned and led an all-day retreat for nearly 50 students on Saturday, April 16. These were all first- and second-year students who plan to serve as public interest student leaders next school year. The retreat focused on community-building and fundraising/resource development. At the end of the day, we also hosted a casual cocktail reception for retreat participants and graduating third-year public interest law students. ■



PHOTO BY ANNA WANG

Alrwishdi Named Rubin International Human Rights Award Recipient

In March, the Levin Center hosted Deyaa Alrwishdi, a human rights activist from Syria. Alrwishdi is the 2016 recipient of the Rubin International Human Rights Award. The award recognizes outstanding, emerging leaders in the international movement for human rights by awarding one leader the opportunity to spend one week at Stanford Law School as a practitioner-in-residence.

Since the onset of Syria's civil war in 2011, Alrwishdi has worked at the national and international level to defend victims of human rights violations, including directly representing political prisoners and activists arrested at protests. He also documents violations and atrocities across Syria as a researcher with the Damascus Center for Human Rights.

After several years representing individual political prisoners, Alrwishdi sought to achieve more systemic impact by founding the Free Syrian Lawyers Association (FLSA), a diasporic network of legal practitioners working to train other lawyers in human rights and reform the Syrian



Left to right: Jane Cho, JD '17; Deyaa Alrwishdi; Matt Gasperetti, JD '17; Elliot Higgins, JD '18; Shannon Galvin, JD '18; Swain Uber, JD '16; Cassandra Kildow, JD '16; Kimberly Larkin, JD '16; Tara Rangchi, JD '18; Titi Liu; Nancy Rubin; and Matthew Ball, JD '18 at a small dinner for law students.

justice system in order to lay a foundation for a transition to rule of law.

During his visit, Alrwishdi met with Bay Area organizations that are seeking to develop or expand their work on Syria including Center for Justice and Accountability, Benetech, and International Rescue Committee. Alrwishdi also received advice and guidance on his vision for advancing human rights and rule of law in Syria from Stanford Professors James Cavallaro, David Cohen, Larry Diamond, Erik Jensen, and Jeremy

Weinstein.

The Levin Center also hosted a dinner for Alrwishdi, benefactor Nancy Rubin, and a small group of law students interested in international human rights.

Alrwishdi gave talks at Stanford Law School and the Bar Association of San Francisco about the prospects for peace and transitional justice in Syria. Alrwishdi said of his visit, "During this trip I found a family helping, encouraging, and supporting me. I will never forget everyone's advice." ■

Graduating Students and Alumni Honored at Spring Awards

Faculty, students, and staff gathered on Wednesday, May 18 in Manning Lounge. We honored 89 pro bono distinction graduates, 25 recipients of post-graduate fellowships and government honors positions, and eight students selected to receive the law school's public interest awards.

Graduating students Cindy Garcia, Ginny Halden, and Ruhan Nagra jointly received the Deborah L. Rhode Public Interest Award. Morgan Lewis, JD '18, received the 2016 Lisa M. Schnitzer Memorial Scholarship.

Eight graduates will be serving in Stanford Law School postgraduate fellowships. There were three new

fellowships for 2016-2017: the Stanford Law School Civitas Fellowship, the Stanford Law School International Fellowship, and a one-time fellowship funded by the Class of 2014 for a member of the Class of 2017.

Nine graduates received fellowships from external funders, including the Skadden Foundation, Equal Justice Works, Center for Constitutional Rights, Natural Resources Defense Council, Open Society Foundations, Equal Justice Initiative, and the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation.

Eight graduates will begin their careers in government service at agencies like the U.S. Department



Left to right: Cindy Garcia, JD '16; Ginny Halden, JD '16; Ruhan Nagra, JD '16; Professor Deborah L. Rhode; and Morgan Lewis, JD '18

of Justice, U.S. State Department, California Solicitor General, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

A full list of all honorees is available on-line. ■

PHOTO COURTESY OF TITI LIU

PHOTO BY CHRISTINE BAKER

Alternative Spring Break Trips Offer Students Opportunities to Serve in Rural California, New Orleans, and Rural South



PHOTO COURTESY OF ONEJUSTICE



PHOTO COURTESY OF ONEJUSTICE



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN BONACORSI

The Levin Center sponsored three Alternative Spring Break trips this year. Students participated in an overnight Justice Bus trip to rural California to help clients with criminal record expungement; a week-long trip to New Orleans to volunteer with the Orleans Public Defender; and a week-long trip to Lumpkin, Georgia and Gadsden, Alabama to conduct interviews with detainees held at the Stewart Detention Center and Etowah Detention Center, respectively.

Students Help Expunge Criminal Records in Rural California

Eleven students went on the Justice Bus to Chico and Redding, cities in Butte and Shasta counties in rural California. Working under the supervision of attorneys, the students spent two days assisting 37 eligible clients with applications to expunge their criminal records.

This trip was organized by OneJustice and the Law School covered the cost of transportation, housing and some

meals. The students were Jonathan Berry-Smith, JD'18; John Bonacorsi, JD '18; Savannah Fletcher, JD '18; Ryan McIlroy, JD '16; Rebecca Mears, JD '18; Aishwarya Nair, LLM '16; Giulia Scelzo, JD '16; Matthew Sellers, JD '17; Michael Skocpol, JD '16; Kelsey Townsend, JD '18; and Eric Wang, JD '16.

Fletcher stated, "I went into this service trip knowing little about OneJustice but with a familiarity with rural Northern California and a strong desire to help the people in this area in whatever capacity they needed. Fortunately I got to do just that by tangibly helping individuals both dismiss charges on their records as well as drop felonies down to misdemeanors. One woman will now be able to turn her internship into a paying job, another man will be an example to his children of responsibility and change, and a mother's increased employability will empower her as she leaves her husband and begins an independent life. To be able to tangibly help individuals with furthering their personal goals was a

Clockwise from top left: SLS students ride the Justice Bus to rural California; Matthew Sellers, JD '17 (center) assists a client during the expungement clinic; Seven students who traveled to New Orleans to volunteer with the Orleans Public Defender posed in front of the home they rented in Mid-City.

fantastic way to start off spring break and reaffirmed my desire to continue direct services work."

Berry-Smith added, "I really enjoyed the trip, for not only was I able to provide assistance to a group of people in need, but I was also able to bond with my fellow classmates over a shared passion for the public interest and pro bono work. It was meaningful for me to have the opportunity to use some of my legal knowledge to actually impact the lives of people who are all too often excluded from effective legal support, and seeing how appreciative these people were was an amazing feeling. I will definitely recommend OneJustice trips to my friends in the upcoming years."

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Pro Bono Service Offers Rewarding Learning Experiences

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Bonacorsi stated, “The Justice Bus expungement trip highlighted both the disturbing lack of legal services for low-income people in rural communities, but also the potential for lawyers to make an impact if they take it upon themselves to share their time and knowledge.”

Nair declared, “We, as lawyers, have a moral duty to ensure that access to justice is not denied for merely socioeconomic reasons. The Justice Bus plays a vital role in bridging the gap in access to legal services for low and middle income individuals in California. There still remains a glaring need for improving the current situation and perhaps adopting a mandatory pro bono requirement for attorneys registered in the State might be a good step in that direction.”

First-Hand View of Criminal Defense System in New Orleans

Seven students went to New Orleans to work with attorneys (including alumna Laura Bixby, JD '14) at the Orleans Public Defender (OPD) to represent indigent clients at one of the busiest public defenders' offices in the country. Lisa Bixby, JD '17; John Bonacorsi, JD '18; Laura Douglas, JD '17; Cindy Garcia, JD '16; Michael Halper, JD '18; Heather Hughes, JD '18; and Jennifer Oxley, JD '16 participated.

Douglas observed, “We were all disquieted by the trip. I think it is incredibly important to bear witness to some of the most troubling problems in our society, including mass incarceration and the racialization of the criminal justice system. Bryan Stevenson always talks about the difference someone feels when they ‘get proximate’ to problems: I think all of us came away with a deeper

sense of the human costs of a broken system. Hopefully we were able to help a few people in more concrete ways, as well - by lightening the load of a few overburdened public defenders.”

Halper shared, “We were each assigned to an attorney, and I love that we were treated like equal partners. We would discuss case strategies, and my input was genuinely solicited. Plus it was exciting for me as a 1L to watch

incarcerated client on my own.”

Bonacorsi added, “The OPD trip was an amazingly rewarding experience. In just one week I was able to work closely with an experienced public defender and help him prepare for trial, interact with a number of clients, speak with new and career public defenders about their experiences, and observe trials where attorneys from the OPD fought passionately on behalf of their clients.

“Bryan Stevenson always talks about the difference someone feels when they ‘get proximate’ to problems: I think all of us came away with a deeper sense of the human costs of a broken system.”

my legal research applied on a real, ongoing case.”

Oxley stated, “I really enjoyed my week with OPD. It was my first experience working in a public defender's office. Needless to say, it was quite an eye-opening experience and one that I will never forget. I really appreciated the opportunity to get to see how things actually work (or don't work) in the south and I certainly gained a much better understanding for the challenges that defendants and those who are incarcerated face. Anyone who is thinking about doing this program in the future should definitely jump at it—I actually did a bunch of substantial legal research and motion writing for the attorney I worked with during the week. I also shadowed her while she met with a defendant in the local jail, and she even sent me to meet with an

The trip was an inspiring, one-of-a-kind experience.”

Documenting Conditions in Detainment Facilities in South

The third Alternative Spring Break option was to visit detention centers in the rural South. Yvette Borja, JD '18; Yuliya Goptarenko, LLM '16; Lindsey Jackson, JD '16; and Elena Mercado, JD '18 traveled to detention centers in Georgia and Alabama to document conditions detainees face. Working with attorneys at the Southern Poverty Law Center (including alumna Eunice Cho, JD '09), student volunteers interviewed detainees at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia and Etowah Detention Center in Gadsden, Alabama. See Mercado's first-person perspective about the experience on page 6. ■

Students Document Conditions at Immigration Detention Centers

By Elena Mercado, JD '18

Four of us were lucky enough to commit our Spring Breaks to the Southern Poverty Law Center this March. We joined a project led by Eunice Cho, a Stanford Law alumna, which aims to document conditions at immigration detention centers in the South. Our jobs were solely to document and nothing more—we could offer no legal representation or counseling of any sort.

Over the course of five days and two detention centers, I was able to experience a sliver of the profound human tragedy that occurs in United States immigration detention centers. Although the actual practice is more complex, essentially the U.S. government employs detention for individuals who have violated immigration laws—many of the detainees in these centers are in deportation proceedings.

We began our documentation project at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia. At Stewart, you can only see the inmates through Plexiglas windows in small rooms where you speak with the detainee on the other side of the barrier using a phone. Underwire bras are discouraged, as they can be used to keep you from gaining access to the detainees if you set off the metal detectors. There is a great sense of containment and restriction about Stewart Detention Center.

Eunice warned us we might face resistance from the guards when trying to enter the center, and we did. Once we were allowed in, we were led to one of those small visitation rooms to conduct our interviews with the detainees, asking them an array of questions about their lives before detention, their journey through the immigration system, and the conditions and treatment they have experienced in detention centers.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EUNICE CHO

From left: Yuliya Goptarenko, LLM '16; Eunice Cho, JD '09; Elena Mercado, JD '18; Lindsey Jackson, JD '16; and Yvette Borja, JD '18 posed at the Southern Poverty Law Center's office in Atlanta.

The first boy we interviewed was the same age as my little brother. He was quiet, polite, and visibly sad to be sitting before us. After our interview was over, he wished me *un buen día, y buena suerte* [a good day, and good luck]. His sincerity and kindness, even as he was led out of the visitation room by a guard back to his uncertain fate, reminded me so much of my younger sibling.

The second boy we interviewed was, once again, the same age as my little brother. Any respite I thought I would receive from the emotional turmoil of the first detainee was gone when I saw how young he was. He told us the most difficult thing for him about being in detention was wondering what his classmates were doing right at that moment in last period. This determined teenager still had his high school teachers send him his homework, and worked hard to finish it and turn it in from within the detention center (no matter what obstacles he faced from guards or his inability to get textbooks or a computer)—he said he was going to graduate high school no matter what. This boy reminded me

so much of my little brother I found it difficult to speak with him for long. These thoughts would preoccupy me for hours after we left the detention center—they bother me still, as I sit in front of my laptop.

After two days at Stewart, we made the four-hour drive to Gadsden, Alabama to visit the Etowah County Detention Center. After making our way around the imposing building that houses the detention center, we discovered the Visitation Entrance was locked and unattended. We entered instead through the Sheriff's Office, walking past a myriad of people applying for their \$20.00 pistol permits and through a pair of unmarked doors into windowless, grimy rooms. A quote in red paint on one of the interior walls says something about "Forgiveness."

Nothing has ever made me feel quite as miserable or hopeless as the Etowah Detention Center. A pair of handcuffs is bolted to the ground in the legal visitation room in case guards decide to cuff a detainee. Painfully loud locks in every door surrounding

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Alumna Seeks Reforms to Address Systemic Challenges

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She adds, “The classes that have been helpful to me with my work were Constitutional Law, First Amendment, Criminal Procedure, Constitutional Litigation, and Federal Courts. I still go back to my outlines to remind myself how an issue that I’m looking at fits into the broad picture!”

After Hirose graduated magna cum laude from Yale University in 2003, she spent a year in Japan and a year in China as a Yale China Teaching Fellow before starting at Stanford Law School.

She explains, “I was originally supposed to go to China directly after graduation for a two-year fellowship teaching English in China, but the first year got cancelled because of [the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic in China in 2003] so I ended up going to Japan where my family is.”

Hirose graduated with Order of the Coif from Stanford Law School in 2008, where she was an articles editor for the Stanford Law Review. After law school, she clerked for the Honorable Stephen Reinhardt of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. She then served as the William J. Brennan fellow at the American Civil Liberties Union, where she litigated cases raising free speech and privacy issues. After her fellowship, Hirose was an associate at Outten & Golden LLP, where she represented employees in class action sex discrimination and wage-and-hour cases, for two years. She joined NYCLU in 2012 and currently serves as a senior staff attorney there. Hirose is also an adjunct professor at the Fordham University School of Law, where she

teaches a class on privacy in the digital age.

One of Hirose’s most meaningful cases has been *Hurrell-Harring v. State of New York*, which challenged the inadequacy of New York’s public defense system and was filed in November 2007. She explains, “New York State has delegated its responsibility for funding public defense to the counties, which has resulted in a patchwork of public defense systems that are underfunded and that are not subject to meaningful oversight.”

“[A] strong public defense system is crucial for challenging police practices, for arguing for fairer bail, and for ensuring that innocent people don’t end up in jail and prison.”

Hirose was assigned to the class action case when she first arrived at NYCLU in 2012. Her work involved a variety of tasks including building relationships with community stakeholders, interviewing people who were in jail waiting for their attorneys to visit them to tell them what was happening in their criminal cases, demanding documents from the defendants in the course of discovery and taking depositions, filing motions, gathering the evidence to create a narrative, and preparing for trial.

She shares, “The case settled in 2014 on the eve of trial, and we’re now monitoring the implementation of the settlement which will bring more

funding to the counties that were subject to the lawsuit and ensure that there are attorneys at the defendant’s first appearance in court and that public defense attorneys will have manageable caseloads.”

Hirose’s post-settlement work has been monitoring the settlement—including ensuring that additional funds in the state budget from the settlement are funding meaningful reform—and continuing discussions with the stakeholders to advance the work of reforming the public defense system in New York State.

She comments, “Through working on this case I got a very close look at the many injustices in our criminal justice system. Black and Hispanic people are disproportionately being stopped, arrested, and brought into this system by the police. Once they are in the system they have bail set at an amount that they cannot pay and end up losing their jobs, homes, or even family while sitting in jail waiting for trial.

Once they are in jail, especially if they do not have a lawyer who has the time or resources to fight for them, the pressure to plead guilty is enormous, even for those who are not guilty of a crime. And once they plead guilty, they have a record that will be used against them next time this cycle of injustice starts again.”

Hirose states, “The settlement was important because a strong public defense system is crucial for challenging police practices, for arguing for fairer bail, and for ensuring that innocent people don’t end up in jail and prison. But there is so much more work to be done to reform our criminal ‘justice’ system.” ■

Detainees Face Dismal Prison-like Conditions

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the visitation room cut into our conversations with the detainees frequently—as did the constant passage of center guards. As legal assistants, we were given the privilege of conducting interviews with the detainees in person—family members have to travel potentially hundreds of miles to have video conference calls with their loved ones from a different room in the detention center. No one who loves them is allowed a contact visit with the detainees at Etowah County Detention Center.

We interviewed a group of Bengali detainees who had staged a hunger strike, protesting the conditions at the detention center through their weeks-long refusal to eat. There was only one in their group who could speak English, and as fate would have it, he was the same age as my little sister. He was incredibly intelligent, pleasant, and visibly heartbroken—he began to cry when he told us, “I came here for help to this country, and instead of help I am here, where I do nothing, where my life is nothing.” He did not have enough money to pay for the cost of a phone call to his family in Bangladesh.

Every interview afterwards showed us a new agony, a different journey of hope that had long since collapsed into the routine filth of the detention center. We returned to California after two days at Etowah.

The experience has left me fundamentally shaken up, which I sincerely believe is one of the most important feelings a law school education can offer you; complacency is a dangerous state of mind, particularly when the world we live in simply does not merit it.

After participating in the



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

About *Create Change*

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documentation project, I sincerely believe there is a wild lack of due process given to individuals who—much as we pretend they are not—are being put through criminal proceedings and not civil ones. As a Latina, as a student of the law, as a human being, this trip was one of the most agonizing and important experiences of my life. Improving the world requires first identifying the problems around us, and I was certainly able to identify a host of glaring issues during my time in the detention centers.

One of the questions we had to ask the detainees was, “Why did you come to the United States?” Anyone who has

any familiarity with the immigration system or basic notions of human desires can imagine the answer we received, time and time again, to that question. Having done more immigration and deportation related intakes than I care to remember, I am certainly intimately familiar with the question and the inevitable outcome myself—but just for the emotional and intellectual exercise, let it register with you and your humanity. That the person who answered this question would risk death, abuse, cruelty, uncertainty, detention, and (above all) the American legal system, “For a better life.” ■